

2011

British Perspective on the Colonial Rebellion

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

“British Perspective on the Colonial Rebellion”

written by

Kayla Smith

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 18, 2011

Great Britain and her colonies began their disagreements leading up to the American Revolution over the idea of taxation and representation in Parliament. A new form of taxation came with the passage of Sugar Act in March, 1764. This form aimed at raising revenue to pay for part of the cost of Britain's colonial expenses in North America. All previous taxation on the colonies had only been used to regulate commerce. The British judged the colonists should be taxed to help pay for the cost of the French war that had been fought in their defense and protection.¹ The previous method of voluntary taxation was unpredictable, unequal, and could take months to gather. Because it was voluntary, states like Pennsylvania and Massachusetts tended to give much more than states like Maryland and New Jersey.² Colonies avoided paying this new tax by smuggling in sugar from other countries.

In response to smuggling, Parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765 because it was easy to implement, hard to avoid, and distributed relatively equally between the colonies.³ All paperwork, playing cards, and letters had to receive a stamp from Parliament which was bought from an officer of England. Parliament admitted the colonies would not react well to the new direct, internal tax. In fact, the colonies simply refused to use the new stamps.⁴ Also, the colonists created a group called the "Stamp Act Congress" in the fall of 1765 to write King George III and Parliament. They declared their loyalty to Britain, but protested being taxed without being represented in Parliament.⁵ Parliament refuted their argument by claiming colonists were virtually represented like all other Englishmen who could not vote through virtual

¹ Sydney George Fisher, *The True History of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: JB Lippincott Company, 1902), 51

² *Ibid.*, 53

³ Bruce Lancaster, *The American Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 30-31

⁴ Fisher, 55

⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59

representation. Parliament claimed they created laws with the interest of all Englishmen even if they are not directly representing them.⁶

The Townshend Act of 1767 taxed tea and other goods. England realized the colonists were smuggling tea from Holland to avoid the shilling per pound tax. Parliament dropped the tax to three pence per pound to encourage buying English tea. Colonists nonetheless smuggled in the Dutch tea on principle against taxation by Britain.⁷ After the Tea Act, patriots in the colonies refused to allow English tea to enter their harbors.⁸ In New York, Philadelphia, and New Hampshire tea refused to accept the tea and forced it to return to England. Charleston, South Carolina allowed the tea to enter the town, but colonists refused to buy any of it. The tea then rotted in damp cellars.⁹ Boston experienced the fieriest resistance to the Tea Tax. Samuel Adams, a strong rebel from Boston, began the first cries for independence from Britain. He called for a “Congress of American states to frame a bill of rights,” or to “form an independent state, and American commonwealth.”¹⁰ On December 16, 1773, Adams, along with John Hancock and other patriots dressed up like Mohawk Indians and destroyed all the tea on board ships in Boston Harbor. Three shiploads of tea, worth £15,000, were dumped into the sea. No one attempted to stop the mob from destroying the tea. The admiral of the fleet is said to have said, “Enjoy your sport but prepare to pay the piper.”¹¹ The “piper,” or Parliament, required not only repayment for the destroyed tea, but closed Boston’s harbor until the Governor Thomas Hutchinson assured Parliament the repayment had been made.¹²

⁶ Ibid., 67

⁷ Ibid., 102-103

⁸ Ibid., 107

⁹ Ibid., 109

¹⁰ Ibid., 107

¹¹ Ibid., 112

¹² Ibid., 116-117

In April, 1775, after the Boston Tea Party, General Thomas Gage, commander of British forces in America, sent eight hundred troops to Lexington, Massachusetts to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Gage believed his troops had left Boston in secrecy, but their movements had been watched by patriot Paul Revere who rode through the night to warn Adams and Hancock and gather reinforcements to meet the British troops. Rebels in Lexington raided the military stores and waited behind stone walls for the small British force.¹³ The rebels outnumbered the British. They retreated to Concord, but rebels had already gathered there, and the British were forced to retreat back to Boston. The British suffered heavy casualties, almost half of their total forces and all of their officers.¹⁴ This was the first battle of what would become the American Revolution.

Tales of great patriotism, against both the tyrannical King George III and his allegedly evil Parliament, fill American text books. As the old saying goes, "there are always two sides to the story." American history books almost always portray the American colonies as victims of great injustice. Few studies have ever been done on the opinions of the British towards what they called the Great Rebellion. What needs to be asked are things like: Were the British people supportive, against, or indifferent to the prospective of America's becoming independent? Were the British soldiers and commanders optimistic about the war? How did the British government officials perceive the war? What were the opinions of the British commoners, especially as expressed in newspapers? How were feelings at the beginning of the war contrasted with the middle and then towards the end?

¹³ *Ibid.*, 226-227

¹⁴ "Department of Military Science - Battle of Lexington and Concord." Last modified October 2, 2006, <<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexcon.html>>

The War from the Perspective of British Military Leaders

Shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, even some military officials believed the colonists were being treated harshly. A group of militant colonists had destroyed thousands of dollars worth of British tea in protest to the tea tax, an act called the Boston Tea Party. In response, Parliament passed the Coercive Acts which closed Boston Harbor and held Bostonians responsible for repaying the tea.¹⁵ General Thomas Gage, top military official in American colonies, recommended that Parliament suspend the Coercive Acts to help mediation. King George III called the idea “the most absurd that can be suggested.”¹⁶ The colonies must be punished according to the in King. The Coercive Acts were passed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party, and the punishment must be carried out. As early as 1774, General Thomas Gage doubted the ability to crush the rebellion quickly. He wrote to Lord Barrington, “If you think then thousand men sufficient, send twenty, if one million is thought enough, give two; you will save both blood and treasure in the end.”¹⁷ Adjutant General Edward Harvey, the most senior officer in the British Army, similarly advised, “to conquer it [America] by our land forces is as wild an idea as ever contraverted [sic] common sense.”¹⁸ Gage also admitted the number of Loyalists assumed in the colonies was wearing thin already. He wrote to William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth and stepbrother to the Prime Minister Lord Fredrick North, in May, 1775, “From what can be learned it is not found that one Province is in better situation than another, the People called Friends of Government are few in all and the opposite Party numerous, active, and

¹⁵ Fisher, 112-116

¹⁶ Solomon Lutnick, *The American Revolution and the British Press* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1967), 90

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *The American Revolution and the British Press* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1967), 80

¹⁸ Michael Pearson, *Those Damned Rebels; the American Revolution as Seen through British Eyes* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 113

violent.”¹⁹ The American forces had the advantage of knowing the land better and felt they were fighting for a just cause. If Britain was to keep America, she would need to take advantage of her strong naval powers.

The Battle of Bunker Hill followed these letters in June, 1775. General Gage knew he needed to fortify the hill north of Boston because if the rebels fortified it first, they could bombardment the town. Yet, before Gage could get to the hill, the farmers of the town worked through the night to barricade the hill despite being fire on by the British. The only way of getting through the barricade was through a very narrow peninsula. Instead of attacking at the neck of the peninsula, which would have put British troops between two rebel forces, he attacked in the front, assuming the rebels would quickly scatter at the slightest offense.²⁰ Instead, the rebels waited until the British were within thirty yards to begin firing. They focused on attacking the officers. Not a single subordinate officer under General Howe would make it out unharmed. The British pushed on to retake the hill but at great cost.²¹ Britain would win the battle but at the price of almost half its men, losing 1,054 of their 2,250 including 92 officers. General Sir Henry Clinton wrote in his journal, “The disaffected colonies army, which though badly armed, as ill appointed, and without discipline or subordination, was it must be confessed respectable for its numbers and the enthusiasm by which they were actuated.”²² One of General Gage’s officers claimed the poor performance of the British was unforgivable in, “Such ill conduct at the onset argues a gross ignorance of the most common and obvious rules of the profession and gives us for the future anxious forebodings. This madness or ignorance, nothing can excuse... Our

¹⁹ Ira D. Gurber. *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 22.

²⁰ Fisher, 250-251

²¹ *Ibid.*, 254-255

²² Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion; Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1954), 19

conductor as much murdered them as if he had cut their throats himself on Boston Common.”²³ Colonel James Abercrombie, an officer involved in the battle, concluded that “a few of such Victories would Ruin the Army.”²⁴

Doubts were already filling the minds of British military leaders as to whether America could be regained. General Sir Guy Carleton, the commander of British forces in Canada, had doubts as early as November, 1775, saying, “I think our fate doubtful, to say nothing worse.”²⁵ The British military could no longer deny they were in a long, bloody war. The pleas for more enforcements were finally heard, and twenty-thousand regulars were promised to America by the Spring of 1776, but that number would not be fully met.²⁶ After the skirmish at Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the Americans would retake the lost land from Bunker Hill, General Lord Hugh Percy wrote to General Edward Harvey, “You may depend upon it that as the rebels have now had time to prepare, they are determined to go through with it, nor will the insurrection here turnout so despicable as it is perhaps imagined at home. For my part, I never believed, I confess, that they would have attacked the King’s troops or have had the perseverance I found in them yesterday.”²⁷ This problem was furthered complicated by low number of troops and high amount of coastline to protect. By the summer of 1776, Chief Commander William Howe was in control of 12,810 men, but they were in charge of protecting over three-thousand miles of coastline with only seventy-three ships. Howe would have to use those supplies carefully by fighting offensively, which entailed destroying American shipyards, warehouses, and vessels.²⁸

²³ George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats: the American Revolution through the Eyes of Those Who Fought and Lived It*. (New York: Da Capo, 1957), 63

²⁴ Gurber, 25

²⁵ Pearson, 132

²⁶ Gurber, 26

²⁷ Scheer, 43-44

²⁸ Gurber, 81

There was also great disagreement between the military leaders in America. General Howe was the Chief Commander, but General Germain and General Clinton did not agree with many of his decisions. Howe and Germain agreed to start the war in New York and quickly crush the Continental Army. Their motives were quite different, though. Howe hoped to bring the Continentals to negotiable terms while Germain simply wished to force the colonies to accept the Supremacy of Parliament. Nonetheless, these two men had great respect for one another. Germain wrote to Howe "I cannot take my leave of your Lordship without expressing my utter amazement at the decisive and masterly strokes for carrying such extensive plans into immediate Execution."²⁹ Clinton, on the other hand, thought Howe was making mistake after mistake in executing the war. In August 1776, Clinton wrote, "Lord Cornwallis was now immediately sent forward to take post at Flatbush. This was a measure I did not altogether approve, as I knew it would bring on skirmishing to our disadvantage, which happened as I expected the next day... for by this means the rebels were acquiring courage, confidence, and service."³⁰ After this battle, Clinton advised General Howe to let him follow American General George Washington into New Jersey because a great number of Washington's men had been killed or injured in battle, fallen ill from exposure, or had simply deserted. Howe denied the request, much to Clinton's dismay.³¹ Clinton believed "had our troops followed them close up, they must have thrown down their arms and surrendered; or had our ships attacked the batteries, which we have been in constant Expectation of being ordered to do, not a man could have escaped from Long Island."³² Next, Clinton would recommend attacking the Congress in Philadelphia, yet this too was denied. According to Clinton, either of these choices "in all probability would have deranged all their

²⁹ Ibid., 84-85

³⁰ Clinton, 40-41

³¹ Ibid., 55-56

³² Gurber, 114

affairs." Both of Clinton's requests would be denied despite pleas that "if some extraordinary reverse did not happen soon, there was good ground to hope the disaffected colonies... would be compelled to give up the contest, and that this campaign would consequently be the last."³³

Howe began to give up on the idea of reconciliation but agreed with Clinton the war would end soon after the summer of 1776. He admitted to Germain "as things now are, the whole seems to depend upon Military and Naval operations. The ensuing campaign may possibly be decisive."³⁴ This hope was shared by several of the British generals. General James Grant did "not look for another campaign" after winning New York. General Lord Percy wrote to General Germain "this Business is pretty much near over" in early September, 1776. Even Lord Cornwallis wrote hopefully to his wife "in a short time their [Continental] Army will disperse and the war will be over."³⁵ All these experienced generals would soon learn the American rebellion had only begun.

General Howe wanted to move his forces to Philadelphia in early 1777, but Clinton warned, "it was highly probable the instant the fleet was decidedly gone to sea, Mr. Washington would move with everything we could collect either against General Burgoyne or me and crush the one or the other, as neither would be very capable of withstanding such superior force." Again, Clinton's worries were ignored by his superior.³⁶ Clinton in fact had a very good sense of his enemy. Burgoyne was marching from Ticonderoga to meet with Howe's troops on the Hudson River. He had written Clinton that communication with Canada could not be kept safely, and he was going to move towards the southern army.³⁷ Burgoyne would divide his men to send a 1,500 man unit on a scouting mission to gather information on the location of the American

³³ Clinton, 55-56

³⁴ Gurber, 100

³⁵ Ibid., 115

³⁶ Clinton, 62

³⁷ Ibid., 72

forces. They encountered a unit of American forces led by General Horatio Gates. The Americans found out about the divided move and attacked the now 5,300 man British Army with an American force twice that size. Burgoyne quickly wrote to Clinton for assistance from New York City. Expecting quick aid, Burgoyne wrote to his forces to hold out until aid was received. After two weeks without aid, the British troops were short on supplies with winter weather soon approaching. Ten days later, Burgoyne felt compelled to surrender.³⁸ General Burgoyne wrote in 1777 after the loss at Saratoga, "the great bulk of the country is undoubtedly with the Congress, in principle and in zeal; and their measures are executed with a secrecy and dispatch that are not to be equaled. Wherever the King's forces point, militia to the amount of three or four thousand assemble in twenty-four hours."³⁹

After the loss at Saratoga, Clinton would try to resign his post. He wrote in his journal, "The campaign on the side of New York being thus, after so promising an opening, in a manner fruitlessly closed...I renewed my solicitations to leave to return home, as I saw that my continuance in America was not likely to contribute to the service of my army or the advancement of my own honor." Instead, Howe would be allowed to retire, and Clinton would be named Chief Commander of the Army in America. He wrote about the promotion, "The great change which public affairs had undergone, in Europe as well as America, within the last 6 months had so clouded every prospect of a successful issue to the unfortunate contest we were engaged in that no officer who had the least anxious regard for his professional fame would court a charge so hopeless as this now appeared likely to be."⁴⁰ Clinton would again attempt to resign in the summer of 1778, stating that the war was impractical, but the King would refuse his

³⁸ Lancaster, 220-225

³⁹ Scheer, 266

⁴⁰ Clinton, 83-85

request.⁴¹ That fall his mood was no better as he wrote, “Besides, the force I was now at the head of... was totally inadequate to any material object... on the contrary, the rebels were everyday getting strong in numbers, confidence, and discipline and occasionally supported by...French and Spanish fleet and army.”⁴²

Clinton would again try to resign in mid-1779 stating, “In short, without money, without provisions, ships of war, or troops sufficient to accomplish the services which seemed to be expected of me, or even the smallest intelligence from Europe for 3 months past, my situation was certainly not to be envied.”⁴³ London was still ever hopeful in the fight to keep America. Secretary of State Lord George Germain wrote to Clinton in August, 1779, “I am sanguine enough to flatter myself with the hope he [General Cornwallis] will find means to effect the reduction Charleston, and that the province will be speedily restored to the king’s obedience.”⁴⁴ On the contrary, Cornwallis would lose his fight in the South. He wrote in shame to Clinton in August 1780, “I clearly saw the loss of the whole province except Charleston, and of all Georgia except Savannah, as immediate consequences, besides forfeiting all pretensions to future confidence from our friends in this part of America.”⁴⁵ Germain was in much better spirits than Cornwallis though when he wrote again, “When the season admits of the general’s sending up a body of troops into Vermont, the inhabitants will declare for the King which, with the reduction of the Southern provinces must give the death wound to the Rebellion, notwithstanding any assistance the French may be able to give.”⁴⁶ It would be this last note that would prove Germain wrong.

⁴¹ Ibid., 99

⁴² Ibid, 106-107

⁴³ Ibid., 129

⁴⁴ Ibid., 415

⁴⁵ Ibid., 453

⁴⁶ Pearson, 371

Secretary Germain knew the war had to end. He wrote to General Clinton in January 1781, "our enemies are increased and the states of Holland are to be numbered amongst them. Every exertion must be made to bring the American war to a conclusion...the circumstances of this country cannot support a protracted war."⁴⁷ With the war at a stalemate at this point, Clinton was looking to make his final blow to the lengthy rebellion. He had sent out spies to track the motions of the American forces. Rebel forces had took position at Chatham in New Jersey and "seemed to threaten Staten Island."⁴⁸ Clinton wrote "It seemed to have been therefore unanimously agreed that the French troops should immediately join Mr. Washington on the North River" in New York.⁴⁹ Clinton kept his naval ships at New York to guard this important British stronghold. Three days later he received a message from a trusted spy in early August 1781 that read "The Chesapeake is the object- all in motion."

Clinton realized all too late he had been fooled. The true target was General Cornwallis in Yorktown, Virginia. In order to keep communications on the sea with Howe in New York, Cornwallis reversed and retreated to the coast of Yorktown. Instead of attacking New York, a small American unit would fight Howe to keep him from aiding Cornwallis while the main fleet of the French Navy and Franco-American troops headed for the Chesapeake to engage Cornwallis.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Cornwallis wrote optimistically to Clinton in September 1781, "I have no doubt if relief arrives in any reasonable time, York and Gloucester will both be in possession of His Majesty's troops." Relief would not be able to reach him, though. Clinton knew he would not be able to get aid to Cornwallis before the rebels with French aid had destroyed the fort. Clinton wrote to London saying "the tide of fortune with respect to the British

⁴⁷ Ibid., 370

⁴⁸ Ibid., 379

⁴⁹ Clinton., 305

⁵⁰ Lancaster, 331-333

interests in America was now very evidently beginning to turn against us.”⁵¹ Clinton wrote Cornwallis, “I am doing everything in my power to relieve you by a direct move...I shall persist in my idea of a direct move even to the middle of November, should it be Your Lordship’s opinion that you can hold out so long. But, if when I hear from you, you tell me that you cannot...I will immediately make an attempt on Philadelphia by land.”⁵² Cornwallis wrote in October, “I do not think any diversion would be of use to us...with such works on disadvantageous ground, against so powerful an attack, we cannot hope to make a long resistance...we continue to lose men very fast.”⁵³ Cornwallis would have to write Clinton in only a few days, “I have the mortification to inform Your Excellency that I have been forced to give up the posts of York and Gloucester and to surrender the troops under my command by capitulation, on the 19th instant, as prisoners of war to the combined forces of America and France.”⁵⁴ Clinton would again ask to resign his post, and this time his wishes were granted. Germain wrote him in early 1782, “I have the pleasure to inform you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to comply with your request. And I am to signify to you His Majesty’s pleasure that you embark for England the first convenient opportunity.”⁵⁵ The loss of Yorktown would be the last real battle of the American Revolution, although a final peace treaty would not be signed for two years to come. Nonetheless, the highest military officials in the war admitted Yorktown had been the final blow. Britain had lost America.

⁵¹ Clinton., 376

⁵² Ibid., 577-78

⁵³ Ibid., 580-581

⁵⁴ Ibid., 583

⁵⁵ Ibid., 595

The War from the Perspective of British Political Leaders

The history between Great Britain and her colonies in North America was very rocky in the years leading up to the American Rebellion. From 1756-1763, they had fought alongside one another against the French in the Seven Years' War, but after this war relations between the two peoples became strained. Some colonists began to call for literal representation in British Parliament, not just the virtual representation through spokespersons. Some wanted to send actual colonists as members of Parliament to guarantee the needs of the colonists were met. Many British believed this was not necessary. Parliament member Thomas Whatley said Parliament "virtually" represented colonists the same as it did for all women and most men who had no direct input towards the selection of Parliamentary members. He wrote, "all British subjects are really in the same [condition]; none are actually, all are virtually represented in Parliament; for every member of Parliament sits in the House, not as Representative of his own constituents, but as one of that august Assembly by which all the Commons of Great Britain are represented."⁵⁶

Others sympathized with America's call for actual representation. Even the Irish, who were viewed as well beneath their British brethren, received representation in their own Parliament in Dublin. There was also precedent for such a case for giving representation to a people. In the 1500s, the people of Chester demanded and then received representation in Parliament under Henry VIII, but those who sympathized with the Americans, the liberal Whigs, did not have a large enough majority to grant the request.⁵⁷ Adam Smith, the famous Scottish author of the *Wealth of Nations*, argued that the colonies should be taxed but also receive literal

⁵⁶ Eliga H Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2000), 119

⁵⁷ John Chester Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 221

representation in Parliament.⁵⁸ King George wrote to Lord North that if he gave into the colonists' demands for representation it would seem "so like the Mother Country being more afraid of the continuance of the dispute than the colonies and I cannot think it likely to make them reasonable; I do not want to drive them to despair but to submission."⁵⁹ The King and his ministry members decided it was not time to give representation the colonies because it would make it look as though the mother country was giving in to her colonies, and the pride of English leaders could not allow that.

After the long and costly war with France, Britain needed to raise revenue to help defend her newly won lands. In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act which imposed a tax on almost all written material and goods, from newspapers to playing cards. Colonists were infuriated by the new high taxes. Britons, on the other hand, believed it only fair that the American colonists should bare some of the burden of supporting the mother country. The war was fought to protect English settlers from the hated French. Was not the war fought on behalf of the colonists? Is it not reasonable they should therefore help pay for their own protection? Questions like these caused some to be offended by the colonies' hostility to the taxes. Soame Jenyns, a member of the Board of Trade, wrote, "can there be a more proper time to force [the colonies] to maintain an army at their expense, than when that army is necessary for their own protection, and we are utterly unable to support it?"⁶⁰ The Marquis of Carmarthen took it a step further. He viewed the colonists as little more than workers for Britain. He wrote, "we sent them to those colonies to labour for us... For what purpose were they suffered to go to that country, unless the profit of

⁵⁸ Miller, 223

⁵⁹ Peter Whiteley, *Lord North: the Prime Minister Who Lost America*. (London: Hambledon, 1996), 147

⁶⁰ Gould, 116

their labour should return to their masters here?"⁶¹ New taxes would be placed on the colonies for the next ten years.

The greatest resistance to the taxes would come in 1773 with what became known as the Boston Tea Party. A group of Boston colonists led by Samuel Adams dumped 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor in resistance to the new Tea Tax. A Cabinet meeting was soon held in London where it was agreed "in consequence of the present disorders in America, effectual steps be taken to secure the dependence of the colonies on the mother country."⁶² Charles Van, a member of Parliament, said in response to the Boston Tea Party, "I am of opinion, you will never meet with that proper obedience to the laws of this country until you have destroyed that nests of locusts" in Boston. Former Governor of Massachusetts Thomas Hutchinson assured the King and Parliament that with strict legislation against America there would soon be "speedy submission."⁶³ As early as 1768, Secretary of War Lord Barrington had known Boston was the center point of American rebellion. He wrote to Sir William Draper:

The present commotions at Boston are such as we see almost everyday in our own country: in both there are always men who prefer their own interests to the obedience which every good subject owes to the laws, and factitious people who avail themselves of every clamour which arises... For a time the laws are without efficacy, unless supported by a proper degree of legal force; when such a force appears at Boston, I am persuaded the magistrates will be easily enabled to do their duty and wholesome example will secure future obedience to the laws in all parts of America."⁶⁴

Lord Fredrick North, the Prime Minister of Britain, agreed when he said "the truth is that too great leniency of this country [Britain] increased their [colonists'] pride and encouraged them to rebel."⁶⁵ The Coercive Acts were passed in response to the Tea Party. Lord North said in

⁶¹ Miller, 206

⁶² Whitely, 138

⁶³ Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels The American Revolution Through British Eyes* (Boston: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 24

⁶⁴ Gould, 121

⁶⁵ Jeremy Black, "War With America." *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 230

response to relations with America, “however necessary and agreeable a reconciliation with America might be, as no terms had been offered by America, England would not submit first.”⁶⁶ North refused to think about compromising with the colonies until they fully and formally acknowledged the supremacy of Parliament. Others, like the Liberal Whig Edmund Burke, opposed the Coercive Acts because by closing Boston Harbor and shutting down Boston’s Assembly, England was contradicting the very freedom it preached.⁶⁷ While some would sympathize with the colonists, most would agree such behavior must be punished. Since no formal recognition was offered, war was now the only real answer.

Edmund Burke was the most famous person to resist war with America from the beginning. He believed fighting with the colonies to keep them part of the country was counterproductive. He argued that by breaking the people and destroying the land, war would only further alienate the colonists from British interests. He also greatly agreed with their desire for freedom and liberty which he called “the only advantage worth living for” and people become “suspicious, restive, and untractable [sic] whenever they see the least attempt to wrest from them by force.” He summed up his opinion in March, 1775, before Parliament when he said:

But I confess considering force not as an odious, but a feeble instrument for preserving a people so numerous, so active, so growing, so spirited as this, in a profitable and subordinate connection with us. First, Sir, permit me to observe that the use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed which is perpetually to be conquered.”⁶⁸

Burke was not fully counting America already lost, but he knew war was not the answer. He believed to keep the American colonies of England they must make it in the colonies’ best interest to do so. Even if America was momentarily conquered, she would most surely rebel

⁶⁶ Whiteley, 145

⁶⁷ Burke, *Selected Writings*, 192

⁶⁸ Edmund Burke, *Burke’s Speech on Conciliation with America* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 23-25

again. He also argued fighting a war over taxes was meaningless. According to Burke, taxes are meant to bring in revenue to a country, but a war will cost money, much more so than the taxes which are being fought over. He believed it to be much more practical to again lower taxes than risk losing millions more in a costly war.⁶⁹ Despite his logical arguments and spirited speeches, Burke was in a small minority, especially during the early years of the war. England would try to regain her colonies by force.

Could the great British army be defeated by a group of untrained rebels? This question received a wide range of responses in the years before and during the American Rebellion. Lord Charles Lee wrote to Edmund Burke in December, 1774, "if I have any judgment the people of New England at this day, more calculated to form irresistible conquering armies, than any people on the face of the globe."⁷⁰ Others denied the resistance in America would ever turn to true war. Lord Sandwich said to the House of Lords in 1775, "They [Americans] are undisciplined cowardly men... believe me, my lords, the very sound of a cannon would carry them off... as fast as their feet could carry them."⁷¹ A similar opinion was held by House of Commons member Richard Rigsby who asserted, "The Americans will not fight. They will never oppose General Gage with force of arms."⁷² These men, and many like them, never dreamed this group of rebels, who they believed were a very small minority of the population, would ever truly fight. Within two weeks, both Sandwich and Rigsby were proved very wrong with the battles of Lexington and Concord. Not only would the colonists fight, but they would also win against the British regulars. The unruly mob would defeat the great British Army. Lord Percy commented on the change of events. He somewhat jeered at previous comments in Parliament when he said after

⁶⁹ Edmund Burke, *Selected Writings* 193

⁷⁰ Whitely, 133

⁷¹ Michael Pearson, *Those Damned Rebels: the American Revolution as Seen through British Eyes* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 57

⁷² Pearson, 58

Lexington and Concord, "Whoever looks upon them as an irregular mob will be much mistaken. They have men amongst them who know very well what they are about...nor are several of the men void of a spirit of enthusiasm."⁷³ King George, who would ever be optimistic about the war, said after the loss, "I therefore hope you will not see in this a stronger light than it deserves."⁷⁴ Others were already starting to doubt the ability of England to conquer America. One Parliament member said if Britain did lose the war she would "revert to her primitive insignificance in the map of the world," possibly even be overtaken by France or Spain.⁷⁵ Edmund spoke to this when he warned it was better to concede greatly to their brethren in the colonies than face conceding to a foreign offense and the longer England waited to compromise with America, the higher the likelihood France would intervene on the side of America.⁷⁶

War had come. There was no denying it after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Britons had mixed feelings towards the new war. King George III said to Parliament in November, 1776, the colonists who had once enjoyed "the Blessings of law and Liberty" had "fatally and desperately exchanged for the calamities of war and the Tyranny of their chiefs."⁷⁷ The Battle of Bunker Hill soon followed Lexington and Concord. Britain would claim a technical victory because the American forces would fall back, but suffered the greater losses. King George would still not be alarmed. He told Parliament, "I am clear as to one point that we must persist and not be dismayed by any difficulties that may arise on either side of the Atlantick."⁷⁸ After Bunker Hill, King George issued a Proclamation of Rebellion against the colonies, which was essentially a more formal declaration of war. House of Commons member

⁷³ Pearson, 82

⁷⁴ Ibid., 109

⁷⁵ Miller, 219-20

⁷⁶ Burke, *Selected Writing*, 189-190

⁷⁷ Troy O Bickham, *Making Headlines: the American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 2009), 98-99

⁷⁸ Whiteley, 157

Charles James Fox, a vocal opponent of Lord North's government, wrote "I cannot consent to the bloody consequences of so silly a contest about so silly an object, conducted in the silliest manner that history...has ever furnished on instance of, and from which we are likely to derive nothing but poverty, misery, disgrace, and defeat and ruin."⁷⁹ Edmund Burke agreed in his "Address to the King" which read:

We were always steadily averse to this Civil war, not because we thought it impossible that it should be attended with victory, but because we were fully persuaded that in such a contest, victory would only vary the mode of our ruin... WE cannot, therefore, agree to unite in new severities against the brethren of our blood for their asserting an independency to which we know, in our conscience, they have been necessitated by the conduct of those very persons who now make use of that arguments to provoke us to a continence and repetition of the acts which in a regular series have led to this great misfortune... Sir, we abhor the idea of making a conquest of our countrymen."⁸⁰

The war would turn in favor of Britain momentarily, especially in Canada. After the British victory at Ticonderoga in June, 1777, King George ran into his chambers yelling, "I have beat them, I have beat all the Americans!"⁸¹ Little did he know, within just a few months, Britain would face a major setback at Saratoga. Lord North was more realistic when he said, "My idea of American affairs is that if our success is as great as the most sanguine politician wishes or believes the best use we can make of it is to get out of the dispute as soon as possible."⁸² Both men, nonetheless, believed the war was reaching its end. In a most ironic way, days before the news of the British loss at Saratoga reached Europe, King George told Lord North he never believed the American forces could muster as many as ten-thousand regular troops and a few thousand militia. Almost foreshadowing the news of Saratoga, Fox said "the idea of conquering America was absurd."⁸³

⁷⁹ Pearson, 114

⁸⁰ Burke, *Selected Writings*, 217-227

⁸¹ Pearson, 241

⁸² Whiteley, 171

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 171-172

When word reached London of General John Burgoyne's loss at Saratoga, Lord North immediately resigned, but King George refused to accept it, seeing it premature and foolish.⁸⁴ North wrote a very strongly worded letter to the king advising, "the pride of your political friends and yourself stand in the way of everything that would be effective or indeed, have the appearance of proposition likely to be accepted in any part of America." The Duke of Grafton, who was a member of the Opposition to the ministry in Parliament, summed up public opinion upon hearing of the defeat at Saratoga: "the amazement of the whole nation was equaled only by the consternation they felt."⁸⁵ Lord North tried to reach a peace agreement with America after Saratoga. He met with Benjamin Franklin and two other ambassadors. The king was not enthusiastic about the meeting. He saw it as futile and worried it would anger his friends in Parliament to seem so weak.⁸⁶ The Prime Minister offered to end certain punitive acts such as the Tea Act and Coercive Act and promised no more revenue taxes on America. He also proposed a peace commission to meet with the American Continental Congress to possibly suspend all legislation concerning the colonies since 1763. Most Parliament members agreed that while this offer might have prevented the war, it was not enough to end it this late into it.⁸⁷ Also, scandal killed the proposition when negotiators were caught trying to bribe members of the Continental Congress.⁸⁸ After the success of Saratoga, the Americans would accept nothing but complete recognition as an independent country.

Lord North was growing weary of the war. He would attempt to resign several times during the war, but King George always refused to accept them. Lord North told a senior civil servant, William Eden, his desire was "to get rid of this damned war" but could neither convince

⁸⁴ Ibid., 172

⁸⁵ Lutnick, 108

⁸⁶ Whiteley, 173

⁸⁷ Lutnick, 123

⁸⁸ Whiteley, 175

the King to accept he could not take America by force or allow North to retire and wash his hands of it all.⁸⁹ It would be another four years until North was allowed to retire and five years until King George would finally admit America could not be taken by force. In March, 1778, the Prime Minister would again plead with the King to end the war and allow him to retire when he wrote, "peace with America, and a change in the Ministry are the only steps which can save the country."⁹⁰ Even the King showed the first signs of real concern once France formally entered the war in early 1778. He wrote to Lord North in March of the "faithless and insolent conduct of France" to enter this purely British war.⁹¹ He later admitted in November, with the growing naval war, "the misfortune is we have more to defend than we have ships ready to employ."⁹² Within a few months, though, King George had returned to his insistence that the war continue. He wrote North "Before I will ever hear of any man's readiness to come into office, I will expect to see it signed under his hand that he is resolved to keep the Empire entire and that no troops shall be withdrawn from thence [North America], nor independence ever allowed."⁹³

Faith in Britain's ability to win this war was wearing. Parliamentary candidate for Oxford, William Jones, wrote to his benefactress Lady Georgiana Spencer, "I fairly confess, that I rejoice, as an Englishman, in the success of America, that I detest the war from its beginnings to the hour, and that I think the form of government... which the American states have established, manly, sensible, rational, and as perfectly adapted to them..."⁹⁴ King George referred to this a most "dishonourable peace" with America many called for.⁹⁵ Despite many cries by advisors and members of Parliament, the ever proud George III would not hear a word

⁸⁹ Ibid, 175

⁹⁰ Lutnick, 124

⁹¹ Black, 231

⁹² Ibid., 236

⁹³ Ibid., 233

⁹⁴ Gould, 148

⁹⁵ Whiteley, 181

of compromise with the rebels. His pride and power were much too great. He was determined to win this war, maintain his colonies, and prove his position as a great leader in the world. He rarely wavered in his belief throughout the war that Britain was fighting a true and rightful war and that she would soon crush the rebellious Americans and reassert her power in the world. Perhaps this is why even after the last battle of the war was fought King George would not admit defeat for another two years.

Even after the disaster of Yorktown, King George gave a speech to Parliament saying the “diluted [sic] subjects in America” would soon return to “that happy and prosperous condition which they had formally derived from, a due obedience to the laws.” He asked for a “prosecution of this great and important contest.” Lord Germain reluctantly called for a continued and vigorous attack to subdue America. Lord North promptly got up from his seat in parliament to move away from Germain as a testament to his utter disagreement.⁹⁶ The worried Prime Minister wrote a letter to King George saying, “peace with America seems necessary, even if it can be obtained on no better terms than some Federal Alliance, or perhaps even in a less eligible mode. This is my opinion, which I have the honour of submitting before Your Majesty.”⁹⁷ King George wrote back to Lord North saying when “men are a little recovered of the shock felt by the bad news they will find the necessity of carrying on the war, though the mode of it may require alterations.”⁹⁸ He would refuse “the getting of peace at the expense of a Separation from America” well into 1782⁹⁹, well after no major battles were fought and a treaty was in most minds, only a matter of time. It was not until 1785 the King would agree to meet with a representative from America and give a formal recognition of independence. He admitted to John

⁹⁶ Ibid., 196-197

⁹⁷ Ibid., 198-199

⁹⁸ Ibid., 196

⁹⁹ Ibid., 198

Adams upon meeting, "I will be frank with you. I was the last to consent to the separation; but the separation having been made, I have always said... that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Pearson, 402

The War from The Perspective of British Newspapers and Pamphlets

Should the press be subjective? Should it simply state the facts as they appear with no opinions of the writers and editors? Does the press reflect public opinion, or does it mold public opinion? These are questions raised about the power and influence of the press. With the creation of the Guttenberg's printing press in 1440, the world would forever change into a more literate people where information could spread more easily and more quickly. Most would agree the press reflect the opinions of both its writers and its constituents. People often buy a specific newspaper due to their own political alliances. They will read a paper whose editors seem to be of the same opinion towards issues. This is especially true during political turmoil and war. It is during these trying times the political opinions of newspapers and their readers come through the most.

This political alignment shined brightest during the American Rebellion. Newspapers were the public source of information on politics, world affairs, the economy, and especially war. Even the vast public who could either not read or could not afford to purchase a newspaper could gather in places like coffee shops to hear the papers read and then enjoy discussion with other townspeople. Liverpool merchant Charles Goore wrote in a letter in January of 1775 "The coffee houses are now crowded waiting to hear the resolves of Parliament relative to the American affairs."¹⁰¹ The British newspapers depicted the outcome of the American Rebellion with their political association well known to their public. A reader of the *Salisbury Journal* wrote, "I believe there is not a person in this kingdom but is more or less interested in the present struggle between us and our American Colonists, and not many so totally divested of all concern for the events, as to take no side in it; but everyone seems to have attached himself to one of the

¹⁰¹ Bickham, 63

other.”¹⁰² The Opposition press was critical almost from the beginning, and the Tory press remained optimistic nearly throughout the war. After the embarrassing British loss at Saratoga, more papers which had generally considered themselves moderate and did not align with the Ministry or the Opposition began writing more consistently and more completely in opposition to the American Revolution.

The Opposition newspapers were all of the same opinion regarding the Ministry who served King George and Parliament: corrupt and inept. Many of them were Whigs who had fought for rights in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.¹⁰³ The Opposition press included papers such as: *The Evening Post*, *Public Ledger* and *Middlesex*. By 1776, the more moderate *Gazetteer*, *St James's Chronicle* and *Morning Chronicle* also joined the Opposition.¹⁰⁴ The *Gazetteer* switched to the Opposition because it feared the loss commerce from war with America, which was full of raw materials. It also distrusted of the use of Hanoverian mercenaries and hated the Ministry filled with the King's "favourites" who were resorting to bribes and corruption to guarantee a Parliament with no opposition to the King.¹⁰⁵ The *St. James's Chronicle* wrote March 15, 1775 a question and answer article ridiculing Parliament:

Q- What is the Royal Prerogative?

A- As much as it can get.

Q- Wherein lies the privilege of Parliament?

A- In the people's pockets

Q- How does a Modern Member of Parliament represent his constituents?

¹⁰² Ibid., 20

¹⁰³ Solomon Lutnick, *The American Revolution and the British Press* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1967), 77.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 61.

A- As doing as they did- selling himself¹⁰⁶

The Opposition saw Parliament as nothing more than a group of greedy men who had completely and fully forgotten their true purpose in representing the people. Also, the Opposition held complete disdain for Lord North. The *St. James's Chronicle* wrote in February, 1775, comparing him to a "School-Boy" who "cons his lesson [when] he cannot get it by Heart."¹⁰⁷ He was seen as a stubborn fool who followed the will of the King and other ministry leaders. Anti-Ministry opinions like this are what grouped the Opposition press together.

In the earliest onsets of the war, even the Opposition press was critical of the American colonists. They believed the Ministry would use its corruptive nature to further tarnish the image of the English mainland. The *St. James's Chronicle* wrote March 9, 1775, that by sending negotiators to America "with the fullest powers of Bribery..." it would put down the dignity of Parliament "at the Feet of seven and twenty Assemblymen in New York, for the single favor of ceasing to oppose."¹⁰⁸ The American Congress was seen as a small group of rebellious elites that did not represent the wishes of the masses and should not be treated as a legal body worthy of negotiations. Many Britons believed the American Congress was a group of "factious demagogues, whom if you could catch and hang, all would be quiet." The *Pubic Ledger* even went so far as to say if people like John Adams and John Hancock could be brought to England for trial the whole rebellion would cease, and there was no real need to look into the demands of the colonists because they were being exaggerated by such rebellious leaders.¹⁰⁹ *Lloyd's Evening Post* wrote April 3, 1775, against quenching the "indignant flame of British honour" by making any kind of concessions to the rebels. Later, in December that year, they asked readers "Could

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 71

¹⁰⁷ Bickham, 70

¹⁰⁸ Lutnick, 51

¹⁰⁹ John Chester Miller. *Origins of the American Revolution*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 219

the Americans still possibly have one Advocate amongst a rational people?" It concluded that "it was now necessary that the British Supremacy should shine forth its full lustre."

Some papers were much more insightful of the mindset in America, and tried to break the image of Congress portrayed in other papers. The *London Evening Post* warned in March 1774, "Some People have suggested an incoherent Idea, that the People of Boston were a partial Faction. Be it known to the Legislature of England, that is a Falsity- that all the Provinces are united in their Opinion and are determined to uphold the cause of America."¹¹⁰ The *St. James's Chronicle* echoed this in November 1774, "Government is determined never to relinquish her Right to taxation; and America is determined not to submit to Taxation; the consequence is, that a war between the mother country and the colonies will commence." Jacob M. Price wrote a well publicized pamphlet in 1774, "The Imperial Economy" in which he estimated the £2.649 million in exports to American and the £1.442 million in imports was far less than the estimated £14 million per year the war would cost. The public was shocked at the high cost difference which proved to be remarkably accurate.¹¹¹ The *Gazetteer* equally was looking at the big picture. It wrote in July, 1775, that concessions were needed to save business interests in the colonies which was much more important than a "punctillo of honour" and wrote if war began, to expect "French and Spanish treachery". An annoyed reader calling himself "A True Briton" wrote the *Gazetteer* after that publication and said any Briton willing to negotiate with the rebels "must lay down their arms, humbly beg the royal pardon, and submit themselves as in duty bound to the laws, and ordinances of the British legislature...and should answer it with his head on Tower

¹¹⁰ Bickham 68

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 67

Hill.”¹¹² No concessions would be made, though, and war was on the horizon for the mother country and her discontented colonies.

Most pro-government papers spoke of American colonists with little to no respect. The *Gazetteer* and *New Daily Advertiser* wrote in November, 1765, Americans have created a “crabbed race not very unlike their half-brothers the Indians for unsocial principles, and an unrelenting cruelty.” The papers continued their comparison by saying that giving Americans representation in parliament would be like letting a Mohawk sit beside an Englishman.¹¹³ The *Morning Post* called Americans “the scum or off scouring of all nations,” and The *Daily Advertiser* called them “a hotchpotch medley of foreign, enthusiastic madmen.”¹¹⁴ One Englishman wrote “I have always considered the colonies as the great farms of the public, and the colonists as our tenants, the American colonists as little more than a set of slaves at work for us, in distant Plantations one Degree only above the Negroes that we carry to them.”¹¹⁵ Joshua Steele wrote a paper, “An Account of a Late Conference on the Occurrences in America”, in 1766 where he wrote giving the colonies representation “would go so much against the stomachs of some of our countrymen, that it could never be got down.”¹¹⁶ Because Americans were viewed many levels beneath that of a “true” Englishman, public support stayed very low for giving the colonists representation in Parliament.

Loyal or Tory papers remained optimistic towards the war almost throughout its entire course. A few examples include the *General Evening Post* and *London Chronicle*. They were often filled with articles by Ministry leaders and Tory members of Parliament who were known for their support of the Ministry. *The London Chronicle* wrote February 20, 1766, almost a

¹¹²Lutnick, 51-53

¹¹³ Miller, 229

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 203

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 206

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 224

decade before the full scale rebellion, it is “neither fair nor honest” for colonists to refuse to pay taxes when “that army which defends them against savages” is paid for by taxation.¹¹⁷ Loyalists wrote since the colonies were being protected by their mother country, they should pay taxes willingly as any good citizen of Britain would. On this point, most Englishmen could agree. An article from 1769 reads “If Americans...would judge with candour, they would readily acknowledge that their brethren on this side of the Atlantic lie under much more pressing burdens than themselves.”¹¹⁸ The businessmen of England all paid taxes their American brethren did not. The lack of taxation was one of the great enticements in moving to the colonies and establishing business there. When colonists began rebelling against taxation, the Tory papers condemned them immediately. They saw no reason for the Americans to rebel against something the English had been doing for centuries.

Rumors of a growing American militia reached the British press by late 1774 through letters of colonists and government officials. The Opposition press focused on the emerging Colonial Army. The *Bristol Journal* wrote in March, “We are assured that almost every county in Virginia, Maryland... and Delaware have chosen their officers, and are learning the military exercises with the greatest diligence.” The *St. James's Chronicle* wrote in April a pro-Congress militia of 15,000 in Virginia alone had been raised, with Maryland and Pennsylvania following suit.¹¹⁹ Worries over French and Spanish aid were constantly on the minds of Britons. The *Derby Mercury* estimated France and Spain’s standing armies at 150,000 and 120,000, while Britain had only a 40,000 man army.¹²⁰ The difference was staggering to readers. The *Derby Mercury* tried to reassure its readers in September, 1776, when it promised some 10,000 loyalists had

¹¹⁷ Eliga H Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 119

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 119

¹¹⁹ Bickham, 68

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67

joined British forces under General Howe, but these estimates would prove to be greatly exaggerated.¹²¹

By the summer of 1775, over 30,000 troops were headed to America, which left little room to doubt that all out war was coming.¹²² While some Opposition publications may have resisted negotiations with America initially, they soon switched to full resistance to the war. The Whigs that filled these papers could sympathize with America because they saw many similarities between the colonists' demands and their own demands during the Glorious Revolution.¹²³ The *Evening Post* in April, 1775, referred to war with America as "unnatural, unconstitutional, unnecessary, unjust, dangerous, hazardous, and unprofitable."¹²⁴ The *Middlesex Journal* in both April and June 1775 predicted an American military win and independence from Britain because as the paper said, it was full of "absurdity and madness" to fight such a great war across the Atlantic with people fighting for their freedom.¹²⁵ This article was assuming the deep rooted motivation and homeland advantage of the Americans would insure a long, bloody fight they were destined to win. The *Evening Post* also agreed the Americans had reason to rebel. They relied on their political affiliation to guide their motivation. They attacked the "cowardly and treacherous" Ministry for passing cruel and inhuman laws on the colonies, and now that war was in sight, was putting British lives at risk.¹²⁶ Throughout the war, Opposition newspapers would continue to attack the king's ministers as corrupt, ignorant, and completely disconnected with the will of the British people and the colonists.

¹²¹ Ibid., 100

¹²² Lutnick, 74

¹²³ Ibid., 77

¹²⁴ Ibid., 59

¹²⁵ Ibid., 77-78

¹²⁶ Ibid., 59

The British military had no motivation in fighting this war, according to the Opposition press. The *Chester Chronicle* reported in September, 1775, that the enlisted sailors looked “spiritless and averse the service.” The *Evening Post*, *Morning Post*, and *St. James's Chronicle* all reported in September and November of 1775 great numbers of officers in England were attempting to resign to avoid being sent to America. Commanders in America were already asking for permission to be relieved of duty. The *St. James's Chronicle* later wrote April, 1776, “no less than nine general officers of superior rank, refused the command of the troops in America before General Howe accepted it.”¹²⁷ Whether it was hatred of leaving their homeland of England for a treacherous sea ride across the Atlantic to a foreign place to fight a deadly war or their secret support of the rebels themselves, it is obvious the British military suffered greatly from low morale, and the Opposition newspapers used this to fuel their anti-Ministry, anti-war rhetoric. Due to insufficient numbers of British troops, a shortage of two to three thousand by some estimates, and poor morale throughout the country, the British looked to Hanoverian mercenaries to fill their numbers. This in fact further lowered morale because most British citizens opposed using foreigners to fight a purely English war.¹²⁸ The English public had little respect for the outsiders interfering with what they saw as a civil war.

The Opposition continued to focus on their anti-Ministry stances after the rebellion began. The *London Evening Post* on May 4, 1774, compared General Gage's new appointment as military governor of Massachusetts to a Roman dictator and maintained that such action would forever injure relations with the colonies.¹²⁹ The Prime Minister, Lord Frederick North, received little to no respect from the Opposition press. The same can be said for George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department. The *Evening Post* wrote in March,

¹²⁷Ibid., 82-83

¹²⁸Ibid., 81

¹²⁹Bickham, 61

1776, that after “each blunder” in America, the two leaders did nothing but quarrel with one another, passing the blame between one another. The paper wrote a limerick, “When two such lads of mettle, cannot their business settle, Good people where’s the wonder, if England’s rent asunder.” This behavior between two leading Ministers further drew the distinct lines between the Opposition and the Tory newspapers. With each ministerial problem, the Opposition continued to use it as fuel to why America was lost to Britain. The *St. James's Chronicle* wrote sarcastically of the bickering among Ministers in August, 1776, when it said “no wonder the present Ministry are so successful at home and abroad when we consider what wonderful Harmony reigns among the Ministers and those they employ.”¹³⁰

The one thing the Tory and Opposition press agreed that without trade with England, the colonies would starve financially like “dutiful children” without a mother.¹³¹ Most people agreed if trade were stopped with America and the British Navy could successfully blockaded the ports in America, the colonies would be forced to surrender in a few months due to lack of supplies. The *General Evening Post* wrote at the beginning of 1776 that Britain had “with the great indulgence and patience of a parent, soothed, flattered, and even courted them to a reconciliation [holding] out the olive branch when she ought, perhaps, to have stretched for the rod of correction” to restore “the just authority of this kingdom.”¹³² Others continued to question America’s ability to support herself. The *Morning Post* wrote in August, 1776, that America had removed its “duty and allegiance which in honour and necessity they owe” to England.¹³³ James Macpherson, a famous writer of the time, published his pamphlet *The Rights of Great Britain Asserted Against the Claims of America* in October, 1776. In it he defended the supremacy of

¹³⁰Lutnick, 69

¹³¹Ibid., 85

¹³²Ibid., 52

¹³³Ibid., 75

Parliament, especially its right to tax the colonies through virtual representation. He attacked the “pretended arguments justifying rebellion.” He called the Declaration of Independence “folly” and full of “ignorance” that did not reflect the majority of American opinion. He said the country had been “misled” by “rabble.” The *Morning Post* wrote in March, 1777, a counter argument when it said all the “villainous designs” of the American Congress in the press had “at length sealed the lips of every republican on this side of the water.”¹³⁴ Macpherson also believed the colonies did not have the ability to finance a war and doubted any European state would come to their aid.¹³⁵ The press was full of opinions of people who saw the colonies as children deserving a good whipping from a parent. The *Morning Post*, though, wrote even without England’s manufactured goods, America would survive because it was such a large land mass with diverse landscapes which were “capable of producing everything so desirable in life.”¹³⁶ Others doubted America’s ability to finance a war or defeat the grand British forces. History would prove Macpherson and the others very wrong. America would eventually receive help from two of the strongest European powers, France and Spain.

The greatest shock of the war would come to England in the winter of 1777 with news of British defeat at Saratoga. The *Public Ledger*, which had always opposed the war, called King George III “a very lying prophet” for promising victory in “the next campaign” following Saratoga. The paper added how ridiculous this was when they said “fifty thousand veteran troops, have not in three years, been able to obtain secure possessions of fifty miles of land in America.”¹³⁷ The *Edinburgh Advertiser* described Lord Germain’s speech to the House of Commons telling them of the surrender by Burgoyne at Saratoga with “His Lordship’s speech

¹³⁴ Bickham, 98

¹³⁵ Lutnick, 76

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 120

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 110

struck the house with astonishment and such a gloom appeared on the countenance of every member, as might be supposed to have been settled on the countenance of every Roman senator, when the defeat at Cannae was announced in the Senate.”¹³⁸ Most of the Opposition press including *The Gazetteer*, *Packet*, and *Annual Register* all concluded in the winter following Saratoga that continuing the war was “national suicide.”¹³⁹ *The Gazetteer* talked of how General Howe in New York would fall just as Burgoyne. *The Public Advertiser* predicted the rebel victor of Saratoga, Horatio Gates, would soon take over New York and expected the news at “any hour.” *The London Packet*, *Ipswich Journal*, and other papers speculated that Philadelphia would soon fall to the rebels.¹⁴⁰

The Morning Post blamed the Canadian loss on the poor leadership of London and to General Howe specifically. It asserted that if he had moved some of his troops from Philadelphia to Canada in support of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, Britain would have won.¹⁴¹ Burgoyne shared in the blame of General Howe for the loss at Saratoga. He believed Howe “might well have spared” up to three-thousand men to aid at Saratoga, and if he had “the entire reduction of all the northern rebellious colonies would have ensued.” Unknown to either the press or Burgoyne, Secretary Germain had supported Howe staying in Philadelphia, so the ultimate blame lay with the leadership in London.¹⁴² *The Morning Post* praised British courage, leadership and magnanimity at Saratoga. It claimed the defeat was because of the great numerical advantage in troops by America. Ironically, this same paper had previously reported that the troop size of America was extremely small and could be crushed quickly and completely. *The Gazetteer* had perhaps the most violent response. It wrote the Ministers who had formulated the Canadian plan

¹³⁸ Bickham, 105

¹³⁹ Lutnick., 108

¹⁴⁰ Bickham, 106

¹⁴¹ Lutnick, 107

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 111-112

should justify his plans, and if he could not do so properly “his head should answer for his temerity.” The *General Evening Post* was unable to come up with an adequate reason why Britain would lose such an important battle, so they began printing the idea that American soldiers were using buckshot in their muskets which would injure more than one man at a time. The *Morning Chronicle* adopted the same idea and said American soldiers dipped their bullets in poison before shooting to ensure killing any man hit.¹⁴³ There was little to no basis for these accusations, but the public was so astounded by the defeat at Saratoga that the press tried to come up with anything to lessen the blow.

While General Howe was looked upon with complete disdain, the commander at Saratoga, General Burgoyne, was one of the few leaders who had near hero status even after his loss. After Saratoga, the Loyal press emphasized he had sustained two wounds before giving in to the out numbered force of over 32,000.¹⁴⁴ Howe was soon replaced with Sir Henry Clinton. Clinton would receive the same praise as Burgoyne from the Tory papers, yet nothing but ridicule from the Opposition. The *Chronicle* was so sure of Clinton’s victory in Charleston, South Carolina, that it reported the victory six weeks in advance.¹⁴⁵ This was not necessarily a good decision, because while Clinton would lay siege of Charleston, a previous attempt to take the city had failed miserably in 1776. Nonetheless, the Loyal press continued its praise of Clinton. Following his retreat from Philadelphia to New York, even the moderate *Morning Post* called it a “brilliant maneuver” to bring “immortal honour” but also “the most happy presage of future victories.” The paper was attempting to take a defeat and spin it into a military tactic to keep the public in support of the new commander. The *Evening Post*, on the other hand, wrote in complete disgust that “Sir Henry Clinton is to do wonders at the financial expense of all

¹⁴³Ibid., 111-112

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 107

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 158

Englishmen” and only give “the whale” of debt another “tub” to soak in.¹⁴⁶ It was after defeats like this the prejudices of each paper came through strongest. The Opposition would take a defeat as yet another piece of evidence of the poor leadership of the corrupt Ministry. The Loyal papers would take such a defeat and try to either point out good aspects of it or turn it into something in which it most probably was not.

Morale for a war often can be swayed by the charisma of its leaders, both in the military and the government. British newspapers showed almost no respect for its own military leaders, but ironically had great respect for the enemy general, George Washington. On hearing of Washington’s position as military commander of the colonies, *Gentleman’s Magazine* assured readers Washington was no Oliver Cromwell and was a firm believer in constitutional processes. Washington promised to resign as soon as hostilities ended. He was a man of “unimpeachable” character. Their expectations were both correct. Even though Washington would serve as the first President of the soon to be independent United States of America, he was no Oliver Cromwell in that he had attempted to refuse the post but felt the desires of his fellow Americans were more important than his personal desire to retire. He would serve his two, four-year, terms as President and then step aside in a time when he could perhaps have become a new monarch or dictator. *Scot’s Magazine* also pictured Washington as a man of sense and integrity, polite with dignity, and modesty in manners. Even after his defeat on Long Island, the *Annual Register* in England wrote in 1776 that he executed the war with great ability and performed the part of “no mean commander.” They were equally kind in their description of his victories. After taking over Boston, *Annual Register* wrote he marched “with drums beating, colours flying, and in all triumph of victory” while being received by the town as a deliverer.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 119

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 89-90

After the loss at Saratoga, the press realized Britain was suffering economically from the loss of raw materials her colonies had provided. In January, 1778, the *Westminster Journal* described that while financial trouble in America was meant to show Britain had weakened the enemy, it did little to alleviate the poor situation of England. Trade had slowed to nearly nothing, while threats of higher taxes from the growing national debt combined with the downward spiral of the stock market put England in as bad if not worse of a situation as her enemy.¹⁴⁸ By this time, Spain and France both had joined the American cause against Britain. This further hurt trade and increased the national debt to astronomical figures since Britain was now at war with her own colonies plus two of the strongest countries in Europe. The press was bleak regarding the economy. The *Courant* wrote in 1778 if the war continued for five more years, Britain would most certainly be on the brink of national bankruptcy.¹⁴⁹ The crown was financing an expensive, far reaching war, and the economy was in a state of recession. Taxes were at an all time high. Trade was almost non-existent. The stock market fell almost daily. All the press reported the falling stocks. The *Reading Mercury* wrote January 5, 1778 after talk of a French War, “within the last three weeks only, they have fallen almost 5 per cent.” A few days later, *Westminster Journal* wrote, “stocks fell again on Wednesday upwards of two per cent.” After a French War was fully realized, threat of French invasion of Malabar Coast in India caused East India Company securities to fall four per cent. By the beginning of 1778, the *Westminster Journal* wrote inflation was so high and the economy so bad, men were joining the military as their only option for survival. Others, according to the *Packet* in June 1778, were migrating to America.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 147

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 86

Merchants who were unable to trade their goods in Britain immigrated to America where they thought their fortunes would be higher.¹⁵⁰

By 1778, Britons were tired of war. The *Chronicle* wrote on January 31, 1778, if America could not be won in nearly three years of fighting, it could not be done. Its readers agreed, and one wrote in that an accord binding British and American interest together as independent and sovereign states was the answer.¹⁵¹ In February 1778, the *Annual Register* reported Lord North was planning a bill to the House of Commons to repeal most of the Coercive Acts, suspend Parliament's right to tax the colonies, and create commissioners to negotiate with the American Congress "as if it were a legal body." This bill was met with "a dull melancholy silence" with looks of "astonishment, dejection, and fear overclouded the whole assembly." The legislation passed the House, but due to the British evacuation of Philadelphia, Congress believed it had the upper hand and rejected any negotiations less than recognition of independence and removal of all British forces.¹⁵² Israel Mauduit wrote a pamphlet named *A Hand Bill Advocating American Independence, inspired by the English Ministry*. He defended North's bill and said with French support, America could not be won. He said despite loss of the colonies, free trade capitalism would cause America to still be under English political and economic influence. He said the longer the war lasted, the more American would begin to favor trade and influence from the French, a thought that would disgust and worry any good Englishman. He believed this alone was reason to try to end the war and begin friendly relations with the new country.¹⁵³

Adam Smith, the famous author of the *Wealth of Nations*, admitted in 1778 that even if England won the war, it should not keep America as a colony but set up a federation because

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 148

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 123

¹⁵² Whitely, 174-175

¹⁵³ Lutnick, 125-126

nothing else would keep “to the prosperity, to the splendor, and to the duration of the [British] empire.”¹⁵⁴ The *Evening Post* wrote in October 1779 “after having lost the best part of four regiments, the British had gained no object, but lost time. The mode of carrying on a war, at *three thousand miles distance*, must in the end ruin the richest and most populous country in the world.”¹⁵⁵ A pamphlet written in 1780 summed it up in saying, “Let us not any longer amuse ourselves with the thoughts of the conquest of America. She has now acquired experience; she is assisted by powerful nations, and the people look no longer towards Britain.”¹⁵⁶ For most of the Opposition and moderate newspapers, the war was over. They knew the war could not be won. The war would nonetheless continue until 1783, two years after another embarrassing loss, Yorktown, would deny anyone the possibility the mother country could regain control of her child like colonies. The Earl of Strafford, Horace Walpole wrote, “Will such disgraces have no consequences? Is not America lost to us?”¹⁵⁷ Britain would formally sign the peace treaty giving freedom to America on September 3, 1783.

¹⁵⁴ Miller, 223

¹⁵⁵ Lutnick, 149

¹⁵⁶ Gould, 149

¹⁵⁷ Bickham, 243

Conclusion

In general, the opinions in Britain fighting to regain her rebellious colonies received high praise in the beginning. Most of the military officials were confident if the early skirmishes could be won, the rebels would cease. While the British did win the early battles, they were narrowly won at great cost. The momentum of the rebel forces was stronger than anticipated. The political leaders in England were initially very optimistic about the war. Edmund Burke was the only strong opponent of the war in the early days. The Opposition press quickly decided it would write against war with America, but the Tory press maintained its insistence on regaining the colonies at all cost.

As the war dragged on, certain leaders such, as General Clinton, realized the longer the war lasted, the less likely it was that Britain could ever regain her colonies. The colonies had become much too united in their insistence on independence. Likewise, government officials in England were losing hope, especially after the Battle of Saratoga. Many Parliamentary and Ministry leaders, even Prime Minister Lord North and Secretary of State Lord Germain, would advise King George to make peace with America. His pride would not have it. Immediately after the news of Saratoga hit the press, the Opposition papers called continuing the war "suicide." The Tory press created various excuses for the loss, including numerical advantage of the Americans, the maneuvers used by the British and baseless lies about the tactics used by the Americans.

After the loss at Yorktown, in 1781 under the Franco-American alliance, Britain would not fight another meaningful skirmish. Formal peace would not come until September 3, 1783. Even so, the stubborn King George III would refuse to meet with American representatives until

1785. Nonetheless, America was an independent state as of 1783 and the "Great Experiment" under a democratic nation would begin.

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