

1964

The loss of South Carolina to the British in 1780: a threat to America's independence

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THE LOSS OF SOUTH CAROLINA TO THE BRITISH IN 1780:
A THREAT TO AMERICA'S INDEPENDENCE

by

Allan Goldman

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Faculty

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Lehigh University

1964

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 23, 1964
Date

George Kyte
Professor in charge

May 25, 1964
Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. John Cary, Head of the Department of History at Lehigh University, for his efforts in reading, criticizing, and offering helpful suggestions for the organization of this paper. My special and very sincere thanks go to Dr. George Kyte, under whom I worked, for his untiring work on my behalf in criticizing and correcting this thesis, making possible its completion.

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PREFACE

The American struggle for independence was the longest war in the history of our country. Out of this struggle emerged a new nation, short on power, but resolute in will. The final independence was hard won, and from the first shot at Lexington to the British surrender at Yorktown, a series of military engagements, from formal battles to light skirmishes, were fought. The war raged from Quebec to Georgia, with all 13 Colonies involved.

With the war going poorly for the British in the North, attention was focused on the Southern Colonies. It was here where some of the bloodiest battles of the war were fought; it was here where, for a period of close to a year, the American hopes of independence were most seriously dimmed.

It was my intention in this essay to cover these eventful months in the history of this country, from the American rebuff at Savannah in October, 1779, to the resounding American defeat at Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, 1780. I have tried to examine the reasons for these American military failures, and also the reasons for the British successes during this period. I have tried to use as much documentary evidence as possible so that the reader may get a first-hand look at the bloody battles fought during this critical stage and an understanding of the theories and practices of warfare of the

eminent leaders (on both sides) in the southern area. I have put emphasis on the siege and fall of Charleston, and on the American disaster at Camden, areas terribly critical in the history of the United States, and not covered extensively before.

The first chapter deals mainly with background material concerning earlier British expeditions in the South, from the British rebuff at Charleston in June, 1776, to the American rebuff at Savannah in October, 1779. In the second chapter I have tried to show the vast British operations and preparations to lay siege to Charleston in February and March, 1780, and to explain Vauban's theory of siegecraft. The third chapter treats of the actual siege of Charleston and its repercussions. In the fourth chapter I have attempted to acquaint the reader with the bitter skirmishes and battles which occurred between Patriots and Loyalists during the months of May, June and July, following the fiasco at Charleston and just prior to Camden. The last chapter tells of the American disaster at Camden and the temporary end of American resistance in South Carolina. In my concluding pages I have tried to point out the dire state of affairs in the Colonies in August, 1780, and at the same time show the high point reached by the British.

ABSTRACT

Today we are living in a rapidly changing world. The emerging of a multitude of new nations, each aspiring to create and perpetuate a national identity, is part of a tradition begun with America's struggle for freedom some 180 years ago. The war for independence in the United States was a rebellion against colonial oppression and not unlike the rebellions that have created and are still creating many new nations in our time. These countries will, in time, look back into the annals of their respective histories and point to the bitter crises by which they gained their freedom. Many Americans today, at least those who live within the confines of the original 13 Colonies, can now talk happily about the early days of struggle just as those in other countries will talk tomorrow.

Revolution and crisis are inseparable. In every rebellion there is at least one crisis, and often there are many more. This story deals with a series of crises that occurred mainly in the latter part of 1779 and most of 1780. The place was the South, specifically South Carolina, and for the colonists this period of American history was the most disheartening.

The British were having their difficulties in the North, where concerted efforts of resistance by the colonists helped to dispel the Crown's thoughts of a fast and thorough suppression. With this stiff resistance by the Patriots in the North, the British decided that a show of power in the southern states would restore confidence in their military

prowess and eventually break the resistance in the North.

The British very nearly achieved their goal, and when the battle of Camden, August 16, 1780, was terminated, the Americans were closer to total defeat than at any other point during the Revolutionary War. The disastrous defeat at Camden, coupled with the earlier American disaster at Charleston, placed the British at the peak of success. They were then in a position to consolidate their strength for a move northward. For the Americans there was nothing but an empty treasury, a semblance of a Continental Army, and a great deal of disillusionment.

Sir Henry Clinton, commander of the British forces, who had failed in an earlier attempt to seize Charleston, besieged that city for six weeks, and on May 12, 1780, it fell. Lord Earl Cornwallis, Clinton's successor in the South, routed his adversaries at Camden, to secure the British hold in that state. Savannah had been taken earlier and held against a combined Franco-American assault in October, 1779. Tory-Patriot encounters, bitter and vindictive, filled the gap between these bigger battles.

This period of crisis in the history of the United States is now like a prologue, and the newer nations of the world may some day say, "So it was then with them, so it has now been with us."

INTRODUCTION

During the first stage of the American Revolutionary War most of the military action occurred in the North, in the New England and Middle Atlantic States and in Canada. Since British colonial policy was initially most vehemently opposed in Massachusetts, it was logical that George III would try to quell the rebellion at the place of its origin.

Much to their chagrin, the British discovered that the suppression of the rebellion in the Boston area was not going to be an easy matter despite their formidable display of military might. Spurred by such patriots and propagandists as Samuel Adams, John Hancock and James Otis, the Americans began to close ranks against British tyranny. Only in New York, among the Northern Colonies, and then only at the outset of the Revolution, was there any evidence of strong sympathy toward the Crown.

In the early skirmishes and battles the Americans, despite great odds, fought well enough to impress Whitehall and the British General Staff. Bunker Hill had been but a Pyrrhic victory for the King's troops, for any idea of British invincibility had been quickly dispelled by American efforts there. Subsequent Rebel victories at Saratoga and Trenton alarmed the minds at Whitehall sufficiently to alter their plans for the conduct of the war.

Conduct of military operations for the British was lodged,

basically, in the hands of four generals: Sir William Howe, John Burgoyne, Sir Henry Clinton, and Lord Earl Cornwallis. These men were responsible for planning the strategy and the tactics of Redcoat troops within the Colonies during the Revolutionary War, with first Clinton, and later Cornwallis, in charge of the Southern campaigns. Generals George Washington, Horatio Gates and Nathanael Greene were their American counterparts, with the latter two playing important roles in the Southern campaigns. (While Commander-in-Chief of the American forces, Washington was not actively engaged as a participant in the Southern conflict but kept in close touch with his subordinates there through the usual channels of military liaison.)

The second stage of the war saw a British shift of emphasis toward the South. By 1778 British strength in the North had deteriorated and American opposition was still strong. Continued British disappointments in Northern campaigns forced the hand of the men at Whitehall: Howe was replaced by Clinton as Commander-in-Chief of British forces, in 1778, and the military minds of the Crown turned their attention southward.

Lord George Germain, British Colonial Secretary, proposed to make vigorous thrusts into Georgia and the Carolinas: there the Colonists would offer much less resistance than in the North. For one thing, the geography of the area was such

that organized attempts at rebellion would be much more difficult to accomplish than in the North, because of the prevalence of wilderness and swamp, and the general sparsity of the population. Communications, the British thought, would be so poor that by the time the Colonists could effect organized resistance the area would be under British control. Secondly, the men at Whitehall and the British commanders in the field believed that Loyalist sympathy in the South was extremely strong - optimism that was to prove costly during the later years of the war. Loyalists in the South, the British believed, would help bring a speedy end to any rebellion there, and once the South was firmly in the hands of the Crown, a renewed effort could confidently be made to regain the stubborn Northern areas, where limited military action would, of course, continue even during the major push in the South.

As early as June 28, 1776, Clinton, along with Admiral Sir Peter Parker, had led an expedition in an isolated attack on the Americans at Sullivan's Island. Rebuffed, the British had returned to the North. Now, in 1778, the French, still smarting from their defeat by the British in the French and Indian Wars (1756-1763) and having helped American privateers on the high seas, signed a treaty with the Colonies, and were poised for further action against the British. Large elements of the French fleet had been stationed in the West Indian archipelago, and the British, fearful of a disruption of their

time schedule, stepped up their Southern incursions, hoping for telling victories before the French and the American forces could be welded into an efficient unit. Also, with the new treaty in effect, British naval superiority would be seriously threatened in this area.

The British gained their first real foothold in the South in December 1778, when Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, heading an expeditionary force of some 3,500 men, captured Savannah. A month later Augusta was taken in the name of the King. Then, General Benjamin Lincoln, who had succeeded General Robert Howe as commander of the American forces in the South, tried vainly to drive the enemy out of Georgia, his failure resulting from a combination of American incompetence and British determination. In October 1779 the Americans made their last major attempt, in some three years, to dislodge the British from Georgia. The decisive defeat of the Rebels at Savannah consolidated the British hold on that state.

At this point British operations in the South were only beginning, for they had tasted the blood that brings the sharks. Flushed with success, they turned their attention on Charleston, the plum of the South. An isolated attempt to reduce that city in 1776 had ended in defeat for the British and personal humiliation for Clinton. Now, four years later, Sir Henry was in a position to redeem himself. Charleston was the great port city

of the South. Converting this metropolis to a British base of operations had an importance beyond the mere appeal of a beautiful idea. South Carolina was rich in the production of rice and indigo, staples valuable to the Crown. As the heart of South Carolina the city was ideally located to be a center of operations for carrying out further suppression of any rebellion within the province, and its harbor would make a fine home port for part of the British Navy.

Moving accordingly, Clinton left New York in December, 1779, to implement the British time schedule for conquering the South. The only real difficulty the British encountered in their move toward the destruction of Charleston was the weather: coastal storms in late 1779 and early 1780 hampered troop movements, and the miasmal weather of the region caused a number of Redcoats to fall ill. But within three months, by formal siege, the British systematically captured Charleston and turned it into a Royal stronghold. By May 12, 1780, when Charleston formally fell, Clinton had overwhelming military strength; the Americans, plagued by indecision and an insufficient number of willing fighting men, surrendered meekly, their defeat a serious blow to the American cause and perhaps the greatest victory for the British in the entire Revolutionary War, gaining for the victors one of their most desired military objectives with minimum losses and with a tremendous boost in morale.

The demoralizing Rebel defeat at Charleston sent many Americans into the British camp. The policy of Clinton, and later Cornwallis, was to grant lenient paroles in the hope that such leniency would turn more and more Rebels into Royalists. However, when Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton crushed Colonel Buford's Virginia Regiment near the North Carolina border, a reaction set in to the turncoat trend. Tarleton was not a proponent of parole leniency, and his brutal actions, based on policies contrary to those of Clinton and Cornwallis, alienated rather than pacified many American soldiers.

Though Tarleton's exploits against Buford almost completely negated the American Continental Army in South Carolina, partisan warfare continued in that state in the summer of 1780, carried on by local militia in the face of the dim American hopes in the province at the time. Men like Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens gathered what Rebels they could and marched against the numerically superior British forces. The British, harassed by guerilla attacks on their outposts in South Carolina, nevertheless planned to invade North Carolina and consolidate their strength in the South.

With American Continentals non-existent in South Carolina after the debacle at Charleston, Congress and General Washington had to act to correct the distressing situation in the South. Troops had to be raised, and quickly, to stop the steady British gains there; and before the South could be

reconquered and the war brought to a successful end, men like Gates, Greene and the Marquis de Lafayette would all become deeply involved. In a new move, Congress appointed Gates to be commander of the Southern forces, replacing the defeated Lincoln. This proved to be an unwise choice in view of the fact that Gates was later branded a "coward" and an "incompetent" by his peers.

In the regrouping of forces some 2,000 Delaware and Maryland Continentals were sent to the South, along with various militia groups from Virginia and North Carolina. On August 16, 1780, the Americans met their adversaries in direct confrontation at Camden, South Carolina, and were soundly trounced. The humiliating defeat temporarily ended any form of organized resistance in the province.

Gates was replaced by Greene as commander of the Southern forces, becoming the fourth such replacement within a year and a half. The British were now at the height of their success, for during a period of eighteen months they had taken and defended both Georgia and South Carolina, achieving a feat they had failed to duplicate anywhere in the North. Their plan for the conquest of the South had moved smoothly; their smashing victories in the area would now serve only to facilitate further military operations in the North. They had, however, made at least one mistake in the South in expecting more Tory support than was forthcoming. This overconfidence

would later prove to be costly.

Eventually the Americans regained what had been lost in the South, but not before the future of the country hung by a thin thread during that eighteen month period of British successes and American defeats, culminating at Charleston and Camden.

CHAPTER I

The War Shifts to the South

The Revolutionary War was in its initial stage when the first British offensive was launched in the South. The British, wanting to put Loyalist sympathy there to good use, decided to send a force to South Carolina in order to re-establish the state as a Royal colony.

The belief of the British that loyal supporters would rally under the standard of the soldiers of the Crown was to some extent justified, for there were a considerable number of Loyalists in the back country of North and South Carolina, but these Loyalists did not come forward to help the British in the overwhelming numbers expected. For the good of the British cause far too many of the inhabitants of the Carolinas were of Scotch-Irish and German descent, people who vehemently resented the wealthy Tory planters and held grievances against the local royal government.

Partisan bands, led by Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter and Andrew Pickens, kept Patriot resistance alive in the swamp-and-pine-barrens country of the Carolinas. The British government had to contend with this resistance throughout the war in the South. In fact, during the period between the fall of Charleston, May 12, 1780, and the American defeat at Camden, August 16, 1780, these partisan bands were the only elements of resistance the Crown had to reckon with in the South.

With the idea of total victory solidly implanted in their minds, the British had sent General Sir Henry Clinton south to command the land forces in their thrust against Charleston. Clinton requested and received a task force that embarked from Cork, Ireland, and after a rough voyage against winds of gale strength arrived off the Carolinas at the end of April, 1776, with a formidable fleet of ships and troops¹.

Under the joint command of Admiral Sir Peter Parker and General Clinton, the British regrouped in May, ready for positive action against the Rebels. Clinton, dissuaded by Governor William Campbell, abandoned all plans for action in North Carolina and turned his attention toward South Carolina and the city of Charleston, the largest port south of Philadelphia, with a thriving trade of prime importance to the area. An important factor in Clinton's decision to concentrate his forces for an attack on Charleston was that impulsive Tories, though earlier defeated by the Patriots in a premature uprising, were said to be ready to take up arms in support of the King's troops. Sensing a golden opportunity, Clinton moved toward Charleston².

1 William B. Willcox, ed., The American Rebellion (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954), 23-24.

2 John C. Miller, Triumph of Freedom (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1948), 115-116.

General Charles Lee, who had once been a British officer, was assigned by Congress to command the American forces at Charleston. Though a man of some pomposity, Lee had a growing distaste for George III and England, and was respected by the Colonists for his efficiency and for his knowledge of military affairs. With the arrival of the British fleet off Sullivan's Island, June 4, 1776, Governor John Rutledge of South Carolina hastily sent a message to Lee, urging him to expedite his journey south. "For God's sake, lose not a moment," wrote the anxious governor.³

Rutledge had mustered a body of some 5,000 men, which was augmented by the 1,500 Continentals led south by Lee. This American fighting force of 6,500 troops seemed a formidable number, but only a few were destined to see any action.⁴ Early preparation for the defense of Charleston dragged along slowly. General Lee, though respected for his military experience, was an imperious individual thought by his subordinates to be something of a demon. Many of his early orders were either disobeyed or carried out in a perfunctory manner, and military insubordination under Lee might have led to dire consequences for the Americans had not Governor Rutledge intervened to invest full powers of command upon the general.

3 Major General Charles Lee, "The Lee Papers," Collections of the New York Historical Society, (New York, 1872), Rutledge to Lee, June 4, 1776, II, 53.

4 Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, 2 Vols., (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1952), II, 673.

Lee did not believe that Sullivan's Island was worth defending. He saw no way of retreat from the island, and if it had been entirely up to him, he would have pulled his forces back to Charleston itself. Governor Rutledge did not agree with Lee, and would not allow him to move his forces to the city. Colonel William Moultrie, commandant of Fort Sullivan, felt that the fort could be successfully defended and that retreat would not be necessary.⁵ Brimming with confidence, Moultrie estimated that for the defense of Sullivan's Island alone he had 1,000 men, with another 1,500 in reserve⁶ "not more that (sic) one mile and a half off."

Fortunately the views of Rutledge and Moultrie prevailed over Lee's, and Sullivan's Island was not abandoned. The British did not bother to land their troops but chose instead to be content with an exchange of fire between their vessels and the guns from the fort. Because of a difference of opinion between Parker and Clinton on what method of attack to use, the Americans were given time to strengthen their defenses, and with the passing of valuable time, British chances of victory waned.

The British had nine armed vessels and a complement of some 3,000 sailors and land forces. The Bristol and the Experiment were 50-gun ships; the Solebay, Active, Acteon, Syren, Friendship and the Thunderbomb carried 28 guns each; the

5 William Moultrie, Memoirs of the American Revolution, 2 Vols., (New York, David Longworth, 1802), I, 142.

6 Ibid, 143.

Sphinx had 20 guns.⁷ This was a formidable enough force to smash Charleston's defenses, and the outcome might have been disastrous for the Americans had not Parker and Clinton been in disagreement over the plan of attack.

The decisive encounter took place on June 28, 1776. Because Clinton did not land any soldiers, Parker, directing the entire attack, ordered his ships to begin bombarding Fort Sullivan at eleven thirty in the morning. The Thunderbomb, starting the cannonade, created cover for the Acteon, Bristol, Experiment and Solebay's attack upon the fort from closer range. Mortar bombs from the Thunderbomb landed in the heavy morass and soft palmetto logs inside the American fort, lodged and failed to explode.⁸

The battle raged throughout the day and on into the night. The Americans, despite the fact that they had not yet completed their defenses by the time the battle started, fought with vigor and a determination to win. Because they were short of ammunition,⁹ Moultrie ordered his officers to use it sparingly. The accuracy of the American fire compensated more than adequately for the shortage of ammunition. The Bristol and the Experiment were soon badly damaged, while the Acteon, Sphinx and Syren became ensnarled with one another, had maneuverability problems, and were rendered virtually useless for the course

7 Peter Force, ed., American Archives, Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America from the King's Message to Parliament of March 7, 1774, to the Declaration of Independence by the United States, 4th series, 6 Vols., (Washington, M. St. Clair Clark and Peter Force, 1837-1846), VI, 1208n-1210n.

8 Moultrie, op cit., I, 175.

9 Ibid, 178.

of the battle.

Moultrie had been positive the British would land troops on Sullivan's Island from Long Island, an adjoining body. He had deliberately rationed his ammunition to meet such an anticipated attack. But no such an attack was made because Clinton, cautious as usual, waited to see how the naval foray would progress against the fort. It was Clinton's failure to join Parker in a combined assault that led to chaos for the British.

By the time the firing had ceased at nine thirty that night, the British had suffered heavy casualties. Their losses, wounded and killed, were well over 200. Two vessels were heavily damaged; others had suffered serious damage. ¹⁰ The Acteon was set afire by her commander to avoid her falling into enemy hands. American losses were negligible, and American spirit throughout the battle was indomitable, as was shown by one Sergeant Jasper, who, risking his life to raise the fallen flag, shouted to Moultrie during the heat of the battle, "Colonel, ¹¹ don't let us fight without our flag!"

Though in time a tremendous reversal would occur, June 28 had been a glorious day for the South Carolinians. They had defended Charleston successfully against the might of the Royal Navy. American determination, embodied in such men as Jasper, Moultrie and Rutledge, and abetted by British hesitancy and indecision, was a major factor in this important victory.

10 Force, op cit., 1208n-1210n.

11 R.W. Gibbes, ed., History of the American Revolution, 3 Vols., (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1853-1857), II, 6-7.

Not only was the defeat ignominious for the British; it was also a matter of personal embarrassment for Sir Peter Parker, who had his britches forcibly removed from his body by a shot from the fort. The American victory, supplemented by lesser successes elsewhere, enabled the Colonists to divert English attention northward for some two years.

From 1776 to 1778, Charleston experienced a period of relative peace, and life continued at a fairly normal pace. Trade flourished, and the social life of this southern metropolis found itself revitalized. Though there was no open fighting, there were several fires and other acts of supposed sabotage, which Brigadier General Moultrie (promoted after Sullivan's Island) attributed to the zealotry of various Loyalists in the area.¹² With the families, friends and neighbors relatively secure, many eminent Charlestonians, such as Colonel Charles C. Pinckney and Henry Laurens went off to serve in the army commanded by General George Washington.

With the arrival of the Marquis de Lafayette and Baron de Kalb in Charleston in 1778, revolutionary feeling intensified. In a new constitution the Carolinians changed from British governmental terminology to American, as in changing the House of Commons into the House of Representatives, for example.¹³ Patriotic fervor, which was running high, was

12 Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and the People, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931), 253-254.

13 Ibid, 255.

beginning to sweep away the trappings of the old, colonial order in South Carolina.

When Burgoyne was defeated at Saratoga in 1777, the British once more focused their attention on the South. The men at Whitehall had become convinced by now that gradual acquisition of Rebel strongholds in the South would give the British army bases of operations for further - and victorious - expeditions in the area. Lord George Germain, colonial secretary, outlined the importance of taking Georgia and subsequently reducing the Carolinas. Such action, he thought, abetted by Tory support, would ultimately bring the Northern Colonies to their senses and back within the fold of the Crown. Germain also pointed out the importance of preventing the Southern planters from shipping their staples of rice, indigo and tobacco to Europe.

In renewing their plan to conquer the South the British had used sound logic. The New England patriots were implacable in their hatred of British control and were determined to fight hard to prevent its reintroduction in their tight little part of the Colonies. The situation in the South was different, however: the area was vast and the population was heterogeneous, two facts that created a weakness inviting British invasion and rule.

In December, 1778, a British expeditionary force - their first in the South since Charleston - arrived at the mouth of the Savannah River with the mission to subdue the city of

Savannah. In command of the King's troops was Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, escorted by a squadron of ships commanded by Admiral Parker. Not wanting to repeat the mistake made earlier by Clinton and Parker at Charleston, Campbell and the admiral worked harmoniously together in planning the reduction of the important river city. Using the warships Vigilant, Comet, Keppel and Greenwich to cover the land forces, the British began to disembark their troops. First a reconnoitering force scattered the Rebel defenders; then the main body of Redcoats went ashore. Gaining the necessary intelligence on the location of the main American army, now under command of Major General Robert Howe, the British moved inland.

The American forces, about half a mile east of Savannah, were expecting a British attack on their left flank. Campbell, finding a Negro who knew a path leading through a wooded swamp on the American right flank, made a diversionary move to the left that led the Rebels into believing the main attack would come from that direction. Eventually outflanked and surrounded, the Americans sustained heavy losses, and Savannah fell, on December 29, 1778. Some 450 men were taken prisoner by the British.¹⁴ Over 80 Americans were killed, 11 were wounded, and many were lost in the swamps. In comparison, British casualties were light, amounting to 3 killed and 10¹⁵ wounded.

14 Henry Dawson, Battles of the United States, by Sea and Land, 2 Vols., (New York, Johnson, Fry and Company, 1858), Campbell to Germain, January 16, 1779, I, 477-479.

15 Ibid, 477-479.

In January, 1779, Augusta fell before the British advance, and Georgia became a British stronghold. Sir James Wright resumed his duties as governor of Georgia early in 1779 establishing a British civil regime that would last for approximately three years.¹⁶

The Americans, stung by these two rapid defeats in the South, attempted to unite their forces for a series of counter-attacks. The first step was to replace Howe as commander in the South. His successor was General Benjamin Lincoln, a soldier of average military ability but a man who, like many of his compatriots, was eager to see the Americans regain a considerable amount of lost territory. Unfortunately his character, marked by a lack of initiative and general indecisiveness, was a contributing factor to southern fiascos to come.¹⁷

General Lincoln decided that, because of the growing British strength in Georgia, American incursions were necessary there. Accordingly, Lincoln hastened his troops to Purrysburg on the Carolina side of the Savannah River, where he was confronted by a British army across the river led by General Augustine Prevost, an adroit, resourceful soldier.

Among the commanders at Purrysburg was Brigadier General Moultrie who wrote from the encampment to the president of the senate of South Carolina, disclosing the low spirits of

16 John R. Alden, The American Revolution, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1954), 228.

17 George Bancroft, History of the United States, 6 Vols., (Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1876), VI, 252.

the troops and expressing concern about the meager number of soldiers available to him. His deep anxieties over the future of Georgia and South Carolina were evident in his plea for more generosity on the part of the South Carolina legislature: "for God's sake let not your legislative or executive economy border too much upon parsimony! Be generous to your militia, allow them every thing necessary to take the field; it is now¹⁸ time to open your purse strings; our country is in danger!"

Moultrie proved to be an excellent prognosticator, for within eighteen months the Carolinas were in the gravest of danger, with the fate of the entire South hanging only by a thread. The general's strong faith in the Militia was not shared, then or later, by many of his compatriots.

Two weeks after Moultrie had written his letter to Colonel Charles Pinckney, the Americans had scored two small but substantial victories over their adversaries. The first success took place at Beaufort, across the Savannah River from Purrysburg, where the Rebels with a small force met a contingent of British troops and sent them retreating. The Americans used only a few Continentals in this skirmish,¹⁹ and the odd aspect of the encounter was that the Rebels remained on open ground while the King's men took to the bushes. The mechanics of the event remain a rarity in the military tactics of the Revolutionary War.

18 Moultrie, op cit., Moultrie to Pinckney, January 10, 1779, I, 260.

19 Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, eds., The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six, 2 Vols., (Indianapolis and New York, Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1958), II, 1079.

The second military success occurred at Kettle Creek, where militiamen and Tories participated in the kind of pitched battle that, as will be seen as the war progresses, was marked by some of the war's bloodiest fighting. The Loyalists, surprised by Colonel Pickens, dispersed and fled within a short space of time. Many of the prisoners taken were hanged.²⁰

Now that American confidence was again on the rise, Lincoln felt that he was in a position to take the initiative. He sent out three different forces against the British - his main body - some 1,200 men, mostly militia - moving toward Augusta under the command of Major General John Ashe.²¹

Campbell, the British commander, learning that the Americans were approaching, evacuated Augusta and headed toward Savannah. At Briar Creek, with Ashe in close pursuit, Campbell destroyed the bridge behind him, and sent Colonel Mark Prevost around to the rear of the Americans, who were busily engaged in rebuilding the bridge. The green militia crumbled quickly before the British. The troops not captured by Campbell's forces disappeared into the swamps or returned safely to General Lincoln. Ashe, whose hasty departure seems to have set a precedent for others in similar commands, was among the group who made it back to Lincoln. The significance of the calamity at Briar Creek was that the encounter pointed

20 Ibid, 1079.

21 Walter Clark, ed., The State Records of North Carolina, (Goldsboro, Nash Brothers, Printers, 1898), Ashe to Caswell, March 17, 1779, XIV, 39-40.

up how highly inadequate the militia were in open battle.

At the end of April, Lincoln marched the main body of his army along the Savannah River near Augusta, hoping to cut off British supplies from the West, but in so doing he left Moultrie with only a small force at Purrysburg to guard the Savannah area. General Prevost, sensing an excellent opportunity now to move on to Charleston, pushed Moultrie back, and the opposing forces engaged in a series of rear guard actions. On May 11, the British reached Charleston, and Prevost with approximately 3,200 troops ordered the ²²surrender of the city.

The defenders were divided in opinion over what course of action to take. Governor Rutledge was in favor of neutrality. He argued, along with certain members of the city council, that the city's defenses were untenable, the local forces insufficient, and the enemy's numbers too great. This was the same Rutledge who three years before had declared himself for defending the city at any cost. Meanwhile, Moultrie, Colonel Henry Laurens and Count Casimir Pulaski opposed the idea of surrendering or neutralizing Charleston without a fight. After all, they reasoned, had not the city been defended three years before against strong odds? Moultrie told the council: "I am determined not to deliver you up prisoners of war, we will fight it out."²³ His views prevailed.

Orders were given to strengthen the city's defenses and

22 Moultrie, op cit., I, 429-430.

23 Ibid., 434.

prepare for battle but, strangely enough, the next morning the British were gone. At first the Charlestonians couldn't believe their eyes, but, on learning that Lincoln was returning to the city at top speed, they realized why the British had retreated so hastily. Lincoln had sent a message to Moultrie, telling him not to relent: "Do not give up, or suffer the people to despair."²⁴ The British had intercepted a copy of this letter, and not wishing to be caught in American crossfire, they chose the wise course.

Prevost, moving from island to island in his retreat from Charleston, encountered the Rebels in numerous skirmishes, but escaped unscathed because American numbers were insufficient to inflict many casualties. During their retreat the British army looted property and slaves, thereby deepening the resentment of the Patriots toward the Crown and creating a situation which consequently led to mass reprisals being committed on both sides.

For the second time Charleston had been saved, but the future was not to be as bright as it then seemed. Within a year Charleston was destined to fall to the British, and when the city had capitulated, in May 1780, the South was violently shaken.

The spring and summer months of 1779 were relatively quiet. The British were content to hold Georgia. The Americans

24 Ibid, Lincoln to Moultrie, May 10, 1779, I, 436-437.

made no attempt to advance, and an uneasy stalemate prevailed.

In September, 1779, a large French fleet appeared off the coast of Georgia. The Americans, gravely in need of naval aid, had requested such aid from the French. Both Lincoln and Rutledge believed that, with the addition of French strength, Georgia could be regained for the Patriots. The French, traditional enemies of the English and still smarting from defeat in the Seven Years' War, saw a golden opportunity to gain a measure of revenge. Moreover, the French wished to honor the terms of the Franco-American treaty, signed the year before: some of the terms of the treaty of alliance could now be implemented. Under the imperious and supercilious Admiral Comte D'Estaing, the French West Indies fleet was placed temporarily at the disposal of the Revolutionary cause.²⁵

D'Estaing reached the mouth of the Savannah River on September 8. He proceeded up this waterway with six warships and a total of 4,000 men.²⁶ On the evening of September 11, he disembarked with 1,500 men at the mouth of the St. Mary's River, a tributary of the Savannah. Here he remained for six days, waiting for torrential downpours of rain to subside so that the remainder of his troops could be disembarked. Finally, on September 17, the weather broke favorably, and D'Estaing

25 Alexander Lawrence, Storm over Savannah, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1951), 20-22.

26 Charles C. Jones, ed., The Siege of Savannah in 1779 as described in two contemporaneous journals of French Officers in the fleet of Count D'Estaing, (Albany, Joel Munsell, 1874), 58-60.

had his full complement of troops. The French moved within the defenses of the city, where the Admiral requested Prevost to surrender. Prevost, with a force of some 3,000 men, stalled for time. At a conference with Franco-American forces, Prevost, by giving the impression that the city would be abandoned, bought himself time enough to permit the arrival of 700 reinforcements under Lieutenant Colonel John Maitland. ²⁷

The combined French and American forces began a bombardment of Savannah on October 3 with such fury that one resident was prompted to exclaim: "The appearance of the town afforded a melancholy prospect, for there was hardly a house that had not been shot through, and some of them were almost destroyed." ²⁸ Though firing was heavy, the city withstood the bombardment, a fact that caused D'Estaing to decide - for everyone! - that the town should be taken by storm. In fact, the adamant commander threatened to leave the scene if his orders were not carried out. The Americans had little choice but to defer to his wishes, for without French aid they would have been obliged to retreat immediately.

The D'Estaing-conceived assault took place on October 9. The plan of attack was simple. The French troops were divided into three columns on the right, and the Americans into two

27 Ibid, 58-60.

28 Frank Moore, ed., Diary of the American Revolution, from Newspapers and Original Documents, 2 Vols., (New York, Charles Scribner, 1860), II, 224-228.

columns on the left. At four o'clock in the morning the signal was given by D'Estaing to proceed toward the fort. The combined troops marched in one column through the woods. They were to have broken off into separate columns when they reached open ground and then prepare for an attack. But the overall plan was not consummated because D'Estaing prematurely rushed the fortress and could therefore not obtain the required support. The first French column to reach the fort was rebuffed by grape shot and musket fire, and succeeding columns met the same fate. Count Pulaski, leading a cavalry charge on the right flank, was mortally wounded by a cannonball. The American light infantry, led by Colonel Laurens on the left, followed by the Second South Carolina Regiment and First Battalion of Charleston Militia, attempted to scale the parapets but found them too high. Repelled by enemy fire, they were forced to retreat.

Many of the American troops in reserve on the left flank were confronted with marshy land and had great difficulty moving forward. By the time they had passed through the bogs, their allies were in retreat. When the day was over, the combined Franco-American forces had lost nearly 1,100 men killed, wounded or missing out of some 5,000. The British casualties barely exceeded 50.

29 Franklin B. Hough, ed., The Siege of Savannah by the Combined American and French Forces, under the Command of General Lincoln, and the Count D'Estaing, in the Autumn of 1779, (Albany, Joel Munsell, 1866), 164-170.

A discouraged D'Estaing sailed away over the objections of Lincoln. The Americans, dismayed over the hasty departure of the French admiral, commented sharply on the short-lived alliance, specifically channeling their discontent toward D'Estaing, who retorted sardonically himself about the unfair treatment given the French by the American Newspapers.

Thus the Rebels had suffered a humiliating defeat again. Not only did the debacle cause a critical setback in the morale of the Americans, but it also breached the feelings between the two allies. The British now consolidated their grip on Georgia and shifted their attention toward the strategic seaport city of Charleston for the third time in three and a half years.

CHAPTER II

The Invasion of South Carolina

"I think this is the greatest event that has happened in the whole war," said Sir Henry Clinton on hearing of the retention of Savannah in British hands.¹ His Majesty's government once more saw an opportunity to invade and infiltrate the divided South, and for Sir Henry a peculiar personal pleasure was added, for now four long years after the defenders of Charleston had repulsed his expeditionary force in a most humiliating manner, he had an opportunity to redeem himself. Personal vindication was, of course, not the only reason why Clinton saw Charleston as a welcome addition to the Monarchy. The British controlled Georgia, and Tories by the hundreds had flocked to the Royal standard. Many inhabitants of Charleston appeared to be only remotely interested in the fate of their city, and such indifference was made to order for Clinton. Furthermore, the war had not gone well for the British in the North and Clinton felt that a sizable portion of the 5,000 British troops stationed in New York and Rhode Island could be spared for the reduction of Charleston and the ultimate conquest of the South.

Clinton realized that he had been, and was still, faced with formidable opposition in the North in the person of Gen-

1 Sir Henry Clinton, Observations on Mr. Stedman's History of the American War, (London, 1794), 24.

eral Washington. His admiration for this indomitable personality, whom he described as "Wary" compelled him to leave a substantial force in the New York area before the campaign in the South could even be begun.²

In this favorable position, Clinton began his preparations. On December 26, 1779, he turned his command over to Lieutenant General Baron Wilhelm Von Knyphausen, a capable Hessian officer, and set sail for Georgia. With him went 88 transports, over 8,000 men, and numerous horses to be used by the cavalry.³ When Clinton's force was only two days at sea, violent gales arose along the Eastern coast of the Colonies, and the British felt the full wrath of the winds. The fleet was scattered and communications among the vessels was so poor that on some days four-fifths of the ships of the armada were not in sight of one another. During the first few days of the voyage the Russell, Renown and Robust were not heard from and were presumed to have been lost.⁴ It was not uncommon to hear shots from ships in distress from innumerable leaks, and most vessels were virtually powerless to venture to the aid of sister ships.

The sailors aboard these ships were in a constant state of anxiety and sickness. Eating and sleeping were almost impossible; men ate and slept barely enough to keep alive. But con-

2 Willcox, op cit., 152.

3 Bernard A. Uhlendorf, ed., Revolution in America, Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces, (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1957), 331-332.

4 Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, ed., Siege of Charleston, (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1957), 119.

sidering the extremity of the suffering, the spirits of the men were reasonably good and in no way mutinous. Captain Johann Hinrichs of the Hessian Jager Corps, who was aboard one of the vessels bound for Charleston, wrote about the deplorable conditions at approximately the half way point of the voyage:

Everything still the same! Still a westerly wind! We cruised up and down. Terrible weather! Snow, rain, hail storm, foaming waves and bitter cold! Toward noon the Judith transport, carrying fascines long bundles of sticks used in raising batteries or for strengthening ramparts and engineers, hoisted a flag of distress. She had sprung a leak and, furthermore, had lost all her yards. She approached the flagship and obtained assistance. Toward evening it cleared up but the blue horizon was a foreboding of severe cold. During the night the wind veered somewhat to N., so that it was about NW. We stood WSW and were hoping for the wind to shift still more to the North. With such hopes we slept fairly well, especially since the ship did not roll as much as usual, for snow and rain had beaten down the waves somewhat.⁵

The voyage took over a month, despite a good day or two, before the ships reached land. Most of the horses had been lost at sea, and the destructive force of the gale drove one shipload of troops (Hessian) clear across the Atlantic to Cornwall. Late in January, 1780, the first shipload of troops and supplies was landed off Tybee Island on the Savannah River. About ten days were spent on repairs before the British forces sailed on to North Edisto Island Inlet, landing

5 Ibid, 124-125.

troops on John's Island on February 11.⁶

On the afternoon of the same day the British began to disembark at Simmons Point on Simmons Island (actually a part of John's Island). The light infantry, British Grenadiers, and two companies of Hessian Grenadiers disembarked from the arriving ships.⁷ Brigadier General John Patterson had already left for Purrysburg from North Edisto Island, with a force⁸ of men.

The British forces were under tripartite command, although Clinton was actually the chief commander. Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot, an obdurate, forceful man, was in charge of naval forces, while General Lord Earl Cornwallis, a less raucous but equally driving personality, worked under Clinton. He did, however, share in some of the important decision-making. Clinton, fearful of recurring storms, was opposed to the idea of immediate advancement to John's Island, but Arbuthnot and Cornwallis overruled the commander, and the troops moved north-ward.⁹

The British landing on John's Island went uncontested, mainly because American intelligence expected a different diversion from the original landing at North Edisto Island. The Americans believed that Beaufort would be the eventual center of heavy troop concentration.

6 Willcox, op cit., 160-161.

7 Uhlendorf, Siege of Charleston, 179.

8 Ibid, 179.

9 Willcox, op cit., 160.

The initial landing of British troops on John's Island was under the command of Captain Elphinstone of the warship Perseus. Elphinstone was well-acquainted with the conditions of the island, having fought there two years before. The main part of the British army landed on the same spot on February 12, Cornwallis heading the advance party of light infantry. They moved toward Jame's Island to set up headquarters, traveling a good deal of the way under the most adverse conditions imaginable, before they reached their destination, approximately 25 miles from Charleston. Hinrichs again gives a clear description of the plight of the troops moving through alien territory.

Our landing was effected in good enough time, although we had to go two miles in boats, but the march to headquarters was the more arduous. A column making its way through a wilderness of deep sand, marshland and impenetrable woods where human feet had never trod! Even Elphinstone, our guide, led us two miles out of our way. Sometimes we had to struggle, singly, or two abreast, through marsh and woodland for half a mile - What a land to wage war in! ¹⁰

It is well to read the observations of Hinrichs in the light of the fact that the Hessian mercenaries had a definite contempt for their English allies. Describing conditions such as noted above was simply one way the Hessians had for expressing the resentment they felt concerning both the war and the British. The British, on the other hand, believed the

10 Uhlendorf, op cit., 181-183.

Hessians lacked the temperament required for this kind of warfare. The British attitude toward them naturally irked the Hessians, who reciprocated through derisive remarks of their own.

With such overt animosity existing, cooperation between the British and the Hessians was at times minimal. The Hessians, however, were vital to the Monarchy because the major part of the British army was in Europe, poised to quell any troubles that might arise there. Friction between the British and the Hessians didn't help matters for the Crown as the Revolutionary War progressed, but in the siege of Charleston the difference had little bearing.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Americans had problems of their own. With the landing and build-up of Royal forces just 25 miles from Charleston, some compensating action had to be taken by the Americans. Among the natives of the city and the environs, apathy was as marked as ever (as even among the British there was lethargy and procrastination), and officials there differed in their proposals for action as they did a year before when Prevost requested the city to surrender. However, a strong Rebel desire to defend the city also existed as in the year before.

In a letter to General Washington, Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens explained the peril confronting Charleston. In view of his knowledge of British troop movements, he was certain, he said, that their plan of operation included a siege

¹¹ William T. Bulger, Jr., The British Expedition to Charleston 1779-1780, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, 1957), 211-212.

against the city. Laurens further surmised that in such a siege British ships would have to enter Charleston harbor as cover for the land forces. In expectation of such naval action by the British, the Americans, feeling that the defense of the harbor bar (a shallow area of water between Sullivan's Island and the mainland) was impracticable, decided to remove their ships from the harbor. After a consultation with his officers, Commodore William Whipple had his small American fleet moved to the harbor entrance and sunk in order to obstruct entrance to the harbor by British ships. Rather than stand up to the British in a pure naval engagement, the Americans would repel the British vessels with gunfire from Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island.¹²

It was Laurens' contention, as it was that of Lincoln and other high-ranking officers, that enough military aid would eventually arrive to defend Charleston successfully, or at least make a creditable attempt. Unfortunately the confidence of Laurens, and the enthusiasm and optimism of some of the more important Charlestonians, was not justified, as subsequent events proved.

Washington in a letter in answer to Laurens, dated April 26, told the officer that the attempt to defend Charleston should have been abandoned when the bar was left unprotected:

¹² Jared Sparks, ed., Correspondence of the American Revolution, 4 Vols., (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1853), Laurens to Washington, March 14, 1780, II, 413-415.

The impracticality of defending the bar, I fear, amounts to the loss of the town and garrison. At this distance it is difficult to judge for you, and I have the greatest confidence in General Lincoln's prudence; but it really appears to me that the propriety of attempting to defend the Town depended on the probability of defending the bar, and that when this ceased the attempt ought to have been relinquished.¹³

Lincoln, who had the decision to make, chose to continue with the defense of the city. Repairs had to be made, and quickly. Washington, in a letter to Lincoln on March 30, before the bar had been crossed by the British, told the local general how he had reluctantly parted with Brigadier General Louis Le Beque DuPortail so that the engineer could go to Charleston to supervise construction of the defenses of the city.¹⁴ With the fortifications such as they were there, DuPortail had a monumental task staring him in the face. The existing defenses were inadequate - far from being impregnable. Lincoln worked his men hard on strengthening the fortifications, and on numerous occasions was himself the first to report for work.¹⁵ Because many whites felt it undignified to work on the redoubts themselves, Governor Rutledge was obliged to impress 600 slaves to work on the defenses.¹⁶

13 John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799, 39 Vols., (Washington, United States Printing Office, 1931-1944), Washington to Laurens, April 26, 1780, XVIII, 298-300.

14 Ibid, Washington to Lincoln, March 30, 1780, 178-179.

15 Bancroft, op cit., 265.

16 Ward, op cit., II, 697.

Clinton described the American defenses, as based on intelligence reports:

The center of the line, where the natural defenses seemed to be the weakest, was strengthened by an enclosed hornwork of masonry which was converted into a kind of citadel during the siege and through the extent of these works were mounted eighty pieces of cannon and mortars of various calibers, from which a well-served fire was unremittingly kept on. On the sea side a number of ships was sunk in the mouth of the Cooper, and the batteries which guarded the entrance of each river and commanded the navigation up to the town, appeared to be equally formidably numerous with those to the land well-furnished with heavy guns.¹⁷

Actually, American defenses were precarious, and Clinton could have fabricated his description so as to make them appear more effective before Whitehall than they really were. Charleston was surrounded on three sides by water, a fact which, of course, made naval defense a necessity for repelling any naval attack. But the American sea forces were invalidated when Commodore Whipple had his fleet scuttled to prevent the British from crossing the bar. Whipple and Lincoln suffered sharp criticism for the scuttling, but it was debatable whether the Americans with their old warships, obtained mostly from the French, could have stood up very effectively against the strong British navy. It was not unsound thinking for the Americans to rely on a concerted effort from the land forces.

17 Willcox op cit., 163-164.

The basic American mistake, aside from the obsession with the idea of the inevitable arrival of great numbers of additional troops, was the shortsightedness concerning escape routes from the city. The northern side of Charleston was the only land side. The supply depot at Monck's Corner, thirty miles to the north, proved to be highly vulnerable and eventually disastrous for the Rebels, and aside from planning to use the route to this depot, Lincoln had done nothing to insure the safe retreat of his army. He was prepared only to stand against a siege, had no planned alternatives, and unwisely pinned his hopes on the arrival of necessary aid.

Although not in favor of the defense of Charleston after the harbor had been abandoned to the enemy, General Washington knew the value of retaining the South in the struggle for victory for the Colonies. Faced with a British force of over 10,000 men (a force that was still expanding), Washington ordered General James Hogun south with the First South Carolina Brigade in early December, 1779.¹⁸ Accompanying Hogun was Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, who with his dragoons was destined to see a great deal of action during the Southern campaigns. Major Henry Lee's Virginia Corps was also ordered south, and, most important of all, Major General Baron DeKalb with 2,000 Maryland and Delaware Continentals.¹⁹ Brigadier General Mordecai Gist was to command the Maryland division. These Continentals were crack troops,

18 Uhlendorf, Revolution in America, 332-333.

19 Fitzpatrick, op cit., Washington to Lincoln, April 15, 1780, XVIII, 263-265.

and their main purpose was not to aid in the defense of the city but to protect the Southern provinces against any further British aggression. (These troops later distinguished themselves at Camden, where DeKalb was to be mortally wounded.)

By the time the siege was in full swing, the Americans numbered over 5,000 men,²⁰ and the British, after 2,500²¹ reinforcements arrived from New York, had upwards of 10,000 men.

The British, with vast numerical superiority, now began to plan their movements, but not without many divergent opinions being first expressed by their leaders. Clinton's theory of attack - skilled, highly methodical - was modelled after several centuries of such experience among European militarists, a look at which experience is pertinent at this point for what may be revealed as to why Charleston was defended in the face of differing attitudes at the time.

The art of siegecraft began with earliest man, and has evolved through the ages, adapting itself to the conditions of the times. Clinton's method, in use in Europe as early as the late 17th Century, was originated by Sebastien Le Prestre de Vauban, a French military engineer of the first magnitude, who developed his siege theories and practices in accordance with the growing importance of artillery in his era. Sieges before Vauban's time were generally conducted haphazardly, with no definite prior planning and with no regard to the element of time. With Vauban - and the men who followed him -

20 Tarleton, op cit., 13.

21 Moultrie, op cit., II, 73, n.

time became of the essence: fortifications were to be reduced in the shortest possible time. In the case of Charleston only six weeks elapsed from the construction of the first parallel until the surrender of the city (April 1 to May 12).

The first object of Vauban's idea of siege was to place batteries 600 to 700 yards away from the fortifications and to protect these batteries against any counterattacks. The artillery of the defense was to be silenced; trenches were to be zig-zagged to evade enemy fire; men digging the trenches were, of course, always to be protected from enemy fire and any possible advancement from the enemy. The overall object was to make any breach that would open the way for assaulting columns, and guns were to be mounted as close to the fort as possible for breaching purpose.

Three parallels or lines of trenches, each successively closer to the defense, were to be established, to be used by the attackers to ward off sorties from the adversaries. The ideal location for the first parallel, according to basic theory, was about 600 to 700 yards from the enemy position. This was considered the proper spot for affording protection to the men doing the succeeding construction, since they would normally be under fire.

Batteries of artillery were placed in front of the trenches, which were approximately 12-15 feet wide and 3 feet deep. From here parties of men called "sappers" moved forward perhaps 300 yards, where a second parallel of trenches

was dug longitudinally by the sappers, using picks and shovels and working behind little more than a protective shield. It was the task of the forces of the first parallel to protect the sappers with artillery fire against any enemy sorties. The assumption was that by this time the defenders' heavy weapons would be dismounted because of constant artillery bombardment. The sappers on the second parallel worked only at night, when their chances of survival were best. In the morning other squads of men would widen and deepen the trenches. At this point of the attackers' forward movement by means of parallels, the defenders would be within a closer - and, logically, more accurate - range of fire, and the attackers could proceed to establish their third parallel.

The third parallel was the coup de grace of Vauban's systematic approach, for by this time the besiegers had two strong transfixing positions, and when the last parallel was completed the attackers were generally no more than 100-150 yards from the walls of the besieged. They would now be at the foot of the glacis, a bank of earth sloping downward from the defenders' gates. The method of attack was then to push upward on both sides of the glacis and, the proper position once gained, to begin constructing breaching batteries. Vauban's highly methodical attack was generally accomplished in a relatively short time, considering the amount of sapping and building going on. In fact, in view of the elementary tools of labor the time was very short indeed. Vauban proved

the soundness of his system by not having a single failure in the some 40 sieges which he supervised and in which he participated, in the latter part of the 17th Century. It was no wonder that his method was applied throughout Western Europe during the 18th Century, and it can readily be seen why Clinton attached great importance to the Vauban system of siegecraft.

Several further details will bear explaining. First, during Vauban's time defenses were not constructed nearly so thoroughly as offenses. At Charleston, for instance, Lincoln, having trouble getting the white inhabitants of the city to work on the fortifications, was forced to use slave labor, and the resulting defenses turned out to be imperfect. Also, when the British attacked Sullivan's Island in 1776, the defenses there had been hastily and haphazardly constructed; however, in that particular case poor construction proved to be an asset for the reason that the cannonballs from the English ships merely stuck in the soft palmetto logs of the fort, and failed to explode, a fortunate occurrence for the defenders and one not likely to be repeated.

The genius that went into preparing an attack was not operative on the defensive side, and resistance was more passive than active. The defenders resigned themselves to the fact that the advancing parallels were virtually unstoppable, and made little use of the open in front of their walls while the besiegers were busy digging their trenches. At

times the besieged may have sent a few troops outside the fort to harass the attackers, but generally such troops met with little success.

The pattern of defense at Charleston followed perfectly the standard 18th Century procedures against siege: passive optimism growing into uncertainty and uncertainty leading finally to total defeat, but defeat with honor, for the British surrender terms were rejected three times before the commandant of the city decided to capitulate. If he had fought on vainly, Lincoln would have suffered incalculable losses. As it turned out, he received lenient terms for surrender. His attempts to justify continuing the defense of the city, after Washington and other prominent military leaders urged abandonment, will be discussed later in this paper.

On the British side, Clinton had good reason to feel his operation at Charleston would prove a success, because recent history had shown that Vauban's method of siegecraft was virtually unbeatable.²³ The British launched their offensive on April 1. After the first Parallel was established Vauban's theory of celerity was vindicated, within six short weeks.

23 Louis Charles Jackson, The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th edition, (New York, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910-1911), IX, 707-711. For an excellent dissertation of "Fortifications and Siegecraft" see the article on this subject in Volume IX, 679-725.

CHAPTER III

The Siege of Charleston

On April 5, cannonading was active on both sides and the siege was well under way. The first decisive breakthrough occurred on April 8, when Admiral Arbuthnot, with 13 vessels - including the Roebuck, Renown and Richmond¹ - sailed into Charleston harbor, passed the controversial bar, and anchored off Sullivan's Island. Because of the earlier scuttling of the American ships to prevent this very British penetration, the admiral encountered little opposition, and his casualties were few.

Now holding the upper hand, Clinton asked Lincoln to relinquish the city, but received the following answer from the American commander:

I have received your summons of this date. Sixty days have passed since it has been known that your intentions against this town were hostile, in which time has been afforded to abandon it, but duty and inclination point to the propriety of supporting it to the last extremity.²

After this refusal to surrender had been received from Lincoln by Clinton, the order was given to open fire again on the city. At about 8:30 in the morning, April 13, with their first parallel almost completely established, the British commenced firing three batteries. The exchange of cannonading throughout the day was moderate, but Charleston was set on fire

1 Uhlendorf, op cit., 242-243.

2 Clark, op cit., Lincoln to Clinton, April 10, 1780, XV, 44-45.

in three different locations by British shells, though the fires were put out in short order. When numerous American guns were dismantled, Vauban's theory of the significance of the first parallel became solid fact, and the sappers continued their work to establish the next parallel on schedule.

Clinton had given strict orders that cannonading by his artillery officers should not be too severe because he believed that a city bombarded beyond repair could not possibly make a strong base of operations for the victors. Meanwhile, he was at work on another and very important part of his strategy, the cutting off of the American communications and supply depot at Monck's Corner. The route to this establishment, as noted earlier, was the only escape route open to the Americans by land, in the event that Lincoln chose to retreat.

The depot was under the command of Brigadier General Isaac Huger, with three regiments of Continental cavalry and some militiamen,³ when Clinton on April 13 sent a detachment⁴ of 1,400 men under Colonel James Webster to capture the outpost and further minimize whatever chances the Americans had of rebuffing the British at Charleston. With Webster were Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton - a controversial figure in the struggle for the South, of whom more will be heard as the war progresses - and Major Patrick Ferguson.

3 Banastre Tarleton, A History of the Campaign of 1780-1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America, (London, T. Cadell in the Strand, 1787), 14.

4 Ibid, 15.

On the way to the depot, the advance guard, under Tarleton, captured a Negro through whom they were able to ascertain how the Rebel defenses were set up. At 3 a.m. on April 14, Tarleton and his dragoons completely surprised the Americans, charging with such alacrity that Huger and Colonel Washington fled on foot into the swamps. Besides relieving the Rebels of their basic supply depot, Tarleton and his men took by force some 400 horses gravely needed by the British cavalry⁵ after the loss of most of their horses during the stormy voyage south from New York. (Between the time of the British landing and the attack on Monck's Corner, Tarleton had also commandeered horses in raids on various Rebel estates.)

In their defeat at the depot the Americans had 100 men taken prisoner and lost 50 wagons of arms, clothing and ammunition. English losses there were a mere 3 wounded.⁶

As was his custom after each encounter with his opponents Tarleton wrote an account of the adversaries' shortcomings. He blamed the Rebel defeat on an improper defense, especially on the inexcusable sin of being taken by surprise. Also, he said, no American reconnaissance parties had been sent out.

Because of his policy of giving no quarter, Tarleton was soon to be known to Americans as the "Butcher" and "Bloody Tarleton." At the battle of Monck's Corner he was cursed for

5 Ibid, 16.

6 Ibid, 17.

this policy by a dying American major, Paul Vernier, and curses such as Vernier's were eventually to be repeated by many Americans whenever the name of Tarleton was mentioned.⁷ His superiors, of course, held the young man in high esteem for his military ability. In fact, when he was a mere 26 years of age, they had placed him in charge of the green-coated dragoons of the British Legion. His assignment was to keep communications open among the various British outposts and to "awe" the Rebels; in other words, to frighten them so that they would not dare to bear arms against the King. Needless to say, Tarleton was proficient at this job. (He was also said to be proficient in his operations with the opposite sex, captivat-⁸ing young and old alike with his charm and his good looks.)

The British web was now tightening. With the diversionary move at Monck's Corner a complete success, attention was again concentrated on advancing the parallels at Charleston and simultaneously bombarding the city. The exchange of fire on April 16 and 17 was constant but not overly destructive. The British were more interested in displaying their might to the Rebels than in actually damaging the city. Arbuthnot had his sailors construct a battery near the mouth of the Wapoo River, from where an advantageous stream of fire could be sent out when needed.

7 Robert Bass, The Green Dragoon, Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson, (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1957), 74.

8 Ibid, 76.

On April 19 the British completed their second parallel, some 450 yards from the city.⁹ On the same day Brigadier General Lord Francis Rawdon arrived from New York with 2,566 men, of which 1,863 were declared fit for duty.¹⁰ These men added to the already vast numerical superiority of the British.

On April 24 the Americans, in an effort to repel the oncoming British, attempted a sortie. Three hundred Virginians and South Carolinians, under Lieutenant Colonel Charles Henderson, attacked the British lines outside the fort in the vicinity of the second parallel, and were completely successful in temporarily stalling the enemy's progress. The Rebels suffered light casualties, while their opponents' casualties numbered some 50 men.¹¹ This was the only major American sortie during the siege. Although successful in this endeavor, Lincoln, still hoping aid would come, failed to follow through with other major sorties and thus allowed the British to move forward.

April 25 saw a heavy barrage of fire from Charleston against the approaching enemy. On April 26 the fire was minimal as the British moved up their equipment for the construction of the third parallel. On the same day General DuPortail, arriving in Charleston, decided that the defense of the city

9 Tarleton, op cit., 39.

10 Willcox, op cit., 167 n.

11 Uhlendorf, Siege of Charleston, 259-265.

was not tenable. With this news ringing in his ears, Lincoln called a meeting of the military council to decide the fate of Charleston. The idea of evacuating the Continental troops was seriously considered. Unfortunately the one main land route of escape was in British possession, and escape by water would be difficult because the enemy controlled the harbor. The idea of evacuation was dropped when some private citizens, hearing of the talk of evacuation, threatened "to cut up his (Lincoln's) boats and open the gates to the enemy".¹² It was such citizen reaction that caused the Rebels to reject the second set of British surrender terms and to continue the defense another three weeks.

Light skirmishing marked the last few days of April and the first week in May. Little damage was done and few casualties were reported, but still the British advanced. On May 6 the third parallel was completed by the British, and the opposing forces were within shouting distance of each other.

On the waters the British were also vastly superior, as has been seen. After they crossed the bar blocking the harbor entrance, it was as natural as it was anti-climactic that Fort Moultrie should surrender to them without a shot being fired. The British landed on Sullivan's Island with 500 seamen and marines under Captain Charles Hudson.¹³ Well aware of the

12 Moultrie, op cit., II, 80.

13 Willcox, op cit., 169.

inferiority of his troops and the untenability of his position, the American commander at the fort, Captain Scott, surrendered meekly. The terms, as laid down by the British, were lenient, consisting of eight articles or stipulations:

- I That the troops in garrison shall be allowed to march out with the usual honors of war and to pile their arms outside of the gate.
- II That all the officers in garrison, as well continental as militia, and the non-commissioned officers and privates of the militia, shall be considered as prisoners of war at large on their parole, until exchanged; and be allowed in the mean time, to reside with their families and friends, Charles town excepted, as it is at present under siege.
- III That the continental and militia officers be permitted to wear their side arms.
- IV That the slaves and other property of every individual in garrison be secured to their respective owners: That all such slaves in garrison, belonging to persons out of it, be secured to their respective owners in such manner as may be agreed upon between Captain Hudson and the commanding officer of the fort.
- V All property, slaves, &c. to be secured to each individual of the garrison; such as is lodged in the fort for security or otherwise, belonging to individuals, not of the garrison, to be delivered up.
- VI That all the sick have every necessary accommodation, and all the continental private soldiers be treated in a humane manner, and not rigorously confined; every humanity to be shown to both sick and well.
- VII The fort, artillery, arms, ammunition, and stores of all kinds, to be delivered up to such officers and guards as Captain Hudson shall think proper to send for that purpose.
- VIII The garrison to march out of the fort, and pile their arms early in the morning,

in front of the British forces, who will be drawn up before the entrance of the fort for the occasion.¹⁴

The surrender terms were put into effect on May 7 at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. One hundred and eighteen Continentals and 100 Militia were captured, and 41 pieces of iron ordnance and 3,809 rounds of shot were seized.¹⁵

The surrender of Charleston was only five days away now, and the British trenches were so close to the fort that it was highly probable that a strong cannonade could almost smash the ramparts of the city. Clinton, who was prepared for any event, wanted Arbuthnot to move his fleet toward the Ashley and Cooper Rivers to assist the land troops in an assault on the city, if necessary. Arbuthnot did not heed Clinton's wishes, a quirk in his behavior which forged another link in the chain of differences between the two men, though this difference at this time had little immediate consequence because no assault was forthcoming. But the difference did bring about a feud between the two men at a later date.¹⁶

On the morning of May 8 Lincoln once again received a communication from Clinton, beseeching him in the name of humanity and discretion to give up "the fruitless defense" of the fort.¹⁷ Lincoln had until 8 p.m. to answer. Laying these terms before a council of general and field officers and the captains of the Continental ships, Lincoln heard a general concurrence for capitulation, Clinton, however, rejected in quick order

14 Tarleton, op. cit., 53-54.

15 Ibid, 55.

16 Bulger, op cit., 212.

17 Clark, op cit., Clinton to Lincoln, May 8, 1780, XV, 45.

the terms of surrender as submitted by the Rebels.

The heaviest cannonading of the siege began on the evening of May 9 and continued until May 11. At this time, after conferring with some of the principal inhabitants of the town and with the leaders of the militia,¹⁹ Lincoln, now fully aware that help would not be coming for the defense of the city, yielded to the British terms of capitulation. Clinton's stipulations were relatively moderate. He felt that the lenient terms would convince many Americans that allegiance to the King would be preferable to further resistance. (Later Cornwallis also initially agreed to this policy of leniency after he replaced Clinton as Southern Commander. However, certain British officers urged upon him a more repressive course of action. Tarleton, for one, objected vociferously to the freeing of the prisoners of war on parole. He had learned that many of the former prisoners had violated their paroles.) Despite such differences of opinion among subordinate officers, Clinton was still in command when Charleston surrendered, and he set the terms. Twelve articles were drawn up, and there was general agreement on most of them:

ART. I. That all acts of hostility and work shall cease between the besiegers and the besieged, until the articles of capitulation shall be agreed on, signed, and executed, or collectively rejected.

ANSWER. All acts of hostility and work shall cease, until the articles of capitulation are finally agreed to or rejected.

18 Ibid, Lincoln to Washington, August 11, 1780, 46.

19 Ibid, 46.

ART. II. The town and fortifications shall be surrendered to the commander in chief of the British forces, such as they now stand.

ANSWER. The town and fortifications, with the shipping at the wharfs, artillery, and all other public stores whatsoever, shall be surrendered in their present state to the commanders of the investing forces; proper officers shall attend from the respective departments to receive them.

ART. III. The continental troops and sailors, with their baggage, shall be conducted to a place agreed on, where they shall remain prisoners of war until exchanged. While prisoners, they shall be supplied with good and wholesome provisions in such quantity as is served out to the troops of His Britannic Majesty.

ANSWER. Granted.

ART. IV. The militia now in garrison shall be permitted to return to their respective homes, and be secured in their person and property.

ANSWER. The militia now in garrison shall be permitted to return to their respective homes as prisoners on parole; which parole, as long as they observe, shall secure them from being molested in their property by British troops.

ART. V. The sick and wounded shall be continued under the care of their own surgeons, and be supplied with medicines and such necessaries as are allowed to the British hospitals.

ANSWER. Granted.

ART. VI. The officers of the army and navy shall keep their horses, swords, pistols and baggage, which shall not be searched, and retain their servants.

ANSWER. Granted, except with respect to the horses, which shall not be allowed to go out of the town, but may be disposed of by a person left from each corps for that purpose.

ART. VII. The garrison shall, at an hour appointed, march out with shouldered arms, drums beating, and colours flying, to a place to be agreed on, where they will pile their arms.

ANSWER. The whole garrison shall, at an hour to be appointed, march out of the town to the ground between the works of the place and the canal, where they will deposit their arms. The drums are not to beat a British march, or colours to be uncased.

ART. VIII. That the French Consul, his house, papers, and other moveable property, shall be protected and untouched, and a proper time granted to him for retiring to any place that may afterwards be agreed upon between him and the commander in chief of the British forces.

ANSWER. Agreed, with this restriction, that he is to consider himself as a prisoner on parole.

ART. IX. That the citizens shall be protected in their persons and properties.

ANSWER. All civil officers, and the citizens who have borne arms during the siege, must be prisoners on parole; and with respect to their property in the city, shall have the same terms as are granted to the militia; and all other persons now in the town, not to be described in this or other article, are notwithstanding understood to be prisoners on parole.

ART. X. That a twelve month's time be allowed all such as do not choose to continue under the British government to dispose of their effects, real and personal, in the state, without any molestation whatsoever; or to remove such part thereof as they choose, as well as themselves and families; and that, during that time, they or any of them may have it at their option to reside occasionally in town or country.

ANSWER. The discussion of this article of course cannot possibly be entered into at present.

ART. XI. That the same protection to their persons and properties, and the same time for the removal of their effects, be given to the subjects of France and Spain, as are required for the citizens in the preceding article.

ANSWER. The subjects of France and Spain shall have the same terms as are granted to the French Consul.

ART. XII. That a vessel be permitted to go to Philadelphia with the general's dispatches, which are not to be opened.

ANSWER. Granted, and a proper vessel with a flag will be provided for that purpose.

All public papers and records must be carefully preserved, and faithfully delivered to such persons as 20 shall be appointed to receive them.

Thus with these twelve articles, capitulation terms were promulgated. Formal arrangements were now made for ceding the fort to the victors. An eyewitness account of the formal ceremonies was given by Major General Carl Leopold Baurmeister, a Hessian officer:

On the 12th of May at four o'clock in the afternoon, General Lincoln and all the Continental Troops left Charleston. They marched two abreast with shouldered but unloaded rifles, colors cased, to the beating of one drum per battalion, through the outer barrier past General Leslie to a spacious place, and there formed in line, seized their rifles by the butts in an orderly fashion and stacked them, hung their cartouches and bayonets over them, and laid their colors on the drums.²¹

The militia, too ragged to march out with the others, were disarmed and paroled to their homes after swearing loyalty to the King. The French, Dutch, and Spanish who participated in the defense of the city were declared prisoners as stipulated in the surrender terms and were to be embarked to France at the first opportunity. Baurmeister's account of the British takeover was lucid:

Major General Leslie took possession of the city in the following manner: A detachment of one officer and thirty men formed the van. An equally strong troop of marines followed, one of whom marched at the head and carried the large naval flag. Two British and two Hessian field-pieces and their train came next. Then followed General Leslie at the head of a British and Hessian grenadier company. Three English regiments, the 7th, 42nd and 63rd, formed the rear. The troops moved in with the greatest propriety to the beating of drums and music. As soon as the British naval flag was raised, the ships saluted, which compliment was returned from both sides of the fortification with twentyone shots.²²

In the hands of the British, Charleston was now on the way to becoming another stronghold for George III. The list of Americans taken prisoner was staggering; 4,710 rank-and-file soldiers and 573 officers, drummers and sergeants.

21 Uhlendorf, Revolution in America, 349.

22 Ibid., 349-350.

Twenty-one brass guns, 9 mortars, one howitzer and 284 iron guns also changed hands.²³ Though the actual count of Americans taken by the British was listed at over 5,000, not more than 1,500 or 1,600 of these were regulars.²⁴ The Militia was ordered to parade near Lynche's Pasture the day after the surrender and deposit all side arms and other weapons in the area. When the British threatened to exert force if the entire body of militiamen did not appear, the aged and the infirm came forth, swelling the number of prisoners. Moultrie was astonished at the number of men who turned themselves over to the British: "I saw the column march out and was surprised to see it so large."²⁵ After signing their paroles the Continental officers were sent to Handrell's Point across the harbor, while the militiamen remained in the city.

An unfortunate incident occurred shortly after the British took possession of the fort. The powder magazine, where guns were being stored, exploded, setting fire to the surrounding houses and killing some 50 British troops and numerous Americans.²⁶ At the time of the explosion many of the British and Hessian soldiers were on the parade grounds, and the explosion was considered a deliberate American act of sabotage against them. The Rebels blamed the tragedy on British carelessness. Whether the event was an accident or a wilful act was never definitely determined. Whatever the cause of the explosion, the many casualties resulting from it in such a short space of

23 Tarleton, op cit., 64-65.

24 Moultrie, op cit., II, 108.

25 Ibid., 109.

26 Ibid., 109.

time amounted to no small fraction of the losses incurred during the entire siege of the city, for the casualty lists of the siege, on both sides, were extremely light, mainly because no direct assault had been attempted. British, Hessian and Provincial losses numbered 76 killed and 189 wounded.²⁷ American losses barely exceeded 300 wounded and killed.²⁸

Many high-ranking civil and military officials were also turned over to the victors at the surrender of Charleston. Fortunately for the Rebels, Governor Rutledge and his entourage had left Charleston several weeks before the capitulation, after the British had taken command of the city's harbor. Colonel Francis Marion, a legend among many South Carolinians, left Charleston on April 14, along with other sick and wounded, by order of General Lincoln. Marion had sustained a painfully swollen ankle when he leaped out of a second-story window after a quarrel at a party.²⁹ (The "Swamp Fox," as Marion was called, was to be an important figure in the struggle for independence in the South, and was to become the prime adversary and harasser of the infamous Banastre Tarleton.)

With the fall of the largest port south of Philadelphia the Americans had suffered an inestimable loss and the British had gained an invaluable base for operations in the South, a stronghold that was to be retained for some two years. The English garrisoned Charleston with 2,000 troops and circumvented American trade with France. Praise and criticism was

27 Tarleton, op cit., 45-46

28 Willcox, op cit., 171.

29 Robert D. Bass, Swamp Fox, Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1959), 29-31.

rampant on both sides. Clinton, in his correspondence with Whitehall, cited men like Cornwallis, Tarleton and Leslie as instrumental to the ultimate British victory. Major James Moncrieff, the commanding engineer, was given special praise for his brilliance in supervising the construction of the three parallels.³⁰

The English newspapers and gazettes eulogized the siege as a glorious triumph for the Empire. In a letter dated October 4, 1780, in Rivington's Royal Gazette, George III was informed of the Crown's great victory at Charleston. His horse guardsmen were ordered to fire a salute in honor of the joyous event. The journal continued:

Never was national joy so universal, as that expressed yesterday on the public annunciation of the surrender of Charleston. The Republicans are always excepted in these public rejoicings; for they, as usual, mourned the event in sackcloth and ashes, and for this pious reason, because "success serves only to procrastinate the War." 31

With the victory at Charleston new heroes had emerged; names, once obscure, had been propelled into the spotlight.

American publications of the time played down the stunning defeat, claiming the indifference of the Charlestonians helped give the city to the enemy, and that British journals had fabricated the importance of the British success. The Independent Chronicle of Boston on June 8, 1780, said:

30 A.R. Newsome, ed., "A British Orderly Book, 1780-1781," The North Carolina Historical Review, (January, 1932), Germain to Clinton, July 4, 1780, IX, 65-66.

31 _____, The Siege of Charleston by the British Fleet and Army, (Albany, Joel Munsell, 1867), 210. Editor unknown; may be Franklin B. Hough, editor of The Siege of Savannah, cited earlier.

The Britons are known to out do all the world in fabricating political news that can only answer the purpose of the day. ³²

The fact was, however, that Charleston had indeed fallen, and Lincoln was to travel to Congress in Philadelphia to answer for the defeat, as will be seen below.

Prominent British participants in the siege placed the blame for the American defeat on weakness of the city's defenses and command in improper hands and on an incorrect deployment of troops which could have been better used in the countryside against the British. ³³

Washington had wanted the city abandoned. Other Americans had disapproved of Lincoln from the time he became military commander of Charleston. Many of Lincoln's antagonists were partial to General Horatio Gates, the popular hero who defeated Burgoyne at Saratoga. Daniel Morgan, a renowned South Carolinian and an American patriot who felt that Lincoln lacked the ability to supervise the defense of Charleston, ³⁴ had served with Gates at Saratoga, where the American victory only helped to strengthen his already high opinion of Gates. But whatever the differing opinions and wishes, Lincoln was the appointee, and the success or failure of Charleston rested on his shoulders. (Gates himself was soon to lose much of his popularity when Camden fell ignominiously under his command.)

32 Ibid, 195.

33 Tarleton, op cit., 14.

34 William Higginbotham, Daniel Morgan, Revolutionary Rifleman (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 101.

General Lincoln in a letter to Washington tried to exonerate himself after the fall of Charleston. He pointed out seven reasons why the defense of the city had been undertaken, and why Charleston eventually surrendered.

First, he showed that as early as January 1776 Congress was determined that a defense of the city should be made because Charleston was the principal port of the South and its loss would bring dire results for the area.³⁵

Second, Lincoln had always felt that more troops and supplies would be forthcoming. He expected 9,900 additional forces to have been sent to help in the defense of the city, instead of the mere 1,950 men who actually arrived.³⁶ Furthermore, he had held meetings of the military and town officials, at which forums it was decided that it would not be practical to retreat or abandon the city. Lincoln's reasoning was that when the American revisions of the surrender terms of April 10 were rejected by Clinton, the siege had to be continued.³⁷ In all fairness to Lincoln it must be said there were many prominent citizens and advisors who shared his constant optimism about aid arriving for the beleaguered city. "Four thousand Virginians and North Carolinians would help defend this city," wrote Thomas Pinckney, an eminent Charlestonian,³⁸ who also believed the Spanish fleet would appear off the coast of the Carolinas to give

35 Clark, op cit., Lincoln to Washington, August 11, 1780, XV, 24-25.

36 Ibid, 26-27.

37. Ibid, 29-30.

38 Jack L. Cross, ed., "Letters of Thomas Pinckney to His Sister Marriott, 1775-1780," South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, (October, 1957), XLVIII, 237.

39
assistance.

Third, in answer to why the town was defended with so few provisions in it, Lincoln replied that plans for provisioning had been made the previous July at a time when he thought communications would be kept open.⁴⁰ With the loss of the supply depot at Monck's Corner to the British, his supply line, of course, was no longer usable.

Fourth, he had constantly asked Congress for the necessary aid, and representatives were sent to that body to ask about the aid. In a letter he had written to Congress on October 27, 1779, Lincoln stressed the importance of retaining the city and the definite need for additional troops to help its defense.⁴¹

Fifth, he justified his ordering of the sinking of the American fleet in Charleston harbor on the basis of having consulted Commodore Whipple and his advisors on whether (1) the American fleet could stand up to the British and whether (2) they could prevent the British fleet from entering the harbor by crossing the bar. When he received Whipple's negative answer the decision was made that it would be more advantageous to sink the American vessels and thus obstruct the harbor for the British.⁴²

Sixth, Lincoln claimed that a complete effort was made to build and strengthen the fortifications. He needed his troops for duty and the white civilians of the city would not work, making it necessary for the construction of the defenses to be

39 Ibid, 237.

40 Clark, op cit., Lincoln to Washington, August 11, 1780, XV, 31.

41 Ibid, 32.

42 Ibid, 34-40.

done by slaves. He further pointed out, in depositions made by various inhabitants of Charleston, that his efforts were ⁴³unrelenting and tireless.

Last, Lincoln submitted to Washington that the defense of Charleston was conducted with a vigor and a spirit that would have justified their countrymen's faith in the city's defense. He mentioned the odds (in sheer numbers) against the defenders, the constant refusal of surrender ultimatums, the repeated conferences with the town officials and the military leaders. When defense was no longer practicable, he said, he reluctantly ⁴⁴agreed to the enemy's terms of surrender.

Lincoln, as many before him and many after, was fighting for his military future. Being a mortal man, Lincoln believed that defeat with honor was of the essence. Though he was cleared by the Board of Inquiry in Philadelphia, the stigma of defeat does not rest easy within the human breast. Others beside Lincoln have experienced the humiliating feeling.

Lincoln's mistakes were numerous, but his two big mistakes were being unrealistic about the strength of the fort and his lack of a sense of history. A defense against the siegecraft of the times had to be futile unless initiative and positive thought went into the defense. Lincoln possessed neither initiative nor the powers of positive thinking. Instead of organizing an all-out attempt to disorganize and push the

43 Ibid, 41-43.

44 Ibid, 46.

British back, he allowed Clinton to advance close to the city's walls. He failed to follow up his one successful sortie with other sorties. Disregarding advice to the contrary, he gave up the Charleston harbor, and tried vainly to perpetuate the defense of Charleston without any kind of naval support.

Though the city of Charleston was lost to the Americans, the struggle for the state of South Carolina went on.

CHAPTER IV

The British Establish a Stronghold

The period between the fall of Charleston and the total collapse of South Carolina, at the battle of Camden on August 16, was a period of tenuous, though heated, pitched battles between the Tories and the Patriots. These battles were marked by some of the most barbaric acts of the war in the South. The British, with men like Tarleton and Major James Wemyss, gave and asked no mercy. Contrary to the moderate Clinton, these men felt that rape, pillage and murder would nullify American resistance to the Crown, but rather than being cowed the Rebels intensified their resistance. Though not too well organized, Patriot attacks were viciously vindictive. (Not until the American Civil War some 85 years later did the States see such brutality as perpetrated by man upon his fellow man.)

After the fall of Charleston, Clinton consolidated British strength around the city and its environs. All Rebel resistance was to be crushed within the province of South Carolina. This accomplished, North Carolina could be invaded. Governor John Rutledge of South Carolina warned high officials of the state, and the sister state to the north, of what he thought were the intentions of the enemy. With Charleston's recent capitulation, Rutledge knew, through intelligence, that under Cornwallis the British would move north in an attempt to pacify South Carolina and, eventually, North Carolina. He even wanted the governor of Virginia alerted, and thought that all three states should raise as many regulars as possible. The militia,

Rutledge felt, was in a weakened condition, disenchanted over the Charleston fiasco. He believed it was imperative that the Northern, as well as the Southern states, be aware of the bitter facts and try their utmost to raise troops to withstand the challenge.

Troops of Continentals and militia were eventually sent south from New York, Virginia and North Carolina, the last of which states alone raised a considerable number of militia to be used later, though ineffectively, at Camden. North Carolina had, in fact, lost the cream of its army at Charleston, and was left virtually defenseless in the face of any British¹ invasion.

For the Tories of North Carolina, Cornwallis was the Messiah. They merely awaited his word to rise up and strike out against the Rebel government. The general himself was interested in a more concerted effort and for the time being asked only for a little patience and more supplies. His wishes, as it turned out, were not to come to fruition, and chaos resulted.

As has been seen, Clinton had deliberately offered lenient surrender terms to gain the confidence and allegiance of the citizens of Charleston and the province of South Carolina. In an attempt to induce the American population into swearing allegiance to the King, Clinton issued a proclamation on May 22: those loyal to His Majesty's Government were to help the

1 Robert O. DeMond, The Loyalists in North Carolina during the Revolution, (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1940), 128-129.

British soldiers drive out the dissident groups from South Carolina; they were to serve in the King's army, being allowed to select the officers who would command them; they were to spend six out of twelve ensuing months in the army and to receive the same pay and provisions as the regular British troops; when their obligations expired they were to be free of any further claims upon them for service in the British army.²

Clinton originally intended to sail into Chesapeake Bay and begin operations there, but certain intelligence reports made it necessary for him to return to New York.³ Cornwallis succeeded him as commander-in-chief of the Southern forces. Under him were 2,542 rank-and-file soldiers, sufficiently strong, he felt, for the time being.⁴ With South Carolina relatively secure for the British, and civil government adequately re-established, attention could be focused on more ambitious enterprises.

To keep South Carolina safe and secure for the British meant retaining as many partisans as possible and to organize them into a defense force. Also, Cornwallis had to maintain a chain of outposts throughout the province, with the base of operations at Charleston. To implement this safety and security, Cornwallis organized a militia force and divided it into

2 Willcox, op cit., Appendix, 440-441.

3 Clark, op cit., Clinton to Cornwallis, June 1, 1780, XV, 245-246.

4 Ibid, May 20, 1780, 242.

two classes. Men over forty years of age comprised the first class. They were to be trained for war but would only be called out during a crisis or an insurrection. The second class was composed of younger men who would serve for six months on active duty in either South Carolina or Georgia.⁵ The militia consisted only of men loyal to the King. Disloyal colonists were ordered to the islands on the coast between Charleston and Beaufort, where their influence would be negligible.

The acquisition and maintenance of outposts in South Carolina by the British brought on some of the most bitter fighting of the war. Because the terrain prohibited formal battles, small pitched battles were the practice, and for the Rebels these encounters had a distinct advantage because they knew the countryside, were expert shots with rifles, were skilled horsemen, and knew the art of hitting and running.⁶ (They later learned, bitterly, at Camden the obvious disadvantages of formal battle.)

The first encounter of any importance between opposing forces, after Charleston, took place at Waxhaw Creek, a small settlement not far from the North Carolina border, inhabited mainly by Patriots. Cornwallis had moved toward Camden to establish that town as the key British supply center in South Carolina. While on the way north from Charleston he had heard

5 Ibid. 249-255.

6 Jac Weller, "Irregular but Effective," Military Affairs, (Fall, 1957), XXI, 118-128.

that Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Buford and about 300 Virginia Continentals were encamped overnight in the Waxhaw area. Buford, having heard of the fall of Charleston, toward which he was moving to help in its defense, reversed his course and headed toward Charlotte, North Carolina. Governor Rutledge was traveling with Buford to help reorganize American resistance, and Cornwallis hoped to snare this Rebel dignitary and his cohorts. Accordingly, he dispatched a detachment of about 100 cavalry to the dauntless Tarleton.⁷

Tarleton had previously been assigned to take prisoners and receive allegiances from the Rebels in the countryside,⁸ and when given this new assignment by his commander, he wasted little time in initiating pursuit of the Patriots. He covered an astounding 155 miles in a mere 54 hours, tirelessly pushing his men forward. If the horses tired fresh ones were seized along the way. On May 29 the British were so close to the Virginia troops that Tarleton sent Buford a set of capitulation terms. He deliberately exaggerated his numbers as 700 light troops on horseback, adding that Cornwallis was nearby with nine British battalions.⁹ Tarleton thought that these "facts" would frighten the Rebel commander into surrendering. "I reject your proposals, and shall defend myself to the last extremity,"¹⁰ was Buford's answer. With Rutledge already in a safe position closer to the border, and with an advance

7 Henry Lee, Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States, (Washington, Printed by Peter Force, North C Street, near Penn Avenue, 1827), 78-79.

8 Tarleton, op cit., 27.

9 Ibid., 28.

10 Ibid., 79, note L.

guard of Virginia troops, Buford reasoned he could afford to defend himself.

Whether Buford's emphatic answer stimulated Tarleton's wrath is academic, but what followed was a grotesque example of human carnage and merciless slayings, unparalleled during the war. Tarleton, already recognized as a military tactician from his victory at Monck's Corner, would now be known by Americans as a sadistic brute incapable of human feelings, and the massacre at Waxhaw Creek was to be a forerunner to indiscriminate brutalities being committed on both sides.

The moment his surrender terms were so firmly rejected by Buford, Tarleton prepared quickly for attack. He placed 50 dragoons and some mounted infantry on the right flank and moved his cavalry straight ahead.¹¹ Buford meanwhile had formed his infantry into one line, with a small reserve force, and ordered his supply wagons to move ahead. Tarleton, wanting to get a better view of the massacre-to-be, directed the British movements from the right flank, and had his horse shot out from under him, later asserting that this incident drove his men to murdering the defenders - an unlikely story since Tarleton had earlier indicated he was against leniency and moderation in warfare.

For some strange reason the Americans withheld any fire until the British cavalymen were a mere 10 yards from the

11 Ibid. 29.

American line. When the British charged, the ammunition then expended by Buford's men did little good and mass confusion resulted on the Rebel side. Some of Buford's men, begging for mercy, were bayoneted to shreds.

Not a man escaped. Poor Pearson Lieutenant was inhumanly mangled on the face as he lay on his back. His nose and lip were bisected obliquely; several of his teeth were broken out in the upper jaw, and the under completely divided on each side. These wounds were inflicted after he had fallen, with several others on his head, shoulders, and arms. ¹²

This incident was typical of what happened to the casualties who lay on the battlefield that day. The American losses were heavy; involving practically every Rebel: 113 killed and 150 wounded. ¹³ British losses were slight: 12 killed and 5 ¹⁴ wounded.

Cornwallis, who praised Tarleton for this smashing victory, was sharply criticized by Americans for allowing the brutalities to happen. He had formerly been held in high esteem by the Americans, mainly for his humanitarian approach toward war, but after this act of barbarism, the public image of Cornwallis ¹⁵ tarnished rapidly among the Patriots. In any event, the defeat at Waxhaw Creek finished what was left of the Continental army in South Carolina.

12 William Dobein James, A Sketch of the Life of Brigadier General Francis Marion and a History of His Brigade, (Charleston, South Carolina, Gould and Milet, 1821), Appendix, 3.

13 Tarleton, op cit., 84.

14 Ibid., 84.

15 Lee op cit., 79-80.

After Waxhaw more atrocities were committed, and accusations of brutalities were flung out repeatedly from both camps. Looting became commonplace because fresh horses, food and clothing were vital in the sweltering summer weather of South Carolina. The Partisans, in particular, availed themselves of every opportunity to obtain these necessities. With no Continental army left in South Carolina, eking out a hand-to-mouth existence was a daily ordeal for the Rebels. Small detachments of British regulars and Loyalists scourged the countryside for whatever they could find. Because these men were generally away from the main base of supply, where the essentials were more plentiful, it was imperative for them to take what they could when and where they could. Pillaging on both sides developed and sustained reciprocal bitter feelings. Eliza Wilkinson, a Patriot, wrote of the enmity between the factions speaking of the surliness and disrespect shown by the British toward her and her female compatriots. She wrote of the threats directed toward her and of the clothes and jewelry the King's soldiers stole.¹⁶

Cornwallis, although aware of such deeds, was more interested in securing his hold on South Carolina than in taking any action against his men for their behavior. Despite a massing of American troops in North Carolina, he continued with his plans for an invasion of that state. His offense would

16 Caroline Gilman, ed., The Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, (New York, 8 Astor House, Broadway, 1839) 27-30.

be launched in late August or early September, he told Clinton in one of his letters. The summer was too hot and sticky for making any move into North Carolina. Besides, he wanted to wait until the harvest was over.¹⁷ In a subsequent letter he mentioned to Clinton the idea for a minimization of the militia and cavalry in his planned invasion of North Carolina, and also for the defense of South Carolina. He pointed out their inexperience, adding that the strain of extra supplies would be a burden.¹⁸ Such thinking was pertinent to the military on both sides for the remainder of the war in the South. The failure of the militia in any organized battle discouraged the use of them in any numbers. Cavalries were generally kept small because of the wild nature of the countryside.

One event which occurred as Cornwallis was in the process of consolidating his strength in South Carolina was of some importance to the future of the British as they moved toward, and eventually into North Carolina. As has been seen, he had wanted the Loyalists (he was sure there were many) in North Carolina to show a degree of patience and restraint until the British actually made a direct move in that direction, but Colonel John Moore, a North Carolina Tory, impulsively decided to take matters into his own hands and by so doing disobeyed the general's orders. With a force of about 1,300 men Moore moved on to the little town of Ramsour's

17 Clark, op cit., Cornwallis to Clinton, July 14, 1780, XV, 253.

18 Ibid, 255-258.

19
Mill on the border.

Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford, with approximately 800 Patriots in his command, entrusted about 300 of the men to Colonel Locke to ward off the Tory threat. The Patriots were poorly armed and had barely enough ammunition to sustain them for any length of time.²⁰ The Loyalists themselves were short on weapons, and both parties were short on battle experience. What followed was a mixture of confusion, chaos and sorrow.

The Tories were encamped on a hill in an advantageous position as the Rebels approached along the road, two deep, with the front columns on horse. When the pickets for the Loyalists saw how close the enemy was, they fled. The Patriots, totally disorganized as they galloped up the hill, fired on the Tories. The Loyalists, also disorganized, regained some of their composure and forced their opponents to retreat down the hill taking part of the infantry that had been following with them. The battle raged up and down the hill, with the Tories eventually permitting some of the Whigs to outflank them and occupy their former position. The fighting was bitter, with much hand-to-hand combat. The Loyalists ultimately withdrew in order to regroup their forces, but could not muster enough men to re-enter the fray, and consequently retired from the battlefield. Moore was chastised by Cornwallis for this impetuous action and lost whatever

19 Morris and Commager, op cit., 1, 117.

20 Lee op cit., 81.

prestige he had achieved earlier. Both sides incurred casualties upwards of 150 apiece. An item of interest is that the Patriots wore pieces of white paper on their hats and the Tories green paper on theirs, in order to tell each other apart because both parties wore practically the same attire. During the heat of the battle many of the Loyalists removed their identifying colors and escaped, unnoticed, through Rebel lines.²¹

The significance of the outcome of this battle was three-fold. First, this abortive attack by the Loyalists was contrary to Cornwallis' plans for invading North Carolina. With this type of maverick attack, organization would be loose and any concerted effort would be difficult.

Second, this was a battle where brother fought brother, and father fought son. It typified the bloody battles occurring in the Carolinas at the time, with not a Continental or a British regular participating.

Third, the extreme disorganization and farcical nature of the battle only served to point out more poignantly the ineptness of the militia in any attempts at more formal, disciplined engagement.

The establishment of outposts in South Carolina was a relatively easy matter for the Crown, the posts being acquired with virtually no opposition. With General Andrew Williamson of the American forces surrendering the fort of Ninety-

21 William Henry Hoyt, ed., The Papers of Archibald D. Murphey, Publications of the North Carolina Historical Commission, 2 Vols., (Raleigh, North Carolina, E.M. Uzzell and Company, State Printers, 1914), II, 222-226.

Six to the British, organized resistance in South Carolina was temporarily halted.²² The British now had 5,400 effectives (Regulars Hessians and Provincials) in South Carolina and approximately 1,100 troops in Georgia.²³

The Crown had continuously strengthened its system of outposts throughout the province of South Carolina. Lord Rawdon commanded the vital supply post of Camden. Major McArthur held the area at Cheraws. A small detachment of Provincials maintained Georgetown. Lieutenant Colonel James Turnbull commanded some militiamen and New York volunteers at Rocky mount. The post at Ninety-Six was held by Provincials under Lieutenant Colonel Nisbet Balfour. Communications among these various outposts were kept open by Tarleton and his feared dragoons. Cornwallis, therefore, from his base at Charleston saw by early June a tight and secure South Carolina.²⁴

In an effort to regain what had been lost and to turn the tide of battle in the South, Congress appointed Gates as commander-in-chief of southern forces, an act that undoubtedly made Gates' good friend, Daniel Morgan, quite happy, but did not improve General Washington's disposition any. Washington felt the man for this position was his trusted subordinate General Nathanael Greene, a man of great military knowledge. Gates was appointed because his influence in

22 Tarleton, op cit. 85.

23 Ibid. 86, note 1.

24 Ibid. 86-87.

Congress was greater than Greene's. In a letter to Samuel Huntington President of Congress, Gates expressed his joy at being selected as the new commander and promised to do his best to serve the general interests of the southern states.²⁵

He wrote to General Lincoln after his appointment and expressed his desire to restore dignity to the command:

I wish to save the Southern States. I wish to recover the territories we have lost. I wish to restore you to your command and reinstate you to that dignity, to which your virtues and your perseverance have so justly entitled you.²⁶

But it was ignominy rather than dignity that characterized Gates' activities as commander of troops in the South.

Gates, like Lincoln before him, was faced with many vexing problems. He had to raise a formidable army. He needed supplies, and he needed loyal support for the American cause. He mentioned the "deplorable" conditions for the quartering of troops in North Carolina. Many obstacles, he said, had to be erased, or "Our army is like a dead whale upon the sea shore - a monstrous carcass without life or motion."²⁷ If Patriot assistance replaced Patriot indifference, Gates felt, then all of South Carolina and Georgia could be retaken, excluding perhaps Charleston and Savannah.

25 Major General Horatio Gates, "Letters," Magazine of American History, (New York and Chicago, 1880), Gates to Huntington, June 21, 1780, V 281.

26 Ibid, Gates to Lincoln, July 4, 1780, 283.

27 Ibid, Gates to Nash, July 19, 1780, 284.

Cornwallis, meanwhile, had written Clinton on July 14 that a mass American troop concentration was reported by intelligence in North Carolina. Baron DeKalb had come south with 2,000 Maryland and Delaware Continentals and was at Hillsborough, North Carolina.²⁸ Actually DeKalb had started his journey south as early as April 16 to reinforce Charleston but didn't arrive at Hillsborough until June. He had encamped there to await further instructions after Charleston had fallen.²⁹ Intelligence further revealed that Lieutenant Colonel James Porterfield was at Salisbury, North Carolina, with 500 Virginia troops. General Richard Caswell with some 1,500 North Carolina militiamen was marching from Cross Creek to Deep River in that state. Sumter was reported to have had approximately 1,500 men gathered around the Catawba settlement. Dissident Scotch-Irish around the Waxhaw area, and the raising of a potential force in North Carolina, forced Cornwallis to strengthen Camden and tighten the web, for it was believed that the American forces would attack there, an assumption that proved to be correct.³⁰

While the Americans were organizing their forces, Cornwallis, lodged in Charleston, was issuing new proclamations, now a little more severe. He realized that paroles were being violated with increasing frequency. One proclamation declared

28 Tarleton, op cit., Cornwallis to Clinton, July 14, 1780, 118-120 note B.

29 Christopher Ward, The Delaware Continentals, 1776-1783, (Wilmington, The Historical Society of Delaware 1941), 331-333.

30 Tarleton, op cit., 118-120.

that anyone caught driving Loyal inhabitants off plantations, and dispersing or stealing cattle would be dealt with harshly, and the owners would be recompensed. Also His Majesty's troops were empowered to impress any cattle necessary for their needs. Loyal subjects were allowed to export rice to Great Britain or Ireland, as long as that rice was not needed by the troops. Inhabitants of the province had to obtain a license from the commandant of Charleston to dispose of land, slaves or horses. This law was enacted in order to protect British merchants and creditors. Violators of the statute were to have their property seized and their land confiscated.³¹ In view of these new developments many Negroes joined the British army, feeling that their servitude would end once they had severed their ties with their masters.³² Among the Patriots these terms of severity only served to intensify the animosity initially provoked by Tarleton and his heinous deeds in the province of South Carolina.

Gates did not arrive at Hillsborough, North Carolina, until July 25, a full six weeks after he had been appointed by Congress as southern commander. While he was attempting to organize the forces in this area, sporadic fighting had been taking place in South Carolina. The Patriots and the Tories were conducting their own kind of personal warfare in this state bitterly and vengefully.

31 Ibid., 121-126, note D.

32 Ibid., 89-90.

On July 30 a council was held among some South Carolina militia officers, and a decision was made to soften up the British so that the main American forces under Gates would find victory easier. Accordingly, the British posts at Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock were chosen as the objects for Rebel attacks. The council, consisting of such militia officers as Sumter, Major William Davie, and Colonel John Irwin, chose these locales because of their strategic importance and easy accessibility.³³

On July 31, Sumter, with a number of South Carolinian refugees, and Irwin, commanding about 300 Mecklenburg militia, marched toward Rocky Mount. At the same time Davie, with a detachment of close to 100 men, advanced to Hanging Rock.³⁴

Sumter was a man of confidence and courage, but he was also impetuous and reckless, especially with the lives of his own men. Approaching Rocky Mount, he attempted by threats to coerce the commander, Lieutenant Colonel Turnbull, into surrendering the fort. The reply was clear and succinct: "I intend to defend to the last extremity."³⁵

The Americans then rushed the fort, an establishment of three log buildings protected by a ditch and an abatis.³⁶

33 Edward McCrady, The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780, 2 Vols. (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1901) 623-624.

34 Ibid., 624-626.

35 Samuel C. Williams ed. "General Winn's Notes, 1780," South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, (October 1942), Turnbull to Winn, July 31, 1780, XLIII, 208.

36 Lee, op cit., 88-90.

Three times the Patriots attacked and three times they were repelled. Without artillery fire the Rebels had little cover to aid them in their siege of the fort. Sumter tried to have his men set fire to the fort, but a heavy rainstorm put a damper on the attempt. The Rebels, completely frustrated, finally retired and made plans to help Davie in his endeavor to capture Hanging Rock.

7 Davie, in the meantime on the way to his destination, had heard that some Loyalists were returning from an excursion and heading back to the post. Not one to pass up an opportunity of this kind, he deviated from his original course and completely surrounded these Tories. Within a short time their numbers were sharply diminished and no prisoners were taken - further proof of the bloody fighting during this period. Sixty horses were taken, along with 100 rifles and muskets.³⁷

Sumter undiscouraged by a little rebuff, reorganized his forces and together with Davie, attacked the British post at Hanging Rock one week later on August 6. The Crown had 500 Loyalists defending this fort under Lieutenant Colonels Brown and Bryan and Major Carden. The encounter here was grueling and as in previous Loyalist-Patriot engagements there was hand-to-hand combat. As at the battle of Ramsour's Mill, not a single British regular was used.

The Americans gained the advantage early but lost it in a short time when drinking and looting so disorganized the

37 Lee, op cit., 89.

Patriots that the Tories were given valuable time to re-organize their forces and to obtain additional troops. Sumter and his men were forced to retreat and another "sure" victory had been turned into another rebuff, lack of discipline being the main cause for the failure. A few days after the vain attack on Hanging Rock, Lord Rawdon withdrew the troops from this post to prepare for the defense of Camden.³⁸

38 Tarleton, op cit., 99.

CHAPTER V

Camden and Conclusion

If Charleston was the greatest defeat the Americans suffered in the South during the Revolutionary War, then Camden was the second greatest, though it was a different sort of engagement. Rather than one side attacking and the other strictly defending, both sides met in a direct confrontation. The battle was a test of strength, and in the end a humiliating blow was dealt to the Americans and their commander, General Horatio Gates. The battle differed from the one at Charleston because at Camden contrary advice was not given as to the propriety of testing and engaging the enemy. The American purpose here was to regain the state of South Carolina, Camden being as good a starting place as any. The mistakes committed here were purely tactical. There was no question about the wisdom of having the confrontation occur or not occur.

Gates was a soldier of basically mediocre talents¹ who had distinguished himself at the battle of Saratoga in the north. However, some historians have questioned Gates' contribution to this victory in the belief that the ineptitude of General John Burgoyne was more pertinent to the cause of defeat than the purported abilities of Gates. General Washington, for one, did not think of Gates as an exceptionally

1 Lee, op cit., Appendix B, 11.

able commander, and he vehemently opposed the Congressional selection of this man as the commander in the South. Despite what Washington and other military leaders of the times thought, Gates was given the task of regaining what had been lost.

Gates was an extremely obstinate individual who revelled in the sweet nectar of victory at Saratoga but who never accomplished much thereafter. He was short of patience and contemptuous of advice offered by subordinates, a characteristic that proved to be fatal at Camden.

On the other side of the battle was Lord Cornwallis, a man of undoubtedly ambitious designs, yet shrewd, attentive, and of considerably more military ability than his adversary. Cornwallis was genuinely admired and respected by the Rebels. However, some of his lustre had been tarnished through the atrocious exploits of Tarleton. The fact remains that with fewer men than Gates commanded, Cornwallis conducted his operations much more masterfully on the battlefield of Camden that historic day of August 16.

When Gates arrived at Hillsborough on July 25 he was full of confidence and envisioned the total defeat and annihilation of the opposing forces at Camden.² Meeting his new commander at Hillsborough was Baron DeKalb, a man of immense popularity

² Gates, op cit., Gates to Porterfield, August 18, 1780, 300-301.

and certainly an able leader, who was destined to lose his life later at Camden. When DeKalb was notified of Gates' appointment he immediately turned over his 2,000 Maryland and Delaware Continentals to his new superior upon Gates' arrival in the camp. The Baron was now second in command. As a matter of fact at the time there were some American leaders and military men who thought he should have headed the Patriots in the South, but because he was a foreigner he had few supporters in Congress.³ DeKalb never resented the fact that he had been passed over by that august body, and on the battlefield at Camden he displayed true valor.

When Gates arrived in camp he was honored with a ceremony appropriate to his appointment as southern commander. Immediately following the ceremony he ordered his men to be ready to march on short notice. This, the first of Gates' numerous mistakes, was an injudicious move, because the troops were underfed and underclothed, and in need of rest before marching further. Rum and rations had been promised by the commander, but these supplies never arrived, and the rash promises made by Gates served to irritate the weary Rebels only the more.⁴

At this time the American troops numbered around 2,500. Besides the Continentals in camp were 120 infantry and caval-

3 Ward, op cit., 334.

4 William Johnson, Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States in the War of the Revolution, 2 Vols., (Charleston, South Carolina, A.E. Miller, 1822), I, Appendix B, 486-488.

ry under Lieutenant Colonel Marquis De La Roverrie Armand, a French volunteer who later was to disgrace himself at Camden. He headed a contingent of men whose officers were mostly⁵ foreigners and enlisted men who were mostly deserters. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Carrington, with three companies of artillery, was also at Hillsborough waiting to march into⁶ South Carolina.

Gates now committed his second blunder. On the 27th of July the Americans broke camp and headed toward Lynche's Creek, a British advance post about 16 miles from Camden. Colonel Otho Holland Williams, his adjutant general, along with other senior officers, tried to persuade Gates to use a different route from the one he selected.⁷ The commander, being his usual self, stubbornly held to his course. Although he had promised to confer with these officers, he never did. Gates had chosen for this march a countryside that was devoid of food, barren, marshy, and replete with Tory sympathizers - hardly a wise selection of a marching route. Gates felt that this route, being the shorter of two possible routes, would expedite the journey. But the British were ready for him, and he was only deluding himself to think that the more expeditious route for the march would be the more advantageous route.

5 Lee, op cit., 93.

6 Johnson, op cit., I, Appendix B, 486-488.

7 Ibid, 486-488.

The longer route, disapproved by the commander, was in a northwesterly direction; it wound its way through friendly country in the Salisbury area. The land was fertile and stopping-off places would have been plentiful. The area was inhabited not by unfriendly Tories but by many people of Scotch-Irish descent, some of the most loyal of American supporters.⁸ Gates had made his decision, however, and a long tortuous march ensued. Sergeant Major William Seymour of the Delaware Regiment described the soldiers' plight in this uninviting country:

Sometimes we drew half a pound of beef per man, and that so miserably poor that scarce any mortal could make use of it - living chiefly on green apples and peaches, which rendered our situation truly miserable, being in a weak and sickly condition and surrounded on all sides by our enemies, the Tories.⁹

The patience and resourcefulness of some of the American officers helped to stifle any thoughts of mutiny among the rank and file.

On August 3 Lieutenant Colonel James Porterfield and a detachment of Virginia militiamen met the main part of the army as it crossed the Peedee River near the South Carolina border. Also meeting Gates on this march was Colonel Francis Marion and about 20 of his men raggedly clad but nevertheless

8 Ibid. 486-488.

9 William Seymour, "Journal of the Southern Expedition," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (1883), VII, 287.

eager to get into the fight. Gates, amused by the appearance of Marion and his men, hastily dispatched Marion and his men from the main body of troops to the interior of the state for reconnaissance movements.

At the time of the crossing of the Peedee River, Gates issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of the area. As in some of Cornwallis' utterances, the usual platitudes were spoken in an attempt to rally the people to the standard of the cause in question. A fight for freedom as against oppression was the issue, Gates said. ¹¹ Amnesty would be given ¹² to those who had been paroled by their conquerors. Gates would have been better advised to save his eloquence, since because of the route he had chosen, as we have seen, there were few friends in this country.

The march continued, and weary spirits were somewhat transformed when the army arrived at May's Mills to rest, and to find useful supplies there. Crops of corn were found and ground in the mills, put to working use again by the hungry troops; also, cattle were slaughtered. Once the soldiers had at least partially filled their empty stomachs, a different mood was displayed temporarily anyway, and they continued ¹³ on their march in a better frame of mind.

10 Johnson, op cit., I Appendix B, 487-488.

11 Tarleton, op cit., 140-142, note K.

12 Ibid., 140-142.

13 Johnson, op cit., I Appendix B, 488.

The British, in the meantime, had not been idle. Having knowledge of the movement of Rebel troops, they began to whip their war machine into shape. Cornwallis alerted of the Rebel march toward Camden, left Charleston on August 10 and arrived in Camden on August 13. The British forces numbered some 1,400 fighting men. These included both Regulars and Provincials. Added to these numbers were 400-500 militiamen and North Carolina refugees, along with another 800 sick and wounded.¹⁴ Cornwallis wrote Lord George Germain at Whitehall about the importance of Camden:

I now had my option to make either to retire or attempt the enemy; for the position at Camden was a bad one to be attacked in, and by General Sumter's advancing down the Wateree, my supplies must have failed me in a few days. I saw no difficulty in making good any retreat to Charles Town with the troops that were able to march; but in taking that resolution, I have not only left near 800 sick and a great quantity of stores at this place, but I clearly saw the loss of the whole province, except Charles Town and all of Georgia, except Savannah, as immediate consequences besides forfeiting all pretensions to future confidence from our friends in this part of America.¹⁵

Both commanders knew the importance of this supply center, not only as it concerned the future of South Carolina but also as it affected the morale of the troops and the progress of

14 Clark op cit., Cornwallis to Germain August 21, 1780, XV, 268-273.

15 Tarleton op cit., Cornwallis to Germain August 21, 1780, 129-130 note F.

the war in the South.

When Gates, after entering South Carolina, headed toward Lynche's Creek Lord Rawdon, commander of the Camden post, moved his forces toward this site away from Camden.¹⁶ Actually this was a very wise move by the British commander: the sick and wounded had been confined to Camden; his stores and his ammunition were here; besides, the ground was favorable here for observing American troop movements. Eventually Rawdon moved back to just outside Camden, where the battle was to take place.

When Gates arrived at Lynche's Creek a few days before the battle of Camden his army had swelled to over 4,000 men with the addition of Major General Richard Caswell's 1,500 North Carolina militiamen. Caswell, now third in command behind Gates and DeKalb, was a man of limited military ability who appeared to be mainly interested in what the fruits of command could bring in the way of his own personal prestige. Brigadier General Edward Stevens joined the main American forces at Rugeley's Mill on the 14th. With him came 700 Virginia militiamen, expanding Gates' ranks still further.¹⁷ The Americans, despite a superiority in numbers over their opponents, had only the 2,000 Delaware and Maryland Continentals as experienced troops.

16 Lee, op cit., 90-91.

17 Ibid., 91.

The Patriots, after remaining at Lynche's Creek for three or four days, moved on to Rugeley's Mill, which the British had evacuated, and here were joined by Stevens. At this point Gates committed his third major blunder. He had previously received word from Sumter that a detachment of British troops from the fort of Ninety-Six was moving toward Camden with a train of ammunition and supplies. Feeling that Sumter could be invaluable in moving up and down the Wateree River, cutting and capturing British supply lines, he dispatched to the eager guerilla fighter 400 troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Woolford, 100 of these being Maryland regulars.¹⁸ Intoxicated with confidence, Gates undoubtedly sincerely felt he could spare these forces, but as the battle of Camden proved, he could ill afford to lose these men. Rawdon had evacuated Rugeley's Mill, and Gates assumed that the British would probably also fall back from Camden. However, Cornwallis had already made it known that his army would make their stand there.

Banastre Tarleton, who had been recovering from a fever, headed north with his dragoons to join the main British forces at Camden. The trip northward was not devoid of the usual Tarleton reminders to the local inhabitants who the King was and where their allegiances should be. His flare for the daring and the dramatic manifested itself in a little escapade.

18 Ibid 91.

By posing as Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, an American officer, Tarleton got himself invited to supper by one William Bradley, a member of Congress. Saying that he was going to attack Lord Rawdon's rear at Camden, Tarleton was led by Bradley through a dense swamp area, the congressman being entirely unsuspecting. When Tarleton's ruse had been successfully completed, the deceived American and his party were arrested, while the dashing Tarleton and his men continued on to Camden,¹⁹ gloating over this success. On August 15 Tarleton apprehended three deserters from the Rebel forces and learned from them that Camden was to be attacked the following morning.²⁰

Before the actual fighting began at Camden an unusual incident occurred. Cornwallis, as we have seen, meant to fight and he set his troops in motion at 10 p.m. on the 15th. He believed the faster he could hit the enemy the better. Gates meanwhile moving toward Camden, had his troops camped at Clermont, near Saunder's Creek, about 7 miles from the British supply center.²¹ Cornwallis had wished to gain a favorable position for the imminent battle, while Gates, ever so confident, thought he could move right through Camden.

The advance parties of both armies met near Saunder's Creek and because of the coincidence of their meeting in this

19 Tarleton, op cit., 100-101.

20 Ibid., 103.

21 Johnson, op cit., I, Appendix B, 494.

way they were completely astonished. A brisk exchange of firing ensued for about 15 minutes, when finally some of Armand's cavalrymen retreated, causing confusion among the Patriot ranks, although Porterfield's light infantry held up well under this fire. With little advantage gained on both sides a retreat was ordered by the respective commanders so that the ranks could be reorganized.²²

Prisoners were taken on both sides and the intelligence gained from these men helped to align the forces for the encounter later in the day. (The confrontation had occurred at about 2 a.m.)

Gates was informed by his adjutant general, Williams, that the British had about 3,000 fighting men, and actually, if sick and wounded were included, the British numbers may have been that high. Surprised at these figures, the American commander immediately called a council of war at which all his leading officers were present. Gates was told that his own actual fighting forces numbered only 3,052 men, not 5,000 or more as expected.²³ (Many of the American soldiers had been rendered too ill to fight by the treacherous journey from North Carolina.) When the 13 general officers assembled for this meeting, Gates asked what was to be done. Silence followed for a few minutes, until General Stevens spoke:
"Gentlemen, is it not too late now to do anything but fight?"²⁴

22 Ibid. 494.

23 Ibid 493-494.

24 Ibid, 495.

Gates readily concurred and not one voice was raised in dissent.

Around dawn on the 16th the British and the Americans prepared their sides for battle. Gates aligned his troops as follows:

On the left flank in reserve was Armand, who seemed to be more interested in personal aggrandizement than in the general welfare of his troops. (He had constantly asked General Washington for a promotion, and in one letter appeared more gravely concerned over the loss of his personal effects at Camden than in the battle itself.)²⁵

In front of Armand was General Stevens and his Virginia Militia. In the center was General Caswell and his North Carolina Militia. To the right of Caswell was General DeKalb and the Delaware Continentals. On the right flank was Brigadier General Mordecai Gist and the 2nd Maryland Continentals. To the rear was Major General William Smallwood and the 1st Maryland Continentals.²⁶

Cornwallis had placed Webster's light infantry on the right flank, augmented by the 23rd and 33rd Regiments. On the left flank were the volunteers of Ireland, the infantry of the Legion and part of Colonel Hamilton's North Carolina Regiment. Rawdon had command of this flank. The 71st Regiment was formed in the rear of the division, with one battalion, the other to the left. Tarleton's dragoons were

25 Marquis De La Roverrie Armand, Collections of the New York Historical Society, (New York), Armand to Washington, October 7, 1780, II, 1878, 314.

26 Gates, op cit., Gates to President of Congress, August 20, 1780, 302-304.

formulated as a reserve unit, a counterpart to Armand's
horsemen.²⁷ The unique point of these groupings was the
fact that the British regulars were facing the green Ameri-
can militiamen.

Early on the morning of the 16th the two lines stood
facing each other not much more than 200 yards apart.²⁸
Gates having been informed of the enemy's position, held
fast until the propitious moment or so he thought. When
this moment arrived the American commander had Stevens move
his Virginia Militia (of the left flank) toward the British
lines. What made Gates think he had chosen the favorable
moment for attack was that he believed the opponents had
not yet stabilized their right flank.

Cornwallis, well prepared, had Webster counterattack the
Virginia Militia and attack he did, for the British rushed
forward with such a surge - firing yelling and brandishing
their bayonets - that the green militiamen panicked, abandon-
ing their arms indiscriminately, and not even firing a shot.
The Americans had placed some 40-50 volunteers behind trees,
perhaps 50 yards from the enemy. Their function was to cover
the Virginia Militia and deter British fire.²⁹ But the British
were not deterred for a minute, because as soon as the Virginians
collapsed practically the entire body of North Carolina Mil-
itia followed suit and fled. It can be said, however, that

27 Tarleton, op cit., 132.

28 Johnson, op cit., I, Appendix B, 495.

29 Ibid., 495.

part of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Dixon's regiment of North Carolinians paused long enough to expend two or three rounds of cartridges at the enemy.

When the entire left flank of the Americans collapsed, the burden of battle fell upon DeKalb, commanding the Delaware and Maryland Continentals. They were virtually surrounded as the British poured in from the left flank, but they held their ground for nearly an hour and on occasion even advanced a step or two. The Maryland 1st and 2nd brigades, complemented by the Delaware battalion, fought a titanic battle this day and deserved all the plaudits rendered them in days past. General Smallwood, who had been commanding the Maryland 1st brigade, was not to be found after the battle had begun. However, other officers spurred the men on to a supreme effort. Colonel Williams knew the end was near for the Patriots when he asked part of the Maryland Continentals not to leave the scene of battle and was told sharply by a senior officer that the brigade was "outnumbered" and "outflanked" and had "done all that could be expected of them."³⁰

Cornwallis sensed complete victory at this point, and seeing no cavalry opposing the innundation of his forces (Armand's men had fled), he unleashed the ubiquitous Tarleton and his dragoons, who completed the rout by pursuing the fleeing militiamen 22 miles to Hanging Rock, where they (the British) finally stopped out of sheer exhaustion.³¹

30 Ibid, 496.

31 Tarleton, op cit., 132-133.

One hour after the battle of Camden had begun it was over. The Americans had fled in all directions. Those fortunate enough not to be taken prisoner or be killed, neither disappeared or defected from the service, not wishing to be rejoined to the American cause. General Stevens tried to rally some of these men but failed because most of them knew their terms of enlistment would soon be up and they had no desire for any further display of courage.

Gates and Caswell had retreated to Clermont in order to rally their troops there but, as in Steven's case, their attempts were in vain. Gates then sped to Charlotte and eventually to Hillsborough (actions for which he was later criticized) to reorganize the American forces, or what was left of them.

The American losses at Camden were astronomical. Besides Baron DeKalb being mortally wounded, 800-900 others were killed and another 1,000 taken prisoner. The Patriots also lost eight brass cannon and 150 supply wagons; ³² Gates and DeKalb's wagons were the only ones untouched. British losses were comparatively light, with 68 killed, 245 wounded, and 11 ³³ missing.

On April 18, two days after the fiasco at Camden, Tarleton dealt the Americans an additional blow. As has been noted, Gates had sent Sumter additional troops to help sever British communications along the banks of the Wateree River. Sumter

32 Ibid. 133.

33 Ibid. 137-138, note H.

had been successful in his endeavors. On the 15th he had defeated a detachment of British soldiers at Carey's Fort, taking 30 prisoners, and immediately thereafter he captured another 70 Britishers.³⁴

Sumter had not immediately heard of the disaster at Camden and so continued along on his merry way, surprising and harassing the enemy. Cornwallis, meanwhile learning of Sumter's actions, had dispatched Tarleton to rid the British of Sumter's presence in the area. Major William Davie, who remained in the Camden area rather than heading north into North Carolina as most of his compatriots had done, warned Sumter of the imminent peril to himself and his troops. The carefree colonel managed to evade both Colonel Turnbull and Major Ferguson (also ordered by Cornwallis to find and seize Sumter) but he made the mistake of staying overnight at Rocky Mount to rest an action which allowed Tarleton, a rapid and relentless pursuer to close in on his prey. Sumter, with about 350 men including a legion cavalry, infantry and corps of light infantry, moved another 8 miles at daybreak on the 18th to Fishing Creek, where he and his men rested once more from the hot summer sun. There he took minimal precautions to guard the post, stacking his arms and allowing his men to indulge in pleasure.³⁵

34 Ibid, 148 note N.

35 McCrady, op cit., 681-682.

Tarleton, who had set out early on the 17th, moved like lightning. By dusk on the same day he saw fires burning from Sumter's camp at Rocky Mount. However, on the morning of the 18th he discovered Sumter and his troops had decamped. Tarleton was now fast on the heels of his intended victim and wasn't ready to let some of his exhausted men and horses stop him. He left about half of his men as a rear guard and went after Sumter with approximately 160 of his most active soldiers. At 12 p.m. on the 18th he caught the Americans napping at Fishing Creek, some reclining, others seemingly indifferent to the rigors of war and the necessary watchfulness.

Seizing his opportunity, Tarleton had his infantry and cavalry charge so quickly that the Rebels were taken by complete surprise. In fact, Woolford's men lost their arms before they could even be assembled. Little resistance was offered the British, and Sumter, in such haste to depart, rode off without saddle, hat or coat, two days later reaching Major Davie's camp at Charlotte. As at Camden, the American casualties were heavy. Many of those who escaped ended up at Hillsborough, via Charlotte, and out of some 5,000 Rebels who were involved in some way or another at both Camden and Fishing Creek, a mere 700 reassembled at Hillsborough.

The American calamity at Camden had several repercussions. A number of reappraisals were made of the American fighting forces. Counteracting DeKalb's brave stand at Camden were two acts of considerable disrepute. First, Colonel Armand, who

had lost almost half his men before he ever reached the battlefield, was seen with some of his company plundering the baggage of the American army during its retreat.³⁶ Second, the whereabouts of General Gates, the hero of Saratoga, was a question mulled over by soldiers, statesmen and historians from that day on. Gates, himself claimed that after failing to rally his troops on the battlefield, he hastily withdrew and sped to Charlotte to set up a defense and later on to Hillsborough to reorganize his troops.³⁷ Some people were quite sharp in their evaluation of Gates' controversial acts. The eminent Alexander Hamilton sardonically ridiculed Gates for his mysterious dashings about:

But was there ever an instance of a General running away as Gates has done from his whole army? and was there ever so precipitous a flight? One hundred and eighty miles in three days and a half. It does admirable credit to the activity of a man at his time of life. But it disgraces the General and the soldiers.³⁸

Armand, after the battle, expressed his desire to see Gates put on trial for his misdeeds at Camden.³⁹ Samuel Smith, a member of Congress, and a relative of Colonel Williams who fought at Camden, also felt that Gates should

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- 36 John H. Stutsman, Jr., "Colonel Armand," New York Historical Society, (January, 1961), XL, 28-29.
- 37 Gates, op cit., Gates to President of Congress, August 20, 1780, 302-304.
- 38 Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 5 Vols., (New York, Columbia University Press, 1961), Hamilton to Duane, September 6, 1780, II, (1779-1780), 420-421.
- 39 General Otho Holland Williams, "Calendar of the General Otho Holland Williams Papers," Maryland Historical Society, (Baltimore, 1940), 22.

40
be put on trial. As it turned out, Gates was later exonerated for his behavior by a committee in Congress, but he never regained the stature he had taken on at Saratoga.

Besides aiming personal vendettas at Gates, caustic tongues lashed out at the faulty fighting style of the Americans. Tarleton, in one of his usual summations, cited three major Rebel shortcomings at Camden. First, he felt that the Americans should have broken into British communications as soon as they had arrived at Lynche's Creek just before Camden. Second, the moving of inexperienced and undisciplined troops at night was unforgivable, because only trained soldiers should have been used in such a strategy. Third, the mixing of militiamen and regulars was disastrous. The militiamen would have been more effective if they had been placed up front, if only for strategic purposes.⁴¹

General Nathanael Greene, perhaps the greatest strategist of the Revolutionary War, saw the untrained body of militiamen as being solely responsible for the debacle at Camden. He thought it was time to raise an army for the war and curtail short-time enlistments. General Washington talked of "a well-organized body of men" disposed to recapture South Carolina, minimizing the militiamen, who were an expensive and unwieldy proposition.⁴²

40 Ibid, 22.

41 Tarleton, op cit., 109-110.

42 Fitzpatrick, op cit., Washington to Rutledge, September 12, 1780, XX, 36-38.

There was no question that the militiamen were inexperienced and undisciplined. The utilization of these men at such a time was ill-advised and unfortunate for the Americans. But what was Gates to do? It was difficult for him to obtain the sorely needed Continentals from Congress at that time.

Camden had taught many American military men a bitter lesson. For one thing, for Gates to oppose the British in open battle in that country was sheer folly. Hit-and-run guerilla warfare was to be more prevalent in the future. Men like Marion and Sumter would prove to be a greater asset to the American cause after Camden. Perhaps the bitterest of all the lessons learned was the fact that the militiamen could not be held totally responsible for Camden or for the type of warfare carried on there. They were simply not trained for such warfare. They had fought bravely at Breed's Hill and subsequently distinguished themselves in hit-and-run warfare throughout the Carolinas. Bayonet fighting and organized warfare was something alien to them.⁴³

South Carolina and Georgia were now completely secure for the British, and North Carolina was at the mercy of Cornwallis. The British now had approximately 7,000-8,000 men in the first two of these three states.⁴⁴ The American

43 Robert C. Pugh, "The Revolutionary Militia in the Southern Campaign, 1780-1781," The William and Mary Quarterly, April, 1957), XIV, 154-175.

44 Fitzpatrick, op cit., Washington to Comte De Guichen, September 12, 1780, XX, 39-43.

government was virtually without finances after five years
of war.⁴⁵

To try to bolster American hopes for victory, General Greene was sent south in October, 1780, as the replacement for Gates. His task seemed almost insurmountable. He would have to acquire manufactured goods from the North. Transportation problems would have to be overcome, to secure the gravely needed supplies. Because population centers were scattered and Tories were in abundance, the raising of an army would not be easy. Also, morale was low because Charles-⁴⁶town and Camden had been humiliating defeats.

The British were now in a position of strength. Not only did they hold the upper hand with the Rebels but they also felt that their ironclad grip on their part of the South would stand them in good stead at the bargaining table with the other powers, namely France and Spain, countries which wished to maintain a balance of power within the world, as Britain realized. The British wished to invoke the "Uti Possidetis Principle" by which they would be given permanently the land they had conquered, meaning South Carolina and Georgia. If the British could put this principle into effect, the Americans could never be as totally independent

45 Ibid, 40-41.

46 Theodore Thayer, Nathanael Greene, Strategist of the American Revolution, (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1960), 283.

as they wished to be, and France and Spain could maintain⁴⁷ zealously their balance of power.

A new chapter of the Revolutionary War was about to begin. For the Americans it would mean an uphill struggle to make themselves a reality as an independent entity. For the British it would mean a life-and-death battle to repossess their colonies and strongly reconfirm their place as the number-one power in the world.

47 Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States, (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), 166.

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