Ruining the King’s Cause in America:
The Defeat of the Loyalists in the Revolutionary South, 1774-1781

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the dynamics of political violence in the Revolutionary South from 1774 to 1776 as manifested in the rebels’ strategy to overthrow the royal provincial governments in that region. It connects the failure of the British to recapture the southern provinces beginning in 1779 to this strategy implemented early in the war. It also offers a logic to the violence of the war in the South, which is often depicted as random and lacking any broader purpose but annihilation of the American Loyalists.

British strategy for the southern colonies throughout the war was heavily reliant on the support of Loyalists, a reality that the rebels understood even before the war began. Most historians who have written on the British southern strategy have argued that the British failure was due to exaggerated reports of Loyalist strength in the South, usually the result of misleading reports from self-interested Loyalist officials or officials in London who had no better solution and grasped desperately for any proposal that looked promising. These historians have often drawn their evidence from the letters of General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, who had similar complaints about the Loyalists, who he believed were to blame for his lack of success.
Recently historians have started to question this historiographical argument, suggesting that those of Loyalist sentiment were more numerous and willing to act than previously assumed. As with their earlier counterparts, however, these historians suggest the rebels undertook an indiscriminate and brutal campaign of violence aimed at simply eradicating Loyalists in a process reminiscent of The Terror to come in the French Revolution. The rebels’ strategy instead emphasized control more than indiscriminate destruction. They were not attempting to eradicate an irreconcilable population or “purify” their society, the actions typically associated with revolutionary violence. The real threat for the rebels was the British rather than the Loyalists. As a result they used violent as well as non-violent measures to control the Loyalists and prevent them from supporting the British. So long as they could maintain that control, they often avoided expending the resources that would have been required to capture, imprison, and even execute large numbers of Loyalists.

The rebels maintained this strategy of control throughout the war, even through conventional military defeats. Though the British had a number of battlefield victories beginning in 1779, they did not understand how to leverage Loyalist support. They instead expected Loyalists to find their own way to British lines, over miles of territory controlled by the rebels. When this did not yield the expected support, the British blamed the Loyalists, calling them weak, lazy, and indifferent. The British debated whether they should organize support through conciliatory measures, including offering political incentives, or through punitive measures to punish those who did not actively support the British. The
historiography mirrors this debate, but neither measure would have brought the British success. They did not understand how the rebels maintained their control over the population, did not prioritize intelligence or other measures that would allow them to tell friend from foe and isolate rebels from the population, and failed to temper expectations for the long-term process of organizing and training Loyalist militia. The British southern strategy was not a hopeless cause, even as late in the war as 1779. The fundamental mistake the British made was instead in failing to first understand their opponent’s strategy.
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“[A]nd thus your Lordship Sees the Consequences of not Protecting & Holding these two Provinces, I always Dreaded it, from the Moment Lord Cornwallis went into Virginia...I fear [it] has Ruined the King's Cause in America.”

- Sir James Wright, Governor of Georgia, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 December 1781

“For my own part I am convinced that, without our friends joining us heartily, though we may conquer, we shall never keep.”

General Sir Henry Clinton, Commander in Chief of the British Army in North America, to Lord George Germain, 6 June 1781
Introduction

Shortly before midnight on the evening of 21 April 1775, a group of men broke into the armory on the upper floor of the State House in Charleston, South Carolina, and stole 800 stands of arms and 200 cutlasses.¹ They stored the heaviest pieces in nearby buildings and the rest in their homes and the homes of their friends. Before dawn, another group broke into and stole all the gunpowder held at a magazine on the Charleston Neck, approximately four miles outside of town. A third group broke into the magazine at Hobcaw Creek, near the confluence of the Cooper and Wando Rivers. Between them, these groups removed over 1,600 pounds of gunpowder. Although these events occurred two days after the battles at Lexington and Concord, the first newspaper reports of those skirmishes did not reach Charleston until 8 May. These men were reacting instead to the recent news of a resolution from the House of Commons in London calling on the individual British colonies in America to make separate applications to the King for redress of grievances. Many of the colonists saw this as an effort to divide the colonies, and break a united front against the King’s ministers in Parliament.²

¹ A stand of arms was a complete set of arms for a single soldier, including musket and bayonet.
Many of the perpetrators were members of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly, the legislative body of the royal government. Only two months earlier, the Assembly assigned a committee to look into the state of the arms and ammunition stored in the armory and in public magazines. On 16 February, the committee reported that many of the arms were in poor condition and that “the amount paid per stand for cleaning them and keeping them in order is too inconsiderable that no one is interested” in that job. The committee recommended improving the condition of the public arms by increasing the amount paid to anyone who would maintain them, and selling those that were in such poor condition that they could not be repaired. The committee also took inventory of the arms, accounting for the location of any sent to other locations, including Fort Johnson on James Island and Fort Charlotte on the Savannah River north of Augusta.³

Less than a week later, another committee that had been ordered to account for the public supply of gunpowder recommended that the two watchmen who were paid to guard one of the magazines be dismissed, claiming that they were only meant to be temporary positions for times of emergency. The next day, however, the Assembly ordered a bill for appointing a new guard at each of the magazines, while also ordering that the powder receiver, the official in charge of the public supplies of gunpowder, increase that supply by purchasing good quality gunpowder from anyone who would offer it for sale. Furthermore, on 1 March, the Assembly heard a motion to provide funding for purchasing a number of stands of arms to be

³ Report of Committee Appointed to Examine the Public Arms, 16 February 1775, Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH).
distributed to those who could not afford their own, for use in the militia and town patrols. In the month before the break-ins at the armory and magazines, therefore, many of the same men who would participate in the theft of arms and ammunition on the night of 21 April recommended and voted for dismissing the existing watchmen at the magazines and replacing them with guards they could appoint and control, while also using royal funds to increase and improve the supply of arms and ammunition that they would then steal only weeks later.

Lieutenant Governor William Bull, who at the time was serving as acting governor, was desperate to put forward at least a façade of effective governance. He had already issued a proclamation offering a reward for the capture of those responsible for the thefts. Having had little success, he wrote to the Commons House of Assembly on the 25 April informing them of the break-ins. In doing so, he was effectively asking those responsible for the thefts to investigate themselves. Two days later, the Assembly replied, telling Bull it was unable to determine who was responsible for the thefts, but suggested it may have been “unknown persons concerned with the latest accounts from Britain.”

Bull also informed the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that not only was there now no gunpowder in any of the public magazines, they also would not be able to obtain any

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4 Report of the Committee Appointed to Audit the Powder Receiver’s Accounts, 21 February 1775, Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, SCDAH; Proceedings of the Commons House of Assembly, 22 February 1775, Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, SCDAH; Proceedings of the Commons House of Assembly, 1 March 1775, Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, SCDAH; Report of the Committee on the Public Arms, 1 March 1775, Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, SCDAH.

new supplies for the time being. The usual method of imposing a powder duty on those ships that carried it into the province for private use was useless until the expiration of an Order in Council issued in October 1774 prohibiting the exportation of arms and ammunition from Britain.⁶

The royal officials in South Carolina, including Bull, were not unaware of the identities of those responsible for the break-ins. A native South Carolinian, Bull was widely respected and friends with many of the rebel leaders, even though he remained loyal to the King. Alexander Innes, the personal secretary of the incoming royal governor Lord William Campbell, arrived in Charleston ahead of his employer and also provided officials in London with an account of events in the colony. He informed Dartmouth that the leadership of the Provincial Congress was responsible for the thefts. The membership of the Provincial Congress was not a secret to someone in Innes’ position, and he knew that it included “many people of the best fortunes in town and country.”⁷ Bull, however, had no evidence that pointed to their guilt. The rebels threatened the State House housekeeper, Mary Pratt, with “terrible vengeance” should she divulge what she had seen. When she was questioned in the following days, she refused to say anything about what happened even when threatened with the loss of her job. Likewise, the head of the town watch, which patrolled the streets, also refused to say anything, despite having had a guard across the street who recognized several of the perpetrators.⁸

⁶ William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
⁷ Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
⁸ William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; Drayton, Memoirs, I, 223. Similar events to the break-ins of 21 April occurred in Savannah on the evening of 11 May, when a group of
The events described above constitute one of many reasons why a history of the British failure to subdue the southern colonies in the American Revolution must begin in 1774 and 1775. Yet the historiography of the American Revolution in the South focuses overwhelmingly on the period beginning in 1780, when the British captured Charleston and attempted to pacify South Carolina. The traditional narrative emphasizes the role of a few key individuals, most notably Major General Nathanael Greene, and the importance of victories in a few key battles as the primary reasons for the failure of the British to reclaim the southern provinces. Understanding why the British failed to retake the southern provinces in the final years of the war, however, requires a similar understanding of how they lost those provinces in the first place. The events of 21 April 1775 and their aftermath provide insight into the ways in which the rebels weakened and eventually overthrew royal authority in the South. Those events illustrate many of the elements of the rebel strategy, including the organization of forces to compete with the government’s monopoly on the military power, the use of intimidation to control the population, the ability to work from inside the government to bring about its collapse, and manipulation of the government into adopting counterproductive measures that benefitted the rebels at the expense of royal authority. There was continuity in the rebel strategy in the South throughout the war, even when most of the action took place in the northern theater prior to 1778. The rebel strategy for forcing the British men broke into the magazine where the public supply of gunpowder was stored. They sent part of the powder to South Carolina for safekeeping and kept the rest in their own cellars. Unlike the similar events in Charleston, this was a reaction to news of Lexington and Concord that arrived in Savannah the previous day. Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), X, (Savannah: The Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 23; Carl Solana Weeks, Savannah in the Time of Peter Tondee (Columbia: Summerhouse Press, 1997), 185.
out of the southern provinces in 1775 and 1776, therefore, provides the key to explaining the British failure in the southern campaign in 1780 and 1781.

**Debating the Southern Strategy**

There are three broad elements to the current historiography of the American Revolution in the South. The first element addresses British reliance on Loyalist strength in the South, a key element of their “southern strategy.” The British envisioned Loyalists providing a significant manpower reserve that would be able to hold conquered territory as the British army moved north, at a time when increasing global commitments created manpower constraints on the army.

Historians have generally argued, however, that, deceived by self-interested provincial officers and prominent Loyalists, or as a result of wishful thinking, the British vastly overestimated Loyalist numbers and strength in the southern colonies. Only recently have historians started questioning this assessment, arguing instead Loyalist strength was greater than previously assumed. Even with this revisionism, however, a second argument holds that the lack of Loyalist support

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beginning in 1779 was the result of a campaign of indiscriminate violence and terror by the rebels against Loyalists. The rebels, often acting as street mobs or vigilantes, unleashed a paroxysm of leaderless grass-roots violence that demonstrated little strategic purpose. The final element of the historiography attempts to address in greater detail why the British southern strategy was unsuccessful. Some historians argue the British were not punitive enough in their actions to force an end to the rebellion. Most historians, however, argue that the British were too punitive, focused excessively on military operations, and were unwilling to conciliate the rebellious inhabitants, or “win hearts and minds,” with political, economic, and other concessions.

Each of these claims requires fresh examination. The claim that the British overestimated Loyalist strength in the South was heavily influenced by similar claims made by General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, who commanded British forces in the South. Faced with a disappointing show of support from the Loyalists throughout 1780 and into 1781, Cornwallis eventually lost whatever faith he had in the southern strategy. This led him from North Carolina into Virginia, where he ultimately met his defeat while pursuing what he believed would be a more effective strategy of destroying rebel supply depots that he was convinced were critical for sustaining the rebels in the Carolinas and Georgia. Cornwallis’s letters from both during and after the southern campaign are highly disparaging of southern Loyalists, accusing them of cowardice, stupidity, deception, and indifference. Cornwallis’s letters provide an extremely comprehensive insight into the war in the South, and historians have relied heavily on them. As a result, they often echo many of
Cornwallis’s thoughts and opinions on the rebels, on subordinate British officers, on Loyalists, and on the efficacy of the southern strategy itself. In these letters, however, Cornwallis was often self-serving and contradictory, and made very different arguments depending on the situation or the correspondent. It is therefore necessary, when using this source, to provide complete context by comparing what Cornwallis said at different times and to different correspondents, and how his comments compare to what others saw and were telling him.

Many of the most prominent historians of the war in the South wrote during or in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, when a strategy that emphasized “hearts and minds” fell short of expectations for recruiting support from the Vietnamese peasantry. This contributed to the conclusion that revolutionary support for the Viet Cong must have been so strong that there was little chance for the Republic of Vietnam and its American allies to prevail. Many of these historians applied this conclusion and their understanding of the nature of revolutionary warfare to their work on the American Revolution. Don Higginbotham argues that the British demonstrated that “they could care less about hearts and minds,” and the Southern strategy “probably...would have succeeded only if the former rebels were shown real leniency and a better life under British rule.” Paul H. Smith attributes British failure to a reluctance to offer “favourable concessions” and “generous inducements” to win support. Piers Mackesy concurs with Smith, faulting General Henry Clinton, commander in chief of British forces in North America, for his hesitation in restoring civil administration to South Carolina. John Shy takes the post-Vietnam lesson further, arguing that the size and nature of American society “almost guaranteed the
military outcome and powerfully affected the political outcome [of the war].”

Furthermore, all of these historians agree that the British overestimated Loyalist strength in the southern provinces either as a result of being misled by self-interested parties or out of self-delusion when faced with the general lack of British success in the war.11

The second broad argument in the historiography, that the rebels overthrew the British provincial governments and maintained political control throughout the war primarily through indiscriminate or mob violence directed against Loyalists and government officials, must also undergo reexamination. One historian attributes the violence in Charleston early in the war to “street gangs.” Another argues the objective of the rebels was little more than “bludgeon[ing] the Loyalists...into submission.”12 One historian does note that the rebels made a conscious choice to be

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11 Higginbotham, “Reflections on the War of Independence,” 20-21; Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, 62-66, 141; Piers Mackesy, The War for America 1775-1783 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 341; John Shy, A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 131; See also Nadelhaft, The Disorders of War, 58-61. Smith explains the assumption underlying all of these arguments, that the British mistake was failing “to see that a permanent restoration of law and order in South Carolina rested not on the strength of the Loyalists...but on the pacification of the revolutionaries.” Critical to Smith’s claim is the argument that by 1780 the British had, for a time at least, ended most resistance in the southern provinces. If this claim is demonstrated to be incorrect, however, Smith’s initial assumption, that the British should have been focused on conciliating the rebels rather than organizing Loyalist strength becomes problematic. As initial British thinking about the southern strategy correctly showed, the latter was necessary to accomplish the former. See also Leslie Hall, Land & Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia (Athens: The University Press of Georgia, 2001), xi-xiv. Hall argues “As the war progressed, military and civilian authorities on both sides came to recognize that civilians would give their allegiance if their property rights were protected.”

less violent than they could have been. He nevertheless sees this as a necessary result of a weakness in the rebels’ position that forced them to constrain their violent impulses and work within a legal framework in an effort to win support.¹³ Still other historians have focused more generally on the use of violence throughout the colonies in the American Revolution. Peter Thompson compares the American Revolution with the French Revolution, and argues that in both instances, common people advocated for the implementation of terror. He uses the thesis proposed by Sophie Wahnich, a historian of the French Revolution, that “Citizens [in France] asserted their sovereignty by demanding to be the first agents of public safety,” in the context of the American Revolution. Wahnich, however, argues that in the French Revolution the Terror was a type of cleansing for the purification of the body politic. The notion of an enemy in the French Revolution was “inscribed...in the order of the sacred.” She also argues, “This enemy is irreconcilable because he infringes the sacred order, in which God, nature and men are very clearly associated.”¹⁴

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¹³ T.H. Breen, American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 18. While Breen’s observations about the use of violence are correct, contrary to his explanation, this dissertation argues the rebels limited their violence because it was strategically unnecessary to waste resources on mass imprisonment, execution, and extreme violence, when they only needed to control the Loyalists.

This argument, that key events during the first years of the war were the result of a reign of terror carried out by a rabble or an enraged mob consisting largely of the lower and middle classes, is part of a rejection of “the great men – the founding fathers – of the revolutionary era,” which “dominate the reigning master narrative.” Gary Nash, for example, gives the majority of credit to “those not in positions of power and privilege,” and “those in the nether strata of colonial society and those outside ‘respectable’ society.” Without these “oppressed people...from the middle and lower ranks of American society,” Nash argues, “the American Revolution would never have occurred.” Patrick Griffin echoes this sentiment, arguing that war unfolded as it did not because of the “foundational myths,” but because “men and women, many before voiceless, began to act in self-sovereign ways.” T.H. Breen points to “a radically new form of politics, a politics practiced out-of-doors, in which women and the poor experienced an exhilarating surge of empowerment.” Benjamin Irvin also described the many ways in which “The people out of doors articulated their political will” and influenced the proceedings of the Continental Congress.  

These arguments, however, are based on the assumption that if the Revolution cannot accurately be described as the work of only a very

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select few individuals, celebrated and mythologized today as “founding fathers,”
then it was therefore faceless crowds, oppressed peoples, and the middle and lower
classes who were primarily responsible for the war’s course by exercising their own
sovereignty.

The third element of the historiography of the southern strategy also merits
reconsideration. The British did not fail because they were too conciliatory and
could not match alleged rebel brutality, or because they were too punitive,
emphasized military operations at the expense of civil government, and failed to win
hearts and minds. The British themselves engaged in the same debate, and their
focus on this false dichotomy helps explain the real reason they were unsuccessful.
They believed they either needed to appeal to or punish the inhabitants of the
southern provinces to obtain their support. Some believed the reintroduction of
benevolent British authority, underwritten by the defeat of the rebel army, would
appeal to Loyalists to provide active support and to the lukewarm rebels to once
again support the British Crown. Others believed a punitive approach was necessary
to compel the rebellious colonists to capitulate.16 These choices, however, assumed

16 Historians such as Shy, Higginbotham, and Smith have mostly argued that British failure in the
southern campaign came as the result of being too punitive and not winning “hearts and minds.” See
also, Rachel N. Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina
Backcountry, 1775-1782,” Hoffman, et al., eds., An Uncivil War, 63. Some historians, however, have
argued the British were too conciliatory, and refused to “use terror, oppression, confiscation, and
brutality on a grand scale.” Franklin and Mary Wickwire, Cornwallis and the War of Independence
(London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 172-173; Ian Saberton, The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of
1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theater of the American Revolutionary War, IV (East Sussex: The Naval
the inhabitants had complete freedom to decide which side to support, and usually failed to account for the enemy.\(^1\)

**The Enemy Has a Vote**

The southern strategy failed because the British could not mobilize sufficient active Loyalist support. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that this was because Loyalists did not exist or because of indiscriminate rebel violence or terror. The arguments posited above that attempt to explain why the British lost ignore the more important question of why the rebels won. In this respect, the focal point of studies of the war in the South must move to the events of 1774 through 1776, more than five years before the fall of Charleston. The rebels did not make the same mistake as the British in failing to appreciate their opponents’ strategy. As it became clear by the end of 1774 that the resistance to British policies that had been building for years was likely to spill over into war, the southern rebels realized that the North would constitute the primary theater of the war, and they would have to rely mostly on themselves for their own defense. Likewise, they knew the British faced the same situation, and would therefore have to rely heavily on Loyalist support to hold the southern provinces.

The rebels therefore devised a strategy that emphasized population control to prevent Loyalists from providing assistance to the British. The southern colonists had significant experience in population control to protect against a threat from

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within their society. They spent years refining slave codes and operating slave patrols intended to control the movements and actions of their slave populations. As a result, even when they believed in 1775 that the British might send an army against them, and when the British did send an army in 1776 and again in late 1778, the rebels continued to prioritize controlling Loyalists over offering battle to regular British armies. They understood that the British would never be able to send enough men to both conquer and control the southern provinces without the support of the Loyalists, and if they remained focused on preventing this support they would be able to exhaust and outlast the British.

The American Revolution, like all wars, was certainly violent, but studies of violence during this war lack a full appreciation of how and why the rebels applied this violence. The rebels in the South used none of the metaphors of purification or notions of an irreconcilable sacred order that Thompson suggests through application of Wahnich’s thesis on the French Revolution. The rebel strategy was far more pragmatic than this. In an effort to prevent the Loyalists from providing the British the support the latter would need to conquer and hold territory, the rebels worked both from within and from outside the royal provincial governments to undermine and eventually overthrow them, expand the reach of their own governance, establish control over the use of force in the colonies, and intimidate royal officials and other potential opponents into silence and acquiescence. At the same time, they established new organizational structures that would serve as alternative sources of power and compete with a weakened royal government for control over the very people each side would need to ensure success. Meanwhile,
the British reaction would demonstrate their fundamental inability to understand the nature of the rebel strategy. They reacted slowly, with the governors often failing to recognize when colonists used their official positions in the royal governments in support of the rebellion. Furthermore, those who did understand what was happening were limited by bureaucratic constraints that prevented them from dismissing and replacing these officials without official approval from London.

The rebels did use violence and threats of violence to establish control over the inhabitants of the southern provinces, but this was only part of a strategy that preferred control over their political opponents to destruction. The rebels developed a networked system of revolutionary committees and congresses at the provincial, regional, and local levels that used a variety of methods to develop in-depth intelligence on the inhabitants of the provinces, identify Loyalists, prevent groups of Loyalists from assembling, and restrict their movements. They forced Loyalists to sign oaths of loyalty, or an Association, to tie them to the rebel cause. While one historian argues these oaths were “an indication of the weakness of the Whig cause,” they served an important purpose for the rebels.\textsuperscript{18} Since they required all inhabitants to subscribe to the Association, in addition to breaking the connection between at least some of the Loyalists and the British, it also acted as a rudimentary census that assisted the rebels’ shadow governments in collecting intelligence on the population. The rebels instituted levels of redundancy as well, as they understood not everyone would abide by an oath, and the uniform

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] Pancake, \textit{This Destructive War}, 78.
\end{footnotes}
enforcement of Associations allowed the rebels to maintain a system for monitoring
the actions of any suspected persons.

The rebels also blocked communications between the British Army and
Loyalists, between British officials in the northern and southern theaters, and
between British officials North America and London. At the same time they
facilitated their own communication networks, particularly between officials in
different provinces. As they moved information and news more quickly throughout
the colonies than the British could, the rebels were able to establish the narrative of
the conflict and create a sophisticated propaganda system. Hoping to prey on fears
of slave insurrection and Indian attacks among rebels and Loyalists alike, the rebel
leadership spread accusations that the British intended to arm the Indians and the
slaves to attack the white inhabitants in the southern provinces. Underwriting the
entire strategy was the implicit, and at times explicit threat posed by the
reorganized rebel militia and newly formed regular provincial regiments.

Elites and Non-Elites

Two assumptions in particular influence many historians of the war in the
South to emphasize the importance of non-elites. The first is that the collapse of
royal provincial governance caught the elites unaware, and they were instead forced
into revolution to different degrees by other actors, including merchants, Indians,
slaves, and other non-elites. The collapse of royal governance then led to
unintended anarchy since there was no infrastructure in place to assume
responsibility for maintaining order. This dissertation will show, however, that there were governance structures in place before the collapse of the royal governments, and that in fact those structures brought about the collapse of royal governance. This suggests a more deliberate and concerted strategy was at work in the colonies, most likely overseen by those individuals who were already in positions of authority and in a position to direct such a complex organizational undertaking.

The second assumption that influences bottom-up interpretations of the war is the belief that an insurgency can only succeed with mass ideological mobilization of those inclined to give it their support. This view of insurgency is predominant among historians writing during and since the Vietnam War, in part because it is heavily influenced by Maoist and Marxist theories of revolutionary warfare. T.H. Breen argues, “the towns and counties throughout America encouraged expanding the traditional pool of people involved in local political affairs” such that “the insurgency thrust thousands of new men into positions of political responsibility.” This follows from his assumption that to “mobiliz[e] popular support,” the rebels had to “arouse basic passions,” or conduct a process of ideological mobilization in support of rebellion.

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The rebels certainly built a popular base of support in the American Revolution using a powerful and persuasive message against the Crown, and it is not my intention to suggest otherwise here. A closer examination of the role of the Loyalists, however, suggests the rebel success was just as much about the ability to control ideological opponents to prevent the enemy from leveraging their support.\(^2\) The argument that mass numbers of non-elites were responsible for pushing the Revolution forward and the elites were, if anything, concerned about the increased anarchy that resulted, does not fit easily with Breen’s correct observation that the rebels generally limited violence against Loyalists.\(^4\) Such a vast increase in the number of individuals unaccustomed to leadership roles suddenly exercising enormous power would have made it very difficult to constrain violence. It follows from the observed levels of violence that a much smaller group exercised real power in the rebellion, and did so with a relatively narrow set of criteria for using this violence.

Any explanation of how the rebels managed to succeed, seemingly against all odds, must therefore first consider their efforts to prevent the British from

\(^2\) Some historians, such as Rachel Klein, argue the rebel leadership built a base of support in South Carolina by “Recognizing both the ambition and the local authority of backcountry men of influence” and “offering access to political and military positions” in a bid to “win support” from these men. While Klein is correct, her timeline suggests that these attempts at persuasion were not the most important element of the rebel strategy for developing that support. She argues the lowcountry rebel leadership provided these political concessions in the state constitution of 1776, which “greatly increased the political influence of frontier settlers.” Meanwhile, Ronald Hoffman argues, “by the end of 1776 these constitutions made little difference, because the authorities exercised by the central governments in the backcountry had vanished.” This dissertation argues that the rebels established control over the province’s population, particularly in the backcountry by the end of 1775, before the state constitution was passed, and did so using force, coercion, intimidation, and propaganda. Rachel N. Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1782,” Hoffman, et al., eds., An Uncivil War, 48-49; Hoffman, “The ‘Disaffected’ in the Revolutionary South,” Young, ed., The American Revolution, 292.

\(^4\) Ibid., 9.
successfully implementing their own strategy, dependent as it was on the Loyalists.

John Shy also asks, “How a national polity so successful, and a society so relatively peaceful, could emerge from a war so full of bad behavior, including perhaps a fifth of the population actively treasonous (that is, loyal to Crown).” Any attempt to answer this apparent contradiction must acknowledge that there was a purpose to the violence the rebels used, and that rather than eliminate political opponents, the intention was instead to control the Loyalist population.

The historiographical movement away from the founding fathers narrative has therefore moved too far in the direction of non-elites, assigning more agency

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23 Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 15. Robert Weir posits another answer to this conundrum, namely that at the end of the war, and in its immediate aftermath, the rebel leadership in South Carolina believed that “being too soft on offenders...invited the populace to take care of the matter in its own way and risked a popular challenge to duly constituted authorities.” The leadership therefore decided that “punitive legislation” consisting of property confiscation, disenfranchisement, and other relatively mild punishment would “obviate the need for private initiative in the matter” of “punishing the loyalists.” They could then demonstrate mercy by hearing petitions to lessen punishments. There is much to support Weir’s argument, but it does face the same problem as the arguments of Breen and other historians who take a “bottom up” approach depicting an elite leadership struggling – and often failing – to maintain its own legitimacy and authority in the face of overwhelming pressure from below. As with Breen’s argument, thousands of individuals exercising such enormous newfound political power does not fit with the relative restraint and lack of violence on the part of the rebels that both Breen and Weir observe. It is difficult to believe an unruly crowd thirsty for vengeance and likely to unleash enormous bloodshed if given the opportunity would suddenly be content with such limited and restrained punishment by the elites in the legislature. There has to be some mechanism that prevented the emergence of a “Terror.” It is my contention that the general restraint Weir cites, shown by the rebel leadership late in the war and in its aftermath, was consistent throughout the war. He comes close to acknowledging the likelihood of this conclusion by noting that the leadership after the war also preferred specific legislative punishment over a general amnesty as a way to demonstrate the authority of the legislature and show that it could both punish and be merciful. Again, however, there would have had to have been some mechanism by which a rebel elite that for more than five years had lost all authority to the mob and was desperate to maintain its own status in the midst of anarchy was suddenly able to exercise such total and effective control over the entire province and the population. Weir, “The Violent Spirit,’ the Reestablishment of Order, and the Continuity of Leadership in Post-Revolutionary South Carolina,” Hoffman, et al., eds., An Uncivil War, 88-91. See also, Hoffman, ‘The ‘Disaffected’ in the Revolutionary South,” Young, ed., The American Revolution, 312-313.
and significance to “the crowd” than it deserves.24 Particularly in the southern provinces, the descriptions provided by Nash, Griffin, Breen and others are at most applicable to resistance activity prior to 1774. By the time events came to a head at the end of 1774 and first months of 1775, and resistance broadened and became a rebellion, a core leadership group had emerged. Indeed, in return for the responsibility and personal risk the members of this core leadership group assumed, they insisted on strict centralized control over the movement. Far from being the work of faceless crowds, or even the thousands of new political actors Breen cites, the critical events beginning in 1774 were almost always at the direction of the core leadership of the revolutionary government in the southern colonies. The rebels’ success can be attributed to this centrally directed strategy of political violence applied to extend control over the people, political institutions, and territory of the provinces.

The coordinated nature of the break-ins at the statehouse in Charleston and the magazines at Hobcaw Creek and on Charleston Neck support the contention that the rebel actions were not the work of a spontaneous or leaderless mob. They were instead the consequence of in depth debate over and rejection of the Parliamentary resolution by the revolutionary General Committee, one of the organizations within the shadow government in South Carolina that had been meeting since 1774 to direct resistance in the province. Furthermore, the Secret Committee, a sub-

committee of the Provincial Congress, the revolutionary legislative body in the colony that was established in January 1775, planned and directed the break-ins of 21 April. Most of the men serving in these institutions are little-known today and were not the traditional “founding fathers,” but they were nevertheless members of the elite within their communities. They included members of the new Provincial Congress, as well as delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Many of them had served in leadership positions under the royal provincial governments and would largely continue in similar positions in the rebels’ shadow governments. It was often in their interests to hide the extent of their control and make it seem like their decisions were the actions of the crowds to confer a sense of legitimacy to their decisions. Nevertheless, many of the key events involving crowd action in the early years of the Revolution in the South were far less spontaneous than these elites wished them to appear.

**The Strategy Holds**

Contrary to the narrative of the southern war that emphasizes the role of a few key individuals and battles that ended what was largely uncontested British control in South Carolina after the fall of Charleston, the rebels in the South were able to maintain their strategy of population control throughout the war. They did so through the collapse of the royal provincial governments, through the first probing attempts by Loyalists and the British in Florida and the Indian territory to recapture the southern provinces, and even after the full scale British invasion of the southern provinces at Savannah in December 1778 and Charleston in the spring of 1780. They were also able to undertake their own successful pacification campaign
in 1775 in the South Carolina backcountry, where Loyalist strength was concentrated, by emphasizing control even when it meant avoiding open battle. The makeup of the rebel leadership in the southern provinces did not remain the same throughout the war, as those who led the implementation of the rebel strategy in 1775 were not necessarily the same ones who were leading the rebels by the end of the war. Nevertheless, the strategy remained constant throughout, with the rebels focused on isolating the Loyalists and preventing them from supporting the British. This allowed the rebels to frustrate British efforts and force them to overextend and exhaust themselves.

An example of this strategy occurred after the fall of Savannah in December 1778, when the British attempted to take Augusta to open communication with the backcountry, and later, when they tried to test Charleston's defenses. On both occasions the British soon found their lines of communication with Savannah overextended and with little of the Loyalist support they expected, even though they had made no effort to organize that support. They made similar mistakes the following year, after taking Charleston. The British learned in 1775 and 1776 that the rebels were able to prevent Loyalists from assembling and marching to the support of the British. Certain British officials concluded that if they wanted Loyalist support they would need to provide regular forces to meet the Loyalists where they lived and organize them on the spot, breaking rebel control over them in the process. In both Georgia and South Carolina, however, the British ignored this lesson and again operated on the assumption that individual Loyalists would march, potentially
from miles away, to meet the British, exposing themselves and their families to retaliation in the process.

Since the logical conclusion of this assumption was that organizing Loyalists would require little effort beyond showing up, the British allowed themselves to become distracted by the temptation to fix and destroy the rebel army. With the rebels avoiding open combat with the British army, however, the British found themselves chasing an army around the southern provinces that it could never completely defeat. On the few occasions prior to 1781 when they attempted to face the British in open battle, the rebels usually suffered overwhelming defeat. Even on these occasions, however, they were able to reconstitute themselves and continue to implement their strategy of targeting Loyalists. Loyalist support was supposed to assist the British in defeating and holding territory, as well as reasserting political authority. The British, however, largely ignored that critical first objective, and then wondered why they lacked the Loyalist support necessary to complete the second.

Another assumption underpinning the southern strategy by 1778 was that the British had to that point been relying too heavily on military means to break the rebellion. Rather than consider the ways in which military force was being used, the British made a binary assumption that if military means had not worked, they would have to resort to a political solution of appealing for support by reestablishing civil government. The British took this step in Georgia, but it was the man who took office as governor, Sir James Wright, who recognized that the province was not in a state of security conducive to restoring government. Wright, who had also been governor prior to the collapse of British provincial rule in Georgia in 1776,
repeatedly insisted on the necessity of military support throughout the province to protect settlements, isolate the rebels, and break their control over the population before any significant steps could be taken to hold elections and restore government. He grew increasingly frustrated as the British moved into South Carolina before Georgia was pacified, and into North Carolina while rebels still operated in South Carolina and Georgia. He made the sensible observation that the British continuously pushing their lines forward into the next province would only result in defeat as the provinces in their rear, with the exception of a few British enclaves, remained firmly under rebel control. Cornwallis and other military commanders, who were more comfortable with conventional operations than the messy and unfamiliar business of pacification, ignored his pleas for support, as did government officials in London, whose desperate eagerness for news of success led them to prefer the optimistic assurances provided by those same military commanders.

Organization

While this dissertation covers the southern campaign of the American Revolution, it focuses only very briefly on the well known names of that campaign, like Nathanael Greene, and the well known battles, such as Sullivan’s Island in 1776, Camden and King’s Mountain in 1780, or Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse in 1781. This is not intended as an attempt to diminish the military, political, and cultural importance of those individuals and battles. The purpose, instead, is to shed light on everything that occurred between those battles that contributed to the success of the rebel strategy. The individuals examined in these pages were the societal elites in their time, but are nevertheless relatively unknown today except for streets or
towns that bear some of their names. The intention is to provide a new understanding of key individuals and ideas in the War for America, and shift the accepted inflection points of the war in the South to provide a new narrative of the role of the rebels, Loyalists, and British in that conflict.

The dissertation is divided into three parts. Part One, which includes the first eight chapters, outlines the dynamics of the rebel strategy as implemented between 1774 and 1776. Chapter 1 covers the new shadow governments the rebels built beginning in late 1774, the “Association” they forced inhabitants to sign to ensure their loyalty, and their efforts to enforce the Association. Chapter 2 covers the efforts to dismantle the Crown governments, both through the use of shadow governments and enforcement of the Association, as well as from within the royal governments, where many rebels still served in the provincial assemblies and in government positions. Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which the rebels seized control of the monopoly on the use of force in the provinces, allowing them to enforce their edicts. This included taking over the militias, organizing provincial forces, and stealing desperately needed gunpowder from the British. Chapter 4 details the rebels’ efforts to isolate the royal governments in the South from each other, from the commander in chief in Boston, from officials in London, and from supporters in the provinces. Chapter 5 shows how the rebels used fears of British-supported slave insurrections to win the support of Loyalists who feared insurrection just as much as the rebels did, while Chapter 6 shows how they did the same with reports of alleged British support for Indian attacks on white inhabitants on the frontier. Chapter 7 details the rebels’ effort to pacify the South Carolina
backcountry, where Loyalism remained strong, at the same time they were
overthrowing the royal government in Charleston. Chapter 8, the last chapter in Part
1, looks at how the various elements of rebel strategy discussed in the previous
chapters allowed for an overwhelming rebel victory over Loyalists in February 1776
at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in North Carolina.

Part Two, which consists of Chapter 9, covers the years 1776-1778, and
serves as a bridge between Parts One and Three. It covers the period in which the
southern provinces faced no significant British military threat, which allowed the
rebels to consolidate control in the newly formed states by refining and further
developing the policies introduced in the first years of the war. This chapter also
covers the three expeditions the rebels mounted from Georgia to try and conquer
the province of East Florida by taking Saint Augustine to end Loyalist raids from that
province into Georgia. The problems the rebels faced, largely of their own making,
portended the troubles the British would face in their operations in the same
general geographic area beginning in 1779.

Part Three covers the years 1778-1781, including British planning for, and
execution of the southern strategy. These chapters are not intended to be an
exhaustive account of the southern campaign, but instead to show how the British
did or did not recognize the dynamics of the strategic situation in the South and how
they responded to the rebels’ strategy of population control. Chapter 10 covers the
formation of the Southern Strategy, the British capture of Savannah in December
1778, the army’s time in Georgia, and ends with plans for the conquest of South
Carolina. Chapter 11 covers the period from the fall of Charleston in May 1780 to
April 1781, when Cornwallis abandoned the southern strategy and marched into Virginia with a very different strategic objective in mind. These chapters cover the confused and haphazard military operations, the British inability to raise and organize Loyalist support, their attempts to instead appeal to the inhabitants with the restoration of civil government, and details the observations of Governor James Wright of Georgia, who realized more so than most other British officials, the problems with the implementation of the southern strategy.

In reexamining the basis for rebel victory in the American Revolution, I hope to reframe the debate on the British inability to leverage Loyalist support. This dissertation will show the need to go beyond the traditional arguments that they did not offer sufficient incentives to “win hearts and minds,” or were not sufficiently punitive and coercive. I also intend to show that there was a purpose to rebel violence in the war. It was not dictated by rebel weakness, nor was it simply to eradicate internal enemies. The Loyalist population was not even the ultimate target of rebel violence. The overarching objective behind everything the rebels did was to prevent the British from retaking control of the southern provinces. This conclusion, and the British failure to understand the dynamics of the rebel strategy reveals that many inhabitants in the South had less freedom than is often assumed to choose which side to support. It is my hope that this leads to a reconsideration of the way we think about how loyalties are and are not put into action, and the consequences of this process for military strategy.
PART ONE: 1774-1776
Chapter 1: A New Government is in Effect Erected

On the second day of June in 1775, Michael Hubart was visiting the Charleston home of his neighbor Thomas Nicoll when another Charleston resident, James Dealy, entered the house and announced, “there was good news come to town.” Dealy, a Loyalist, explained that a shipment of arms was on its way from England “to be distributed amongst the Negroes, Roman Catholics, and Indians.” Hubart, a Protestant, disagreed that it was good news “that Roman Catholics and Savages should be permitted to join and massacre Christians.” The Catholic Dealy responded that, “he had arms, and would get arms, and use them as he pleased.” Sometime shortly after this discussion, both Dealy and Hubart left Nicoll’s, and Hubart returned to his own home. Later that day, Dealy arrived at Hubart’s house with Laughlin Martin, “an under Wharfinger & of Some Credit in Town” who was also Catholic and a Loyalist.1 When Martin and Dealy responded angrily to Hubart’s earlier comments, Hubart sought to defuse the situation by claiming it did not matter what he thought, as “his circumstances were too small, to forbid any party or sect to carry arms.” Martin accused Hubart of calling Dealy a liar, and had Dealy drag Hubart out of his house and into a nearby shop, where he threatened to “pull him to pieces” with a large knife. With Hubart’s wife and children watching and begging

1 An “under wharfinger” is an assistant to a manager of a commercial wharf.
him to spare Hubart’s life, Martin acquiesced. Before they parted, however, Martin poured a drink and toasted “Damnation to the Committee, and their proceedings.”

The “committee” that drew Martin’s ire was the General Committee of South Carolina, an extra-legal body established in Charleston to organize protests against Acts of Parliament. The committee would also play an active role in coordinating rebel efforts at the start of the Revolution. In the decade prior to the outbreak of war, opponents of the Acts of Parliament in each province established some form of political structure, like the General Committee in South Carolina. The organizers intended these bodies as a means of communicating with their counterparts in other provinces, channeling their opposition, and organizing acts of resistance. Beginning in late 1774 and early 1775, however, in response to the Articles of Association issued in Philadelphia by the First Continental Congress, the rebels in each province established a much larger and more sophisticated governing infrastructure that included a network of local and provincial-level committees. These shadow governments would allow the rebels to compete with royal officials for political authority and control over the territory and population of the provinces. This control was necessary to counter the threat posed by Loyalists, a group critical to the success of British pacification strategy in 1775, and later in the war to reconquer lost territory. One of the primary instruments the shadow government used to control the population was a loyalty oath, called the Association. In addition to serving as an oath, the Association also acted as a kind of census that allowed the

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rebels to gather intelligence on, and quickly identify groups or individuals who posed a potential threat to their authority.

The fate of Martin and Dealy illustrates the aggressive and effective methods the shadow government used to establish and maintain control over the Loyalists. Hubart immediately reported the incident to the General Committee. The General Committee passed the information on to the Secret Committee, a powerful organization formed by the Provincial Congress, which in turn was a legislative body meant to rival the authority of its counterpart under the royal government, the Commons House of Assembly. On the back of the petition Hubart submitted to the General Committee was an order to tar and feather Martin and Dealy, who in the days since the incident at Hubart’s house had also refused to sign the Association. The order was likely written in the hand of William Henry Drayton, a leading rebel who would assume one of the most active roles in the war.² There was also written notification, likely in the hand of Edward Weyman, another member of the Secret Committee, that the body approved of the punishment and ordered it “to be put in Execution.” In the first such incident of this kind of punishment in South Carolina, Martin and Dealy were tarred and feathered on 8 June, and “put into a Cart & driven up & down the Broad Street” to act as an example to the other inhabitants of the city. They were then “put on board a Vessel in order to be banished hence for ever.”³ The Secret Committee, however, had ordered that Martin be allowed to disembark the vessel, and be “discharged, upon his expressing his contrition in the most public

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² Hubart Petition in Drayton, Memoirs, I, 302.
³ Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June 1775 in David R. Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens (PHL), X (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 164-179.
manner.” However, the committee ordered that Dealy be banished from the province, likely because he was not as well connected as Martin, but possibly for also going a step further than Martin and expressing support for not only arming Catholics, but also slaves and Indians.⁴

Rather than the work of spontaneous action by street mobs, or rebels trying to cleanse irreconcilables from the body politic, the Martin and Dealy ordeal, and the role of the General Committee and Secret Committee, illustrates how much authority and responsibility they rebel leadership exercised in the southern provinces. Contrary to historians who claimed that the rebels had little in the way of governmental infrastructure in place when the royal provincial governments collapsed, the rebels established a complex network of committees and congresses at the local and provincial level to compete with, and bring about the collapse of the royal governments. The rebels who constituted this leadership were often natives or long-term residents of the respective colonies in the South, and were largely from the low country, where political authority had been concentrated under colonial government. Members of prominent families intermarried, and many prominent rebels served together in the royal provincial governments, particularly in the assemblies. As a result, by the end of 1774, the rebels had highly sophisticated networks in place, which gave them a significant advantage in information and resources with which to implement the rebel strategy of establishing control over the population. Martin and Dealy’s ordeal also demonstrated the pragmatism of the rebel strategy. The rebels were less concerned about the challenge the Loyalists

posed to their political authority, than they were about the threat posed by the British imperial government. For both the rebels and the British, the Loyalist population was an instrument that the British would have to use to reestablish political authority in the southern provinces.

William Henry Drayton’s son, John later confirmed how the rebel leadership jealously guarded its authority. John Drayton noted with respect to the Martin and Dealy ordeal, “These summary measures have been supposed by writers to have proceeded from the intemperate zeal of the populace...But there can be...little doubt, [it] was sanctioned and directed by the Secret Committee.”

The rebel leadership had scripted the entire incident, down to the political theater of threatening to send Martin away to England with Dealy unless he expressed remorse for his actions. Alexander Innes, the personal secretary to Lord William Campbell, the new royal governor of South Carolina, arrived in the province ahead of Campbell in May 1775 and witnessed the campaign by the rebels to gather signatures on the Association. He described the effect the tarring and feathering of Martin and Dealy had on the general population, calling it a “very well-timed piece of justice” that had “the happiest effects [for the rebels], no one since daring to think of refusing to swallow anything that may be offered.”

This pragmatism that valued control over destruction of an irreconcilable enemy was precisely the objective of the rebels as they set about their task in early 1775 of establishing a system of government that

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5 Drayton, Memoirs, I, 274
could compete with the royal government, while also seeking to undermine the latter’s authority and deprive it of the assistance and influence of its most active supporters.

**Shadow Governments**

Although organized resistance to measures taken in the King’s name by Parliament dated at least as far back as 1765, the last months of 1774 through 1776 saw the formation of a new, more wide-reaching form of organized resistance. What differentiated this period from the earlier episodes of protest was not just the scope of the resistance, which expanded well beyond non-importation of British goods, but also the organized nature of its leadership and control. The rebels of South Carolina achieved this level of central direction more quickly and more completely than those in North Carolina, which initially organized at the local level rather than the provincial level, or in Georgia, where the revolutionary movement took longer to organize and attract support and required assistance from South Carolina to succeed. By the summer of 1775, however, the latter two provinces had in most respects caught up with their neighbor.

The First Continental Congress, held at Philadelphia from September to October of 1774, was in many ways a transition point for the southern rebels. Although the General Committee at Charleston formed in March 1774, before the convening of the First Continental Congress, its role at that time was targeted specifically at organizing protests against tea importation. There was little discussion of targeting the broader infrastructure of royal governance, and any efforts to target political opponents were limited in organization and direction. In
January 1775, however, following the First Continental Congress, the rebels in South Carolina formed the Provincial Congress, which would become a standing body that would meet periodically until the formation of the General Assembly of the new state of South Carolina in 1776. The First Provincial Congress met in Charleston on 11 January 1775. The main order of business was implementing the Continental Association, a non-importation and non-exportation trade embargo against England that was to take effect on 10 September 1775.7

The January 1775 Provincial Congress expanded the focus of the resistance movement for the first time beyond the limited protests against specific Acts of Parliament by attempting to subvert the colonial legal system. The delegates knew the unprecedented scope of the embargo would necessarily cause financial hardship for many in the colony, and so took action to relieve debtors from harassment by their creditors. The Congress resolved that no lawyer could file a suit on behalf of any creditors against their debtors, and no pending cases filed after September 1774 could proceed in the courts.8 The consequence of this action was essentially to shut down common law courts, except in those cases where the General Committee allowed a case to proceed. Though Lieutenant Governor William Bull, serving as

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7 The main point of contention was the exemption the South Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress obtained on the exportation of rice, while indigo and other crops remained subject to the embargo. After some heated debate, the delegates crafted a compromise whereby the politically powerful rice planters compensated those who raised indigo, cotton, hemp, flour, wool, barley, and hops to ensure equal sharing of losses. Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 11-17 January 1775 in William E. Hemphill, ed., *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congress of South Carolina 1775-1776* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1960), 24-25; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 18 January 1775, PHL X, 27-31; William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 January 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/396.

acting governor in the absence of the yet-to-arrive Lord William Campbell, noted that this resolve of the Congress did not yet affect criminal prosecutions, he recognized the precedent these efforts to disrupt and dismantle royal governance had set, and the potential for the rebels to eventually obstruct particular criminal cases that had political consequences. Bull explained to Dartmouth that with these measures the Provincial Congress had seized some governing authority from the royal government, and he noted its effect. He was powerless to stop the rebels as they chose representatives for a Second Continental Congress to meet in May. Bull argued, “In the present temper of the times...the very attempt to defeat the measure of sending of delegates by a governor...would have given rise to fruitless altercation, exposed me to useless insult and thereby reflected some indignity” on the King.

The First Provincial Congress met until 17 January 1775, after which the General Committee resumed meeting while the Congress was not in session and continued to extend the reach of the shadow government and undermine royal authority in the province. In April, the General Committee carried out a resolve of the Provincial Congress by forming a standing Secret Committee and a Committee of Intelligence. The Provincial Congress gave the Secret Committee responsibility for “the better defence and security of the good people” of the province, as well as “other necessary purposes,” a clause that gave the committee nearly unlimited power. The Secret Committee’s first act was to coordinate the appropriation of

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10 William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 March 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
11 The committee’s membership included William Henry Drayton, Arthur Middleton, William Gibbes, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Edward Weyman
arms and ammunition from the State House Armory and public magazines that took place on 21 April. The Committee of Intelligence, meanwhile, had responsibility for informing the inhabitants of the province, particularly in the less secure interior, of developments related to the American cause. On 27 April, the Committee of Intelligence released a circular informing the inhabitants of addresses by both Houses of Parliament to the King on 9 February stating, for the first time, that America was in a state of rebellion.

The Committee of Intelligence also included news of the “conciliatory plan” offered by Lord North, the intention of which was to break the colonies’ unified front by reaching a settlement with individual colonies. Alexander Innes, Campbell’s personal secretary, reported to Dartmouth on the impact of this circular, noting Lord North’s offer “so far from having the effect that might reasonably have been expected, added fuel to the flame.” According to Innes, men who “ten days before were in great doubt whether they should attempt to attend the [upcoming Provincial] Congress [set to meet in June] and had the most distressing fears of the consequences that might follow their violent proceedings,” instead now “talked confidently of pushing things to the last extremity.” Innes insisted South Carolina “hardly falls short of the Massachusetts in every indecency, violence and contempt to government,” and needed to be taken seriously by the British.

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12 The committee’s membership included Drayton, Rev. William Tennent, James Parsons, John Lewis Gervais, Roger Smith, and Thomas Heyward, Jr.
13 A Circular Letter to the Committees in the Several Districts and Parishes of South Carolina, 27 April 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
14 Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
On 8 May 1775, the brigantine Industry arrived at Charleston from Salem, Massachusetts with a copy of the Essex Gazette, which brought South Carolina its first notice of the battles at Lexington and Concord. The General Committee immediately called for another session of the Provincial Congress to meet on 1 June, ahead of its previously scheduled start on 20 June. Henry Laurens, the President of the Provincial Congress, suggested four broad reasons for reconvening. Those reasons included responding to the opening of armed conflict by the British in Massachusetts, preparing Charleston for a potential military invasion, guarding against the possibility of British-supported uprisings by slaves and Indians, and preparing to defend their rights as Englishmen, if necessary, by the force of arms. To meet these requirements, Laurens put before the Congress a number of recommendations from the General Committee, including the establishment of a military force for the province, the formation of an association “to which all patriots would subscribe,” and the creation of a Council of Safety to become the main executive power in the province.15

Even more so than during the session held in January, the Provincial Congress now focused its attention on measures that went well beyond limited protests against specific measures taken by Parliament. Instead, it made a priority of establishing control over the population, particularly those of questionable attachment to the cause of liberty, and to thereby prevent them from offering support to the royal government. These measures greatly expanded intervention by the Provincial Congress into civil society through the use of economic controls,

travel restrictions, and mandatory loyalty oaths. Finally, the Congress also approved the establishment of a provincial army, which the rebels would use to enforce these measures through the threatened or actual use of coercive violence. Alexander Innes succinctly summarized the intentions of the Provincial Congress when he told Dartmouth the members of Congress were discussing the Association, raising troops, and “taking the Government into their own hands, which in fact they have almost done already.”16

The Second Provincial Congress met in November 1775, and focused on establishing control in the backcountry where Loyalists were particularly strong. The Congress also addressed other issues pertaining to defense of the colony, including the creation of defensive works for the city of Charleston against British ships lying off the bar outside the harbor, maintaining Indian neutrality, and manufacturing or otherwise securing sufficient supplies of gunpowder, saltpeter, sulphur, iron, and steel. The delegates met again for a second session in February and March 1776, when they addressed options for neutralizing the few remaining backcountry Loyalist leaders who had not yet been captured, and continued to direct the construction of Charleston defenses, as well as preparations for war against the Cherokee Indians. Their primary objective, however, was the creation of a more sophisticated and permanent government since they had, by that time, succeeded in dismantling the royal government and imprisoning government leaders.

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16 Examples of the economic controls the Congress imposed include enforced price controls on corn. It also ordered the return of any absentee estate owners, and prohibited estate owners from leaving the province without permission of the General Committee. Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, 3 June 1775 in Bargar, ed., “The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes,” 130-131.
officials or driving them out of the province. On 15 March, the Second Provincial Congress gave way to the General Assembly of South Carolina; eleven days later, it approved a new constitution and elected John Rutledge, a wealthy planter who had previously been a delegate to the Continental Congress, and Henry Laurens to be president and vice president respectively. This government would later become the government of the new state of South Carolina when its delegates to the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence in July.

During the June 1775 session, the Provincial Congress also decided it was necessary to form a committee “with powers to direct and regulate the operations of the troops, to stamp, sign and issue certificates for the speedy raising of troops, and for other public services.” This committee, the Council of Safety, would operate when the Congress was not in session and consisted of thirteen members and its president, Henry Laurens.17 The Provincial Congress gave the Council of Safety responsibility for calling forth and regulating the militia, distributing militia pay and rations, removing and replacing officers, procuring all arms and ammunition necessary for mounting a proper defense, and doing everything necessary for “strengthening, securing, and defending the colony as shall be judged by them expedient and necessary.”18 In November 1775, the Second Provincial Congress named a new Council of Safety to continue this work. The Congress again gave the

Council of Safety authority over the "direction, regulation, maintenance, and ordering of the land and [newly formed] sea forces and of the militia and all military establishments and arrangements within the colony."¹⁹ Peter Timothy, publisher of the *South Carolina Gazette* and secretary of the Council of Safety, commented on the vast amount of power given to this committee when he told William Henry Drayton that the Council of Safety had more power than the older General Committee, and perhaps almost as much as the Provincial Congress that had created the Council.²⁰

This amount of power differentiated the Council of Safety in South Carolina, as well as those in Georgia and North Carolina that were largely based on their counterpart in Charleston, from similar committees in the northern provinces. In Massachusetts, for example, the powers of the provincial Committee of Safety, the equivalent of South Carolina’s Council of Safety, were more limited, and it “constantly refused to touch matters not expressly delegated to it.” For example, the committee did not have responsibility for “the trial of suspected Tories,” and “it disliked to deal with them,” either referring cases to the Provincial Congress or “recommending the appointment of a special court of inquiry.” Given the immediacy of the threat from the British army, the Committee of Safety often found its authority subsumed in practice if not in principle, to the militia officers. By July 1775, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress took away the Committee of Safety’s authority to assemble the militia, which instead went to the Commander-in-Chief of the

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Continental Army. This made more sense for some of the northern committees like in Massachusetts, where mobilization and enlistment had priority over all other matters. The political nature of the conflict in the southern provinces, however, and the emphasis on controlling Loyalists, mandated the shadow government have full authority over execution of strategy, and allowed the Councils of Safety significantly greater powers in this regard than their counterparts in the North.

At the local level in the South, the rebels established local committees for each parish or district, the basic unit of South Carolina’s political administrative structure at the time. These local parochial committees played an important role in a multi-layered political system meant to establish control and undermine the political legitimacy of the royal government. They reported to the Council of Safety and Provincial Congress in Charleston, and were responsible for enforcing at the local level the resolves of those two bodies, as well as those of the Continental Congress. The Provincial Congress created these committees in June 1775, leaving it to each parish or district to determine the number of men to serve on the committee. The parochial committees were responsible for administering the Association, keeping records on who had subscribed to the oath and who had not, ensuring merchants and storekeepers adhered to price controls, procuring essential supplies like gunpowder and saltpeter, guarding against potential slave insurrections and other civil disorder, and otherwise monitoring the actions and activity of the people within their parish or district. They would conduct the first investigations of

21 All quotes in this paragraph taken from Agnes Hunt, The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution (Cleveland: Winn & Judson, 1904), 14-18.
suspected violators, and refer cases and individuals to the Council of Safety at Charleston for further action.\textsuperscript{22}

The revolutionary political system in Georgia was similar to that in South Carolina, though the process of developing the infrastructure lagged several months behind its neighbor. It was the only one of the thirteen colonies to not send a delegate to the First Continental Congress, and when its first Provincial Congress met in January 1775, only 5 of 12 parishes sent delegates. It elected representatives for the Second Continental Congress, though those delegates did not attend because they did not believe they could claim to represent the entire province. The elected delegates wrote the President of the Continental Congress, at the time Peyton Randolph of Virginia, explaining their situation and why they would not attend. They told Randolph of their disappointment in Georgia's role to that point, and explained after the First Continental Congress, “the sense and disposition of the people in general seemed to fluctuate between liberty and convenience.” They assured him there were many in the province that supported the American cause.\textsuperscript{23}

While the elected delegates did not go to Philadelphia, the Parish of St. John elected its own delegate, Lyman Hall, and agreed to the Continental Association and resolves of the Continental Congress. The royal governor of Georgia, Sir James Wright, explained to Dartmouth the people of St. John's were “chiefly descendants of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{22}] Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 17-19 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congress}, 56. 59.; Daniel DeSaussure to Henry Laurens, 17 September 1775, PHL, X, 389.
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] Noble Wimberly Jones, Archibald Bulloch, John Houstoun to President of the Continental Congress, 6 April 1775 in Allen D. Candler, ed., \textit{The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia} (RRG), I (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 63-66.
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New England people of the Puritan Independent sect who left New England and settled in South Carolina about 40 or 50 years ago and who there is great reason to believe still retain a strong tincture of republican...principles.”

In February, St. John’s Parish sent representatives to Charleston to express its dissatisfaction with the limited steps that Georgia had taken during the Provincial Congress in January, and sought an alliance between the parish and South Carolina. The General Committee in Charleston ultimately decided against this request since St. John’s was a parish of Georgia, and any dealings with it would violate the fourteenth article of the Continental Association forbidding any “trade, commerce, dealings, or intercourse whatsoever, with any colony or province, in North America, which shall not accede to, or which shall hereafter violate this association.”

By June, opinion in Georgia was moving in favor of joining the other colonies in resistance. On 13 June, a number of inhabitants of Savannah met and resolved to preserve the peace and good order of the province in an effort to convince those who were skeptical about the cause of rebellion. Those attending this meeting also recommended that Georgia join the other provinces “to secure and restore the liberties of all America.”

On 5 July, during the second day of the meeting of the Second Provincial Congress, two men who attended the 13 June meeting read an account of their proceedings to the Congress. The Provincial Congress then heard a

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24 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 24 April 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
25 Hall was, however, able to attend the Second Continental Congress as a debating member without voting privileges.Continental Association, Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 11-17 January 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congress, 18.
resolution to join the other colonies and adopt the resolves of the Continental Congress, including non-importation. Wright ascribed the change in opinion in Georgia to the news of Lexington and Concord, and he expected “no chance for quietude” from that point forward “unless prudence and moderation of the Continental Congress lays a foundation for it.”

On 6 July 1775, the Provincial Congress unanimously passed the resolves heard the previous day, including the non-importation clause. It gave orders to the owners of vessels to tell their captains and masters not to receive on board any goods prohibited by the non-importation agreement, and banned merchants from selling any such goods. The Congress ordered frequent inspections of the entries at the Custom House to ensure cooperation with the embargo. It also resolved, per the fourteenth article of the Continental Association, not to have any dealings with other colonies or provinces in North America that did not subscribe to or were found violating the Association.

The Provincial Congress would not meet again until January 1776, when it selected new delegates to the Second Continental Congress. During its next session in April 1776, since the royal government had little remaining authority in the province, the Provincial Congress concentrated on implementing a more permanent

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27 James Wright to Thomas Gage, 27 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/665.
28 There was some controversy on 8 July over whether these resolves should have been voted on as resolves or merely recommendations. This was in large part because the resolves were the same as those passed in South Carolina, and some members of the Georgia Provincial Congress, in what would be a recurring concern in the following years of the war, wanted to demonstrate their independence from their northern neighbor. Nevertheless, on 10 July, after decrying the “oppressive acts of a venal and corrupted Parliament,” and the “army of mercenaries under an unfeeling commander” sent “to begin a civil war in America,” the Provincial Congress unanimously passed the resolves of the 6th before adjourning. Proceedings of the Georgia Provincial Congress, 10 July 1775, RRG, I, 244-248.
governmental structure to fill the vacuum. The Provincial Congress drafted and passed the Rules and Regulations of the Colony of Georgia regularizing the roles and duties of the executive, of the president and commander in chief, as well as the legislature and judiciary. This document was meant to be temporary until “application [could] be made to the Continental Congress for their advice and directions upon the same.” As with South Carolina, when the Georgia delegates signed the Declaration of Independence six months later, this document served as the first Constitution until a new state constitution was ratified the following year.

In June 1775, when residents of Georgia held elections in their parishes to choose members of the Provincial Congress, they also elected members of local committees to enforce the resolves of the Provincial Congress, which would include the Association. The Provincial Congress gave the local committees the responsibility to “observe the conduct of all persons touching this Association,” and publish in the Georgia Gazette the names of any who violated the oath “as enemies of American liberty.” In Savannah, in response to a notice published in the Gazette and signed by leading rebels Noble Wimberly Jones, John Houstoun, Archibald Bulloch, and George Walton, a large group met at the Liberty Pole, the site of many earlier protests against the British Acts, to elect a Council of Safety for the province “to take charge of and direct the affairs of the friends of freedom.” The Council, with William Ewen as its president, was given responsibility for corresponding with

31 The Council of Safety included William Ewen as President as well as William Le Conte, Joseph Clay, Basil Cowper, Samuel Elbert, William Young, Elisha Butler, Edward Telfair, John Glen, John Houstoun, George Walton, Joseph Habersham, Francis H. Harris and John Morel.
the local committees in Georgia, as well as the Councils of Safety in other provinces and the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. As in South Carolina, the Council of Safety had responsibility for militia forces, though it initially voted down a resolution to raise a provincial army of 350 men.32

The rebels of North Carolina were, in some ways, far ahead of South Carolina and Georgia in organizing an alternate system of governance. Ongoing conflict between the Assembly and the governor over local issues pertaining to courts and collection of taxes, as well as broader issues of perceived Parliamentary oppression, led the governor, Josiah Martin, to refrain from calling a new Assembly after March 1774 “until he saw some chance of a better one than the last.” Incensed at the neglect of the Assembly, its speaker, John Harvey, called for a Provincial Congress in April, but was unsuccessful in organizing such a meeting at that time. In August 1774, after the arrival of news of Parliament passing the Boston Port Bill, several counties and towns held local meetings to discuss the proper local response. The Wilmington meeting issued a call for a Provincial Congress, and the date was eventually set for 25 August 1774 in the capital of New Bern – the first such meeting in the thirteen colonies.33

During this three-day meeting, with Harvey elected as moderator, the delegates from thirty-six of forty-four counties and towns passed a number of resolves calling for a non-importation agreement to begin in January 1775, and, if their grievances were not addressed, a non-exportation agreement beginning in

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32 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
October 1775. They warned merchants not to take advantage of non-importation by raising prices, and warned all inhabitants of the province to discontinue all “trade, Commerce, and dealings” with any colony, city, or town that did not adopt the forthcoming resolutions of the Continental Congress due to meet the following month in Philadelphia. Before adjourning, they selected William Hooper, former Deputy Attorney General for the province and a current member of the Assembly, Joseph Hewes, an Edenton merchant, and Richard Caswell, a New Bern lawyer and militia officer, to serve as delegates to the First Continental Congress. They also advised all counties to create a committee of five men to enforce the resolves of the Provincial Congress.34

The Provincial Congress would not meet again until April 1775, concurrent with the first time the Assembly met in over a year. As in South Carolina and Georgia, many of the delegates to the Provincial Congress were also members of the Assembly. The Congress, after again naming Harvey its moderator, approved the Continental Association and gave its thanks to the delegates to the Continental Congress, after which the Provincial Congress delegates, with one exception, signed the Association. Thomas Macknight, a delegate from Currituck County, refused to sign and withdrew himself from the Congress as the other delegates declared him an enemy of American liberty.35 The delegates approved of the other resolves of the

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35 Macknight explained to the Congress the non-exportation clause of the Association would prevent him from paying a debt he owed in Britain, and he could not approve of a collective action that he would not himself take as an individual. Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 6 April
Continental Congress, and following the direction of those resolves, decided to “encourage Arts, Manufactures, Agriculture, and every kind of economy” to replace the inevitable shortfall of goods that would result from non-importation. The Congress encouraged local committees to offer subsidies for specific industries that would provide goods for which there would be a particular need. Finally, in response to proclamations issued by Governor Josiah Martin calling the Provincial Congress an illegal meeting, the delegates insisted on the right of the people to elect delegates to address grievances.36

While North Carolina was the first colony to hold a Provincial Congress without the sanction of the governor, it was one of the last to call that body to meet following news of the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord. After John Harvey died in May 1775, the responsibility for calling a Provincial Congress passed to Samuel Johnston, a wealthy Edenton planter and lawyer. Although many leading rebels asked Johnston to convene a new Congress, he delayed in doing so until August. Throughout June and July, several of the local committees, including Wilmington and New Bern, wrote to Johnston asking him to convene a new Provincial Congress. William Hooper and Joseph Hewes, delegates to the Continental Congress, urged the same. Based on “The Circumstances of the times, the expectations of the people in this country, as well as the intimations we have

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36 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 3-7 April, CRNC, IX, 1178-1185.

received from Mr. Hooper,” the Wilmington committee even wrote the Committee of Intelligence in South Carolina urging them to write to Johnston.  

Despite these exhortations, for both logistical and substantive reasons Johnston refrained from calling a Congress until August 1775. The April Congress had decided to next meet in Hillsborough, in the interior of the colony, while the Assembly was scheduled to meet in July in New Bern. Since many of the same individuals would be delegates to both, they could not meet at the same time. Furthermore, Johnston wanted to wait on instructions from the Continental Congress on whether North Carolina would be instructed to contribute money or troops to the war effort. Johnston worried if he called a Provincial Congress before the delegates to the Continental Congress returned from Philadelphia, its members “would exhaust themselves in a little parade and think they had done every thing that was necessary.” When the delegates returned from Philadelphia, however, there would likely be a need for yet another Provincial Congress, which could likely suffer from weaker participation.

When Johnston learned the governor would prorogue the Assembly, preventing it from meeting, he finally scheduled the Provincial Congress to meet in Hillsborough on 20 August. The priorities of the Congress were the defense of the colony, acquisition and manufacture of gunpowder and saltpeter, organization of the militia, raising of regular provincial troops, and the establishment of a provincial

37 New Bern Committee of Safety to Wilmington Committee of Safety, 3 July 1775, CRNC, X, 64-65; John Ashe, Cornelius Harnett, and Richard Howe to Samuel Johnston, 29 June 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
38 Samuel Johnston to Joseph Hewes, 27 June 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
currency. However, with the departure of the royal governor the previous month for the safety of a British vessel anchored at Cape Fear, the most pressing matter was the creation of an executive for the province. While North Carolina was one of the last colonies to hold a Provincial Congress after Lexington and Concord, it had been one of the first colonies to establish a robust system of local committees to enforce the resolves of the Continental Congress. Since these committees worked so effectively, the rebels had never established a provincial Council of Safety like South Carolina and Georgia did early in 1775. To fill this vacuum of executive power at the provincial level, the delegates eventually created a Council of Safety, with control of provincial troops, the militia, and the Treasury, and named Cornelius Harnett, previously the chair of the Wilmington committee, as its first president. The Congress also divided the colony into six districts for the basis of representation in the Council of Safety, and also created district-level committees in Wilmington, New Bern, Edenton, Halifax, Hillsborough, and Salisbury. Finally, it maintained the system of local committees for each county and town, which became a third tier in the committee system. This combination of colonial-level executive power and local committees lasted through the Fourth Provincial Congress, which met in Halifax in April and May 1776. This Congress passed the Halifax Resolves, an endorsement of independence from Great Britain, which the North Carolina delegates presented to the Continental Congress in late May. Finally, in the Fifth Provincial Congress, held

in November and December 1776, also in Halifax, the Congress passed the state’s constitution and, before adjourning, renamed itself the General Assembly.

By the end of the summer of 1775, the rebels throughout the southern colonies had established sophisticated systems of governance that would be able to rival and eventually overtake royal government in the southern colonies. At the beginning of July of that year, William Henry Drayton, a leading member of most of the committees and councils in South Carolina, described the system of governance the rebels had built in that colony to his cousin William Drayton, the Chief Justice of the colony of East Florida. William Henry Drayton explained, “We already have an army and a treasury with a million of money, in short a new government is in effect erected. The Congress is the legislature, the Council of Safety the executive power, the General Committee as Westminster Hall, and the district and parochial Committees as county courts. See the effects of oppression!”

40 Henry Laurens provided a similar account to his son John, noting the people had taken control of much of the civil power in the colony, including shutting down courts of law, enforcing embargos, and “command[ing] implicit obedience in all cases by signifying what ‘ought’ and what ‘ought not’ to be done.”

41 The next step for the rebels and their fledgling governments was to challenge the royal governments for control of the people in the provinces.

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41 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL., X, 186-196.
The Association

As the rebels in the southern colonies established a new governing infrastructure, they simultaneously sought to undermine the existing sources of political authority in the colonies. They did this first by targeting those who continued to support the royal government, to significantly lessen the government’s base of support. This would make it difficult for royal government in the southern colonies to function, thereby helping the rebels seize control of political authority. The primary means by which they did this included provincial Associations. Unlike the Continental Association, which focused primarily on commercial measures of non-exportation and non-importation, the new Association went further to encompass other areas of resistance.

In early 1776, the North Carolina Provincial Congress explained the importance of identifying friend from foe and controlling each group accordingly. The enemy, according to the Congress, lived among the rest of the population and enjoyed the protection of the revolutionary government, along with the liberal governance and increased trade it provided. Nevertheless, they “disregarded the duty which they owe to that country...to defend and maintain the cause of liberty.” More importantly, however, this enemy “took advantage of their residence among us, and that confidence which such a relation necessarily created” to “confederat[e] with our unnatural enemies” to “carry their wishes into execution, and...drench this Province in blood and slaughter.”

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42 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 29 April 1776, CRNC, X, 547-549.
that these individuals be identified and their movements watched. The Association was the first step in that process.

In South Carolina, on 10 May 1775, two days after receiving word of the battles at Lexington and Concord, the General Committee heard a recommendation to pass an “Association of defense” to be signed by inhabitants of the province. The next day, following seven hours of debate, the General Committee passed an Association that cited the commencement of hostilities and the “dread of instigated Insurrections at home” as “causes sufficient to drive an oppressed People to the use of Arms.” Subscribers would therefore agree to “go forth & be ready to sacrifice our Lives & fortunes in attempting to secure” the “Freedom and safety” of the colony “whenever her Continental or Provincial Councils shall decree it necessary.” The General Committee voted to send this Association to the Provincial Congress, due to meet on 1 June. Sometime between 11 May and the beginning of June, however, text was added to the end of the Association, stating that subscribers would “hold all those Persons Inimical to the Liberty of the Colonies who shall refuse to subscribe.” This phrase had also been in the Continental Association, though pertaining to the much narrower topics of non-importation and non-exportation, which had more widespread support than taking up arms against Britain.

Henry Laurens, the President of the Congress, signed the Association despite his reservations regarding this late-added clause, which he explained in a speech to the Congress before signing. He cited the possibility that someone known to be well disposed towards the cause of American liberty for their own reasons might not be

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43 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 15 May 1775, PHL, X, 122-123.
able to sign the Association. He noted specific examples of groups like the Quakers who could not swear the oath, and suggested the Provincial Congress should have waited on instructions from the Continental Congress before proceeding.44 Despite his reservations, however, Laurens approvingly explained the reasoning behind the Association to his friend in London William Manning. The purpose of the Association, according to Laurens, was to have “every good Man...lend his utmost assistance by counsel, by his purse, & if needful by his life to his country in order to defeat the attempts of our enemies,” and to prevent from harming the rebellion those who would “for the enjoyment of temporary quiet [be] willing to barter the liberties of posterity.”45

On 3 June, the Association passed out of committee in the Provincial Congress. The next day the Congress ordered every member to sign, beginning with Laurens. The Congress resolved that the representatives sign the copies that would circulate in their respective parishes and districts, and on the 5th, the Congress ordered the widespread distribution of the Association throughout the province, including printing copies to be dispersed as handbills. The local committees were responsible for an accurate accounting of those in their district or parish who had signed, and would “once a month certify and return lists of the names of subscribers as well as those who refuse to subscribe” and provide them to the General Committee and Council of Safety in Charleston.46

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44 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June 1775, Enclosure, PHL, X, 172-179.
45 Henry Laurens to William Manning, 22 May 1775, PHL, X, 127.
The local committees would also account for those who had not yet signed but promised they would, and keep watch on these individuals until they fulfilled their pledge. For example, after a summer of collecting signatures from residents, Daniel DeSaussure, of the Beaufort committee, wrote Laurens in September 1775 with an accounting of the subscribers from that district, and noted, “there are a few that have not yet Signed owing to their Resident on Remote Islands in the Parish & have not been at either places when sent about to be Signed.” Nevertheless, he assured Laurens, “[W]e Know their Cheerfullness in the Common Cause.” By this process, the rebels were not only able to procure oaths of loyalty from the people, but were also able to build and continually update an account of everyone who lived in the province and their loyalty. This information would be particularly useful for following the movements and actions of the same people, including those who signed but whose loyalty was still suspect, as well as immediately identifying and neutralizing the most likely threats in times of crisis.

The Provincial Congress of Georgia passed its own Association shortly after South Carolina in early June 1775. It differed from that of South Carolina in that it did not explicitly cite justification for taking up arms against Britain. It did, however, like the South Carolina Association, obligate the subscriber to “adopt and endeavor to carry into execution whatever may be recommended by the Continental Congress, or resolved upon by our Provincial Convention...” Likewise, only weeks earlier, the newly formed Council of Safety resolved “that Georgia would not afford protection

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47 Daniel DeSaussure to Henry Laurens, 17 September 1775, PHL, X, 389.
to, nor become an asylum for, any person or persons whomsoever; who for their conduct should be considered as inimical to the American cause; or, who should have drawn upon themselves, the disapprobation or censure, of any of the Colonies."

As with South Carolina, therefore, the rebels in Georgia sought to enforce strict adherence to the revolutionary cause, threatening those who would not support them with the same “inimical” designation that was key to the Association in South Carolina. After passing the Association, the Provincial Congress formed a committee to present it to the inhabitants of the parishes and districts of the province for their signature, while keeping an account of those who refused to sign.

Like South Carolina, North Carolina delegates signed the Continental Association at the First Continental Congress in 1774, which the Second Provincial Congress approved it when it met in April 1775. As with Georgia and South Carolina, the news of Lexington and Concord led to an increase in scope of the Association in North Carolina, from a narrow focus on commercial dealings to a broader oath that covered other areas of resistance and included a pledge to follow every resolve of the Provincial and Continental Congress. Unlike in Georgia and South Carolina, the delay in calling a Provincial Congress following Lexington and Concord meant there was no provincial Council of Safety, so this process of passing an Association and requiring inhabitants to subscribe necessarily began in the local committees. These county Associations, however, were very similar in wording to the South Carolina

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Association. Citing the commencement of hostilities with Britain, a number of them claimed, “[U]nder our present distressed circumstances, we shall be justified, before God and Man, in resisting force by force.” Signatories also promised to unite in defense of the colony and take up arms when ordered by the Continental or Provincial Congress. The subscribers swore to “hold all those persons inimical to the liberties of the Colonies, who shall refuse to subscribe this Association.”

The New Bern committee passed this Association in early June 1775, and circulated it throughout the county for inhabitants’ signatures. The committee for Tryon County worded its Association somewhat differently, but still referred to the “unprecedented, barbarous and bloody actions committed by the British Troops...near Boston” as justification for “the painful necessity of having recourse to Arms.” The subscribers swore to “Resist force by force in defence of our Natural Freedom & Constitutional Rights against all Invasions, & at the same time,” and “solemnly engage[d] to take up Arms and Risque our lives and fortunes in maintaining the Freedom of our Country, whenever the Wisdom & Council of the Continental Congress or our Provincial Convention shall Declare it necessary.” It too promised to hold inimical all who refused to sign. Of the counties that passed Associations, only Pitt County initially used more moderate language, including a

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51 Minutes of the Bladen, Brunswick, Duplin, and Wilmington-New Hanover County Committees of Safety, 21 June 1775, CRNC, X, 26-29.
52 New Bern Committee of Safety to Samuel Johnston, 8 June 1775, CRNC, X, 14.
53 Tryon County Association, 14 August 1775, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee of Safety of Tryon County, State Archives of North Carolina.
perfunctory statement of loyalty to the King while still promising to follow all the
resolves of the Continental Congress and the county committee.  

It was not until it met in August 1775 that the Third Provincial Congress of
North Carolina established the equivalent of an Association, which it called a Test. It
was to be signed by all members of the Congress and public officials. On 21 August,
the first full day of the new session, the Congress formed a committee to prepare the
Test, which the committee then presented to the full Congress on the 23rd. While it
made an initial reference of loyalty to the King, it proceeded to claim Parliament had
no right to tax the colonies or regulate their internal affairs, and that “all attempts by
fraud or force to establish and exercise such Claims and powers are Violations of the
peace and Security of the people and ought to be resisted to the utmost.” While it
claimed a right to resist the use of force, it did not explicitly claim the right to do so
by force of arms. It did, however, also demand adherence to the various resolutions
of the Continental and Provincial Congresses. While the language of the Test
appears at first to be more moderate than the various county Associations, and
more in keeping with the tone and text of the Pitt County Association, in many ways
this Test was more radical than even the South Carolina Association. This was
because the North Carolina Provincial Congress directed this Test in the first place
at all public officials, while there was initially significant disagreement in the

54 Pitt County Association, 1 July 1775, Record of the Proceedings of the Committee in Pitt County
North Carolina, State Archives of North Carolina. It was the responsibility of every inhabitant,
without exception, to sign these Associations, and the committees further ruled, “[N]o master shall
prevent his apprentices or servants from complying with the Resolution.” Proceedings of the
Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 7 July 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State
Archives of North Carolina.
General Committee in Charleston over requiring royal officials to sign the Association.

**Enforcing the Association**

On 5 June, the day after its members signed the Association, the South Carolina Provincial Congress created a 26-man committee to “carry this Association round the Town and Neighborhood and report all those who refused to sign it.”56 Anyone who violated or refused to sign was subject to questioning by the local committee. If the committee did not accept the explanation given for not signing or adhering to the Association, that person would “by such Committee be declared and advertised, an Enemy to the Liberties of America, and an Object for the Resentment of the Public.”57 Alexander Innes reported to Dartmouth, “[M]any subscribe with great reluctance,” and only because of the “dread of the terrible consequences both to their persons and property that may follow a refusal.” Regardless of where their real loyalties fell, “few dare refuse, left as they are without leader, countenance, or protection...they frankly declare they rather chuse to depend on the Clemency of their Sovereign than on the mercy of a set of Lawless vindictive Ruffians.”58

At about the same time Laughlin Martin and James Dealy were being tarred and feathered in Charleston, the rebels in Georgia were also targeting those who would not sign the new Association or otherwise support the rebels’ cause. In early

June, several inhabitants received letters demanding they leave the province or
“abide the consequence which would attend noncompliance.” On or about 6 June,
William White, captain of a vessel in the harbor at Savannah, had several people
visit him and tell him he had seven days to leave the province. Several other ship
captains and merchants residing in Savannah at the time received unsigned letters
with a similar message. On 5 June, William Tongue, a New York merchant living in
Savannah received a sealed note informing him, “The friends of America in Georgia
signify to Mr. Tongue that his departure is expected in seven days from this,
otherwise he must abide by any consequences that may follow.”

Tongue also learned that while he was absent from his lodgings he had
received a visit from Joseph Habersham. Habersham was an early and active
member of the new rebel government, including the Provincial Congress and
Council of Safety, and played a central role in nearly every key rebel action that year,
including the theft of gunpowder from the Savannah magazine in May. On 7 June,
Tongue was visiting the Bay Street home of Jane Cuyler, a rebel supporter, where he
encountered Habersham. Tongue asked Habersham if he had been looking for him,
to which Habersham replied he had and suggested Tongue adhere to the order in
the note he had received. Tongue called the note “an arbitrary and unprecedented
proceeding,” and told Habersham that if he was trying to intimidate him, it would

59 Information of William Tongue, 7 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
60 The son of James Habersham, a prominent Loyalist who had moved to Philadelphia for his health
earlier in 1775 and would die in August of that year, Joseph Habersham was an active member of the
new rebel government from its beginning. A former officer in a grenadier company of the militia in
Savannah, he resigned his commission to James Wright. When Wright asked what he had done to
offend him, Habersham replied, according to Henry Laurens, that he “would not hold a commission
under an enemy to his country.” Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, X, 186-196.
not succeed. When Tongue asked why he had received the note, Habersham told him it was because he came from New York and was a known Loyalist and “an enemy to American liberty and that they should not be sheltered or encouraged in this province.” Tongue later confirmed, “Whatever ill will or antipathy may be raised or harboured against [him] in this province is on account of his expressing himself a friend to government.” He described an environment of threat and intimidation against loyalists in the province, noting that he had heard “Matthew White, Andrew Law, and Thomas Gomersale had notice to quit the province about the same time to the same purport” as Tongue.\(^6^1\)

Wright also described this environment to Dartmouth, asserting that there were still many Loyalists in the province who nevertheless asked “why they should expose their lives and property when no support or protection is given them by the government.”\(^6^2\) Wright explained, “they begin to think they are left to fall a sacrifice to the resentment of the people for want of proper support and protection, and for their own safety and other prudential reasons are falling off and lessening every day.” On 5 June, before Tongue received the letter from Habersham and the other rebels, he was dining with Wright and some other Loyalists at the courthouse in Savannah to celebrate the King’s birthday when they heard the report of cannon and firearms and saw a flag hoisted by the rebel leaders in the street.\(^6^3\) Tongue believed it to be “done in opposition to the friends of government.”\(^6^4\) On the 13\(^{th}\), the rebels

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\(^6^1\) Information of William Tongue, 7 June 1775, CO 5/664.  
\(^6^2\) Wright to Dartmouth, 17 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.  
\(^6^3\) James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 9 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.  
\(^6^4\) Information of William Tongue, 7 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
met again to ensure the compliance of the individuals who received the letters. Wright reported that the rebels “did not attempt to commit any open riot or abuse” that evening or in the ensuing days, as two of the men who had received notes were already planning to leave the colony while the other two acquiesced and met their demands. As of 17 June, when Wright wrote his account of these events to Dartmouth, the Liberty flag was “still flying in contempt and defiance of the court and of all law and government.”

The rebels used similar intimidation tactics in North Carolina to enforce loyalty. In July, Joseph Hewes, one of the colony’s delegates at the Continental Congress, told Samuel Johnston, who would be President of the Provincial Congress that would meet the following month, that he hoped Johnston would use his influence to “drive every principle of Toryism out of all parts of your province.” Hewes justified this action by saying he “consider[s] himself now over head & ears in what the ministry call Rebellion,” and that he felt nothing for “the number of our Enemies lately slain” at Bunker Hill in June. When Thomas Macknight, the delegate for Currituck County refused to sign the Continental Association, the Congress passed a resolution condemning the “Disingenuous and equivical behaviour of the said Thomas Macknight,” and declared him an enemy of American liberty and “a

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65 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 17 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
66 Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, 8 July 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
proper object of contempt to this Continent.” They recommended inhabitants have no more dealings or connection with Macknight.67

Macknight seemingly became an even greater threat to the rebel cause as the summer proceeded. In early May, mere weeks after leaving the Congress in protest, Governor Josiah Martin nominated Macknight for a seat on his Council, hoping “the ill treatment he has met with will engage him to imploy his influence to pull down the Tyrannies under the Recommendations of the Congress.”68 In June, there were rumors Macknight planned to raise a force in Currituck County to “subdue the Edenton Committee & to Force open Trade for the Laudable purpose of paying his Debts.”69 What appeared to the rebels to be increasingly hostile action yielded similarly hostile treatment of Macknight. Joseph Jones, one of the delegates to the Provincial Congress from Pasquotank, was particularly vocal in condemning Macknight, who believed Jones was responsible for spreading reports that he tried to build support for the Acts of Parliament and raise “a great number of men ready to act as Government should direct.”70 Macknight also told Samuel Johnston of attempts to harm him and his property “not only by a Persons & Jones, but by men whose general character entituled me to expect from them humanity as well as

67 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 6 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1184. After this resolve passed, several other representatives from Currituck County and neighboring Pasquotank County withdrew from the Congress, citing the rush to approve the resolves of the Continental Congress before any dissension could be recorded in the Journals of the Congress, as well as the “violence of insisting on a consistency of opinion in every individual instance.” They claimed such measures exceeded the mandate they received from their constituents prior to attending the Congress. Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 6 April 1775, Vindication of Thomas Macknight in Force, ed., American Archives, Ser. 4, Vol. II, 270.
68 Joseph Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1223-1228.
70 Thomas Macknight to Joseph Jones, 21 June 1775, CRNC, X, 31-37.
justice.” The individuals targeting McKnight did “all that lay in their power to take away my character & deprive me of the advantages of society.”\(^71\) In October, “threatened hourly with assassination” according to Governor Martin, Macknight fled the province to take refuge with the Earl of Dunmore, the governor of Virginia.\(^72\)

On 17 June, Richard Cogdell, the chairman of the New Bern committee, issued a circular to the residents of the town proclaiming that those inhabitants who had neglected to sign the Association for the town of New Bern and Craven County had until the 22\(^{nd}\) to sign or be deemed enemies of the country.\(^73\) The committees for other counties took similar measures. The Northampton County committee dealt with Anthony Warwick, a Loyalist who was captured trying to smuggle gunpowder from Virginia to the town of Hillsborough, in the same manner. In early August, the committee for that county found that he had violated the Association and made him “an object to be held in the utmost detestation by all lovers of American freedom.”\(^74\) A similar fate befell Jacob Beck of Rowan County, who in November 1775 was summoned by the committee for that county “to give an account of his

\(^71\) Thomas Macknight to Samuel Johnston, 17 September 1775, CRNC, X, 249-251.  
\(^72\) Josiah Martin to George Germain, 6 July 1776, CRNC, X, 655-656. In February 1776, Macknight joined Martin on the HMS Cruizer, a sloop of war in the Cape Fear River, where the governor sought refuge. Macknight only remained on the Cruizer for a short time before leaving for England. In January 1776, the Edenton committee confiscated Macknight’s property while the New Bern committee did the same to his ship, the Belville. The committee also ordered any ammunition found on the ship be seized and placed in the magazine in town. In April 1776, the committee took his slaves, and a month later confiscated his plantation. Minutes of the New Bern Committee of Safety, 18 January 1776, CRNC, X, 417; Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 4 April – 14 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 505, 529, 565.  
\(^73\) Committee of Newbern Circular, 17 June 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection  
\(^74\) Minutes of the Northampton County Committee of Safety, 5 August 1775, CRNC, X, 140.
political sentiments.” When he failed to appear before the committee the following day, a militia officer ultimately had to bring him before the committee, which Beck then treated with “notorious contempt.” For his opposition to the proceedings of the committee and his refusal to renounce his loyalty to the Crown, the committee sentenced him to be immediately confined to jail where he could not influence others.75

The rebels also used coercive measures such as home confinement and banishment to isolate Loyalist threats from the rest of the population. In Georgia in August, for example, the committee for St. Philip Parish ordered a Dr. Traill, who had refused to sign the Association, be banished from the province, and ordered him to depart within eight days.76 Another such case included William Wragg, a wealthy planter and former member of the Governor’s Council in South Carolina, but otherwise “totally unconnected to government.” Wragg nevertheless became the target of the rebels, many of whom had been his friends and colleagues, for refusing to sign the Association.77 In July he was ordered before the General Committee and forced to give his reasons for not signing the Association. The threats against him continued over the following weeks, and Wragg explained his reasoning for refusing to sign the Association to Henry Laurens, arguing that none of the revolutionary organizations had the power to force him to sign.

He also noted apparent contradictions between the rebels’ claims of supporting liberty while also forcing people to endorse sentiments they did not hold.

75 Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 8-10 November 1775, CRNC, X, 311-317.
76 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
77 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
He asked Laurens whether such coercion was “consistant with Justice, with Humanity.” He argued instead it bears “the strongest marks of Despotism,” and “degrades, & too lessens the Valour of the Associators by insinuating fears from the formidable power of twenty Gentlemen.”

Despite his arguments and his friendship with many on the Council of Safety, they nevertheless, in early September, ordered Wragg be confined to his plantation on the Ashley River outside Charleston. Lord William Campbell, the royal governor, told Dartmouth that this process unfolded “with great inhumanity” as they were banishing the elderly Wragg “in the sickly season, cutting him off from all society with his family and friends and forcing him to leave his pregnant wife.”

James Brisbane, a planter from Charleston, received a similar punishment of confinement and banishment. He initially signed the Association, and his ordeal demonstrates how the rebel governments continued to monitor those of suspect loyalty, even if they signed the Association. In early October the General Committee accused Brisbane of conducting himself in a “bad and dishonorable manner,” and “advised him to quit the colony within one week, as they cannot undertake to protect him.”

The General Committee confined Brisbane, now returned to

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78 William Wragg to Henry Laurens, 5 September 1775, PHL, X, 368-370.
79 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396. Wragg would remain confined to his plantation until 1777 when he was again threatened if he did not publicly endorse independence. He sailed for England in July 1777, but died trying to save his young son who fell overboard during a storm off the coast of Holland. Keith Krawczynski, *William Henry Drayton: South Carolina Revolutionary Patriot* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 59; Chesnutt, et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, X, 368n.
Charleston, to that city for several weeks before it ordered at the end of October that he be banished from the colony. Brisbane went to Georgia, but was not allowed to stay there and soon returned to South Carolina, staying at his plantation at New River, just across the Savannah River from the city of Savannah. It was not long, however, before he was again ordered, on the same day his wife died while in labor, to depart the colony within twenty-four hours. In February 1776, Henry Laurens told Brisbane he could stay confined to his plantation on John’s Island, where he remained until June of that year when he was again arrested amidst the imminent threat posed by the arrival of a British expedition led by General Sir Henry Clinton and Admiral Samuel Graves off the coast of Charleston.

Coercion by the rebels in all three provinces could also turn violent. In North Carolina in late May, Jacob Williams, a planter in Anson County, was traveling to South Carolina when he encountered Samuel Wise, a member of the committee for that county. According to Williams’ testimony, Wise “called him a damned scoundrel, swore he had a great mind to kill him, saying he was surprised that he would be against his country.” Several days later, Wise, together with a man named Donaldson and two others whom Williams did not know, arrested Williams, held him captive for several days, and brought him before the local committee. When he would not answer any of their questions or agree to support the committee, it initially ordered his release. On his way home, however, a group of six men, two of

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81 This order did not pass without controversy, however, since before the next session two days later, a primary witness against Brisbane had changed his testimony. The order therefore caused “those of the General Committee...who had better memories” to “[turn] their heads about & [look] at one another.” Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 20 October 1775, PHL, X, 476-483.

whom were known to him, seized him and took him into some nearby woods where he thought they were going to kill him.\textsuperscript{83}

David Love, a member of the Provincial Congress and Anson County committee, as well as a militia officer, asked Williams if he had signed a protest that had circulated against the Continental Congress, to which Williams replied that he had. Love called him an enemy and told him Lord North and the King were Catholics because they established that religion in Quebec, and “the King and Parliament did intend to establish Popery on all the Continent of America.” When Williams still would not agree to their demands, they let him go, but not before calling him an enemy to the country and saying they would “take him again dead or alive.” In June, Thomas Wade, a tavern keeper and also a delegate at the August Provincial Congress threatened Williams that the committee and Provincial Congress would take control of the colony and would have their way with him and other Loyalists.\textsuperscript{84}

Sometime in the next month Williams fled to the \textit{Cruizer}, where he met with Josiah Martin. The governor later reported to Dartmouth, however, that he could do little to help Williams and others who sought his assistance because, given the circumstances in the colony, he could not get a sufficient number of members of his Council to meet to advise him on how to assist Loyalists fleeing the colony.\textsuperscript{85} Williams and the others were therefore forced to return to their homes, but on the way the rebels again took Williams and brought him before the Wilmington committee. Out of options, Williams acquiesced to the committee’s demands and

\textsuperscript{83} Deposition of Jacob Williams, 18 August 1775, CRNC, X, 126-127.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Martin to Dartmouth, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 230-237.
signed the Association.\textsuperscript{86} He was then taken to Hillsborough, and the Provincial Congress meeting there determined he had “made a solemn recantation of [his] former principles,” and set him free.\textsuperscript{87}

The rebel effort to coerce support for the Association would continue throughout the summer and autumn of 1775. On 24 July, a group of men in Savannah seized harbor pilot John Hopkins based on a report he had toasted damnation to America. They abducted him from his house while he and his family were eating dinner and proceeded to tar and feather him, and put him “into a Cart & Carted him up & down the Streets of Savannah for upwards of three Hours,” including by the house of the governor. They swore they would hang him unless he would toast “Damnation to all Tories & Success to American Liberty,” which he agreed to do. Wright described the scene to Dartmouth, and that “such a horrid spectacle I really never saw.”\textsuperscript{88} Historians often cite this incident, like many of the other instances of the tar and feather punishment, as an example of the mob rule that pervaded the southern colonies in 1775. Hopkins, however, named many of his assailants, most of whom were either members of the Council of Safety or Provincial Congress or were representatives that those bodies often used to execute their various measures. Among the leaders of this “mob” was the ubiquitous Joseph Habersham.\textsuperscript{89}

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\item[86] Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 19 August 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
\item[87] Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 182.
\item[88] Deposition of John Hopkins, 25 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
\item[89] In addition to Habersham, who was both a delegate at the Provincial Congress and a member of the Council of Safety, the other perpetrators Hopkins names included Thomas Lee, Ambrose Wright,}

71
Centralized Direction

If the events of these years were merely the result of an angry mob seeking to beat Loyalists into submission, individuals looking to redress private grievances with personal enemies, or rebels attempting to purify society of irreconcilable Loyalists, one would expect to see only one uniform and indiscriminate response to any demonstration of loyalty to the Crown. Instead, the rebels were guided more by pragmatism than ideology, since their objective did not require indiscriminate eradication of Loyalists. The rebels were acting according to a concerted plan to ensure Loyalists could not continue providing support to the government. William Campbell confirmed both the role of the leadership and their objectives when he told Dartmouth, “[T]he whole world ought to know that the present measures proceed not from a mob fired by oppression, but...are the result of a concerted plan and firm determination of a powerful party to establish an independency by acts as unprovoked as they are unjustifiable.”90

As with the case of Laughlin Martin in Charleston in June 1775, the rebels often used large, seemingly unrestrained groups or crowds for their own purposes. These groups would threaten one punishment, to be carried out by “the people,”

Joseph Reynolds, Oliver Bowen, and John McCluer, all of whom were delegates for the town and district of Savannah in the Provincial Congress. Wright and Bowen were also members of the Council of Safety, and Bowen would also serve as an officer in the provincial navy and was used for secret expeditions on the order of the Provincial Congress or Council of Safety. Also named by Hopkins was Francis Harris, a delegate in the Provincial Congress for the district of Little Ogeechee and a member of the Council of Safety. Other participants included Quintin Pooler, a militia captain who enforced the Association among militia members on behalf of the Council of Safety, Alexander Phoenix, who would become an officer in the provincial army and on at least two occasions would attend the Council of Safety to make recommendations for commissions, and Captain George Bunner, a naval captain who would be captured by the British in April 1776. See Deposition of John Hopkins, 25 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.

90 Campbell to Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
before the leadership stepped in to commute that sentence and replace it with something much more lenient after their point had been made. Janet Schaw, a resident of Edinburgh traveling in North Carolina with her family, witnessed an event similar to Martin's ordeal in the summer of 1775 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Schaw was watching the rebel militia conduct their drills, and in the North Carolina summer heat the men drank copious amounts of grog to keep hydrated. As the men became increasingly inebriated, Schaw “heard a cry of tar and feather,” and saw that the rebels “dragged forward” a groom working for a local Loyalist who the soldiers accused of “having smiled at the reg[imen]t.” At the last moment, an officer intervened and suggested to the soldiers, who did not appear to need much convincing, that they should simply accept an apology instead. The point was made for Schaw and her family's Loyalist friends in attendance, but with little need for recourse to violence. Instead, the groom was “drummed and fiddled out of the town, with a strict prohibition of ever being seen in it again.”

The rebels also demonstrated a good deal of flexibility in targeting Loyalists, and made a concerted effort to seek the facts in each case before punishing suspected Loyalists. In November 1775, for example, the South Carolina Provincial Congress heard from Nathan Legare, who had reportedly showed several individuals a letter proclaiming his loyalty to the Crown. After questioning Legare, however, the Congress learned the letter “had been written merely as a cloke, to be shewn occasionally, if the [British] men-of-war [sitting off the bar of Charleston

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Harbor] should stop his limeboats.” Legare insisted he had no intention of supplying the British ships with any supplies or rendering any other sort of assistance. The Congress confirmed Legare’s story and, since his “conduct appear[ed] less criminal than first thought,” released him with a warning not to have any dealings or communication with the men-of-war.\footnote{Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 9 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 114.}

When the facts confirmed that someone was a Loyalist, if the person or persons then repented for their opposition to the rebels and promised not to repeat their mistake, they were often allowed to go free with a warning, on parole, or with another similarly minor punishment, though they often faced continued monitoring. In March 1775, for example, the Pitt County committee in North Carolina learned of attempts by Amos Atkinson, Solomon Shepperd, and Jon Tison to thwart a collection taken up in the county to support the people of Boston against British oppression. In July, Shepperd and Atkinson went before the committee to explain their actions, and the committee acquitted both men of the charges brought against them. In October, Tison appeared before the committee and took an oath that he would abide by the Association and that he would not do anything more to harm America.\footnote{Record of the Proceedings of the Committee in Pitt County North Carolina, 10 March 1775, 17 July 1775, 2 October 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.}

In August, John Coulson of Anson County took a similar oath before the North Carolina Provincial Congress after his arrest for “dangerous practices against the Liberties of America.”\footnote{Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 21 August 1775, CRNC, X, 168.} In September, when the Rowan County committee ordered James Garniss to explain “some late conduct in opposition to American Measures,” it
allowed him to go free after he apologized for his actions and signed the Test passed in August by the Provincial Congress.\textsuperscript{95} The same committee reached a similar decision in November after Matthias Sappinfield, who had also publicly opposed American measures, now “professed his hearty approbation of” those same measures.\textsuperscript{96} Also in November, the South Carolina Provincial Congress learned Robert McKeown had gone aboard the \textit{Tamar} where William Campbell was then residing. When he explained he was unaware he was not supposed to leave the city, the Congress allowed him to go free with a warning to confine himself to Charleston and not have any further communication with the British vessel.\textsuperscript{97}

In December, the Wilmington committee considered a request by Jonathan Dix and David Thompson to be allowed to travel to their families in the northern colonies. The committee considered their request, but found there were “some circumstances that make them appear inimical to the American Cause,” and they had “not given a satisfactory account of themselves to this committee.” The committee ordered Dix and Thompson put under guard until they could be questioned, but when they appeared before the committee, the committee decided nothing in their answers or papers showed them to be enemies. The two men offered to “sign an oath...declaring themselves to be friends to America,” after which the committee

\textsuperscript{95} Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 21 September 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
\textsuperscript{96} Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 10 November 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
\textsuperscript{97} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 15 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 129-130.
allowed them to leave the province, and gave them a copy of their oath to show
during their travels if anyone questioned them.98

Also in December, the North Carolina Provincial Council summoned George
Massingbird, who had been accused of speaking disrespectfully of the American
cause. He expressed regret for his past conduct and agreed to take an oath proffered
by the Council.99 In each of these cases, the rebels used a variety of coercive
measures to intimidate and force the allegiance of their enemies. For some Loyalists,
the profession of allegiance counted for very little and they later sought to provide
support to the British when they had the opportunity. The important thing for the
rebels, however, was the absence of opposition at a critical point in the conflict
rather than the targeting of individual Loyalists. By enforcing the Association, the
rebels were able to deprive the government of support and ensure loyalty to the
American cause, which were both more critical to the rebels than settling petty
personal feuds or destroying political opponents.

Not only was the rebel leadership responsible for most of the
implementation of its strategy of control, it also insisted the authority of the
hierarchical governing infrastructure it had established be respected and adhered to
by those under its purview. The provincial Councils of Safety would overturn the
decisions of the local committees if they decided those committees lacked
information relevant to the case. Sometimes this actually resulted in more lenient
treatment towards Loyalists than ordered by the local committee. In September

98 Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 20-22 December 1775,
Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
99 Minutes of the Provincial Council of Safety, 19 December 1775, CRNC, X, 349.
1775, for example, the Little River committee in South Carolina ordered Daniel Robins be declared an enemy to America after he violated the Association by trading with and employing individuals who had not signed the Association, including James Hamilton. The committee did not have the financial resources to publicize Robins' behavior, and so referred his case to the Council of Safety in Charleston, only to find in October the General Committee had cleared Robins. Insulted, the Little River committee members threatened to resign. The Provincial Congress replied to the committee, informing its members that Hamilton had indeed signed the Association prior to working for Robins, and therefore Robins had not violated the Association. It refused to accept the resignation of the local committee members, and provided them with a small supply of gunpowder to make up for any perceived insult. It also made the hierarchical relationship clear by affirming its decision to overturn the ruling of the local committee.\(^{100}\)

The rebel leadership curtailed any action against Loyalists and government officials that took place outside the oversight of the local or provincial governance structure. For example, in August the North Carolina Provincial Congress approved the decision by the Rowan County committee to have two Loyalists, John Dunn and Benjamin Boote, sent to Charleston. This decision to allow two North Carolina residents to be turned over to another province created a great deal of controversy, and the Congress was aware the potential precedent this action could set for individual rebels and vigilante groups who wanted to settle scores outside of the

\(^{100}\) Little River Committee to Council of Safety, 23 October 1775, PHL, X, 497; Provincial Congress to Little River Committee, Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 11 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses*, 117-118.
purview of the rebel’s governance structure. The Provincial Congress therefore sought to reinforce its own authority and that of the local committees by ordering, “[N]o person whatsoever charged with being an Enemy to the American Cause shall be carried out of this province privately, or by any Act of Violence, except by the directions of a Committee duly impowered to take Cognizance of the Offence with which they are charged.”

The South Carolina Council of Safety made a similar effort to curtail individual lawlessness and assert its own authority. In December 1775, it learned that two brothers, Benjamin and Samuel Legare, had stolen a carriage and some horses that belonged to William Campbell, who was no longer in the city, as a means of collecting on a debt Campbell owed them. The Council of Safety summoned the two men, declared their actions to be illegal, and ordered them to return the carriage and horses. The Council of Safety told them if Campbell owed them money, the proper way to collect on the debt was to make an application for assistance to the Council of Safety. The Legare brothers did so two days later, and the Council then allowed them to take and sell what they needed from among Campbell’s effects to settle the debt. The Council then ordered guards to protect Campbell’s house to prevent additional theft of his possessions.

101 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 29 August 1775, CRNC, X, 184-185.
102 Journal of the Second Council of Safety, 10-12 December 1775 in Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society (CSCHS), III (Charleston: The South Carolina Historical Society, 1859), 74, 80-81. This preference by the rebel leadership to enforce order even when it was for the benefit of Loyalists, and more importantly to defend its own prerogative in meting out justice to Loyalists appears to contrast with practices of the rebel leadership in the North. Jonathan Clark shows how rebels in Poughkeepsie, New York enforced consensus through “selective lapses in the maintenance of order.” When “several local women” objected to a Loyalist, Peter Mesier, selling tea just outside of town, they “broke into his store, drank his liquor, vandalized the premises, and apparently climaxed their day
The Edenton committee asserted its authority over measures taken against Loyalists and government officials in a particularly serious incident in November 1775. Cullen Pollock, a prominent and wealthy resident of Edenton was visiting a friend in Suffolk, Virginia with his wife Ann, when he made a remark that one person present found objectionable. That person reported him to the Edenton committee, and upon Pollock’s return to town, the committee ordered him to appear and not to leave town before he did so. When Pollock refused to appear before the committee, a large party of armed men came to his house and arrested him. He subsequently signed the Test of the Provincial Congress, and promised to “conduct himself...as a friend of the liberties of America,” and was released. The committee issued a public statement explaining what had transpired, “in order to prevent injury to his character.”

Some local residents, however, were not entirely convinced Pollock was reformed, and at around two in the morning the night of his release, a group of armed men came to his house demanding to see him. His wife tried to talk them down, but, according to her, before she could open the door they “chopped it down with their axes.” She had previously removed her husband’s firearms from the house because she was worried about what he would do after his release from jail. Cullen Pollock could therefore do little more than accompany the men to the...

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103 Don Higginbotham, ed., The Papers of James Iredell, I (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1976), 341n.
counthouse while two men stayed behind with his wife. They told Ann Pollock not to worry, as the worst they would do to her husband was tar and feather him. This caused Ann to run through town “barefooted” and with “little clothing upon me,” looking for her husband, who she found at the courthouse with the men who had taken him.  

These men, and the crowd that had subsequently formed, eventually dispersed after tarring and feathering Pollock, but the Edenton committee was outraged by their actions against a man they had questioned, released, and publicly announced was to suffer no additional harm. The committee released another statement declaring the perpetrators “of that horrid transaction” to be “worthy of public contempt,” and ordered notice of the ruling to be widely publicized in the newspapers, while Samuel Johnston invited the Pollocks to stay at his home for their protection. Some historians have used the Pollock affair to demonstrate the mob mentality of the time, or to show the class or ethnic influences that drove the attack on Pollock. Don Higginbotham notes, however, the leaders of the “mob” were themselves also wealthy and prominent individuals, including justices of the peace, vestrymen, former assemblymen, and “the son of the former parish rector.” Furthermore, several of the perpetrators were also friends with the local rebel leaders who had opposed their actions against Pollock. This makes the committee’s willingness to publicly denounce their actions and order the public to

104 Ann Pollock to Joseph Hewes, 23 December 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
105 Higginbotham, ed., Papers of James Iredell, I, 341n.
106 Ganyard, North Carolina During the American Revolution, 184-186;
consider the men who attacked Pollock contemptible particularly remarkable, as well as indicative of the leadership's insistence on maintaining authority over, and control of, the rebellion.

The rebels often did try, if possible, to use persuasive means to win people to their side. The objective was control rather than destruction, and they were not opposed to less coercive measures that would achieve the same objective. These measures were not always productive, but that the rebels attempted them at all is indicative of their pragmatism and strategic flexibility that sought to do more than simply crush all opposition. When the rebels in Georgia created a Council of Safety, elected delegates for a Provincial Congress, and formed local committees to enforce the resolves of the Congress, they sought to persuade the skeptical residents of the province who had not supported the Continental Congress or the January Provincial Congress. They made clear their intentions to “promote the peace and good order” of the province, and stated if “any person become an innocent sufferer on account of these grievances,” they would ensure those persons received whatever assistance was necessary.\textsuperscript{108} Similarly, in North Carolina, the Provincial Congress created a committee to “confer with such of the Inhabitants of the Province, who entertain any religious or political Scruples, with respect to” signing the Association. The committee was also to use “Argument and Persuasion” to convince them to support the rebels.

The largely coastal and Anglican rebel leadership also appealed to clergy, usually of non-Anglican Protestant denominations to in turn convince their co-

\textsuperscript{108} Proceedings of the Georgia Provincial Congress, 10 July 1775, RRG, I, 247.
religionists in the interior of the southern provinces to support the rebellion. For example, in December 1775, the North Carolina Provincial Council wrote to Presbyterian Ministers in Philadelphia asking them to use their “pastoral influence to work a change in the disposition of the people of North Carolina” who had been misled by “wicked men” as to the cause of the conflict between Britain and its colonies. They noted the Presbyterians in North Carolina lived mostly in the backcountry and were “not very politically astute,” but could “nevertheless be a danger and risk bloodshed.”

Conclusion

Beginning in the first months of 1775, the rebels in the southern provinces used a network of committees and revolutionary councils as a shadow government through which they could weaken and dismantle any remaining organizational vestiges of the royal government. Some of these organizations were formed in the last months of 1774, just as similar organizations had existed since the first protests against the Stamp Act. Their use prior to 1775, however, had been more as a means of organizing limited protests against specific Acts of Parliament rather than for launching active opposition with the intention of dismantling the existing royal government. Beginning in 1775, however, and particularly after news of the opening hostilities of the war at Lexington and Concord reached the southern provinces, the scope of these organizations broadened considerably. Even those who were not yet ready to seek independence from Britain and the King supported the campaign

against the provincial governments, with the intention of establishing a replacement government until the colonies had reconciled with Britain.\textsuperscript{110}

While similar committees existed in the northern provinces and their formation often preceded those in the South, the committees in the southern provinces differed from their northern counterparts in several important ways. As both the rebels and British realized from the very beginning of the conflict, any British military effort to hold the southern provinces would rely on the heavy use of the region’s Loyalists. This critical element of any British strategy, whether pursued by the weakened governments in 1775 in a bid to hold onto power or by the British army in the years to come, would be particularly vulnerable to a rebel campaign of political violence and coercion. As a result, the southern committees and congresses emphasized a political strategy of control intended to deny the British support from Loyalists in the region. Their northern counterparts, however, tended to focus more on mobilization and recruitment, which made sense given the immediacy of the threat they faced. As the exigencies of the war overwhelmed the principle of civilian control of the military, these organizations often had less power than they did in the southern provinces where the rebel strategy was inherently political. Northern committees often gave limited attention to the Loyalist population, which they often sought to simply suppress rather than control.

From the beginning, these revolutionary bodies in the South sought to establish tight control over all known Loyalists. These rebels had a well-developed

\textsuperscript{110} See for example Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 26 March 1776 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 263.
understanding of how to control a population, in large part as a result of decades of controlling the slave population to prevent insurrection. They implemented the Association, or an oath of loyalty to the Council of Safety and Provincial Congress, in their respective provinces. This allowed the rebels to form a detailed list of the names of everyone living in a town, city, or parish, which acted as the equivalent of a census. They used this list to determine those who had signed the Association and monitor those whose loyalty was still questionable. Far from the frenzy of violence by which historians often depict the war in the South, the rebels used an involved and targeted strategy that involved intimidation, population control, and targeted violence, but also included pardon and forgiveness.

What has often been described as leaderless violence perpetrated by enraged street gangs of the lower and middle classes was more often than not the scripted work of elites sitting on the various councils, committees and congresses. While decentralized protest and violence by the masses may have characterized the resistance movements in the South prior to 1774, by that year, and particularly after hostilities erupted in Massachusetts in April 1775, the elites in the various revolutionary bodies took control of the movement at the provincial level and imposed highly centralized control. They would insist that they alone were responsible for directing action taken against Loyalists and Crown officials. With the initial exception of North Carolina, they also maintained a hierarchical structure to ensure a coherent strategy against the enemy. In some respects this centralized authority was an inevitable result of the second element of the rebels’ strategy, which complemented indirect efforts of removing Loyalist support by directly
targeting officers and structures of government. This element of rebel strategy even included working from within the royal government to bring about its collapse.
Chapter 2: All Powers of Government Being Obstructed

On a late August or early September day in 1774, in the town of Salisbury, North Carolina, John Ross Dunn, Crown Attorney for Rowan County encountered William Temple Coles, an innkeeper and magistrate who was also a former county sheriff. Coles showed a northern newspaper to Dunn and several others who were present, including Benjamin Booth Boote, a lawyer who would be nominated as Deputy Attorney in 1775. The newspaper included a number of resolves or protests signed by several people from New York disapproving of the actions of the people of Boston in opposing Acts of Parliament. Coles suggested to Dunn, Boote, and the others present that the people of North Carolina, particularly Crown officers, needed to draw up a similar set of resolves, and he asked Boote to draft the document.

Several days later at Coles’ home Boote presented his draft of “a Declaration of Allegiance, fidelity and obedience to his Majesty and Submision to the British Acts of Parliament in General,” which Coles, Dunn, and Boote signed, along with another magistrate named Walter Lindsay and a fifth person, whose identity is not known.

At first the men decided to keep the document secret and not have any others sign, but word soon spread throughout Rowan County and to neighboring areas. Shortly after the meeting at Coles’ house, Dunn was at the Mecklenburg County Court where he learned Waightstill Avery, a Charlotte attorney and member of the
Mecklenburg County committee of safety, had procured and disseminated a copy of the document.\textsuperscript{136} After the formation of the local Committees of Safety in that province, Boote and Dunn had also posted a public document condemning the actions of the Rowan County committee and referencing the earlier resolves they had signed. The committee declared this public “advertisement” to be “false, scandalous, wicked and impertinent,” and labeled Boote and Dunn “Enemies to their Country” who warranted “[c]ensure and detestation” from the public. At the time, however, the new committee could not do much more than post a copy of its decision “against the two posts of the Gallows and the whipping post to demonstrate the contempt in which the Committee hold the authors of so infamous a performance.”\textsuperscript{137}

By July 1775, however, the situation had changed. The Provincial Congress had met in April to approve the proceedings of the Continental Congress, and the increasingly powerful local committees were in the process of seizing control of the province. The Rowan committee members suspected Boote was in contact with Governor Martin, who had recently fled to the HMS Cruizer, with the objective of organizing resistance to the rebels.\textsuperscript{138} The committee summoned Boote, ordered him to bring any correspondence with Martin in his possession, and threatened to use force if he did not turn over the letters. Boote refused, and the committee

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\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{137} Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 23 September 1774, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
    \item \textsuperscript{138} This was confirmed by Thomas Brown, a Loyalist from Georgia who was active in the South Carolina backcountry, to Governor William Campbell. See Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, The (UK) National Archives, (TNA), CO 5/396.
\end{itemize}

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ordered the militia to guard Boote’s house and “prevent the conveyance of all sustenance to him” until he delivered the letters.\(^{139}\) When he continued to refuse, the Rowan County committee had him and Dunn arrested.\(^{140}\)

Dunn testified that on the last day of July 1775, he was at his home preparing papers for the new session of the Court beginning the next day when armed men broke into his house and took him by force to the home of a resident named Lewis Coffee, where they had also brought Boote. Several committee members, including Adlai Osborn and chairman William Kennon, met them at the house and ordered Dunn and Boote be taken to a home outside of town, from there to be taken to Charleston where the General Committee had offered to hold them in their jail. Some of the committee members instead wanted to deal with Dunn and Boote themselves, but ultimately the two men were handed over to the Mecklenburg County committee and taken by an armed force led by Waightstill Avery to the courthouse in Charlotte. From there they were sent to the jail in Camden, South Carolina, and finally to Charleston where they were imprisoned.\(^{141}\) At the end of August, the North Carolina Provincial Congress approved of the committee’s decision, dismissing petitions for their release from their wives and asked the Committee of Intelligence in Charleston to continue holding Dunn and Boote until

\(^{139}\) Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 15 July 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.

\(^{140}\) Statement of John Dunn as to His Arrest in Salisbury, 27 July 1776, CRNC, X, 673-678.

\(^{141}\) Ibid.
the Provincial Congress met again or until "they make such recantations of their principles as shall be satisfactory to the Committee of Charlestown."142

Dunn and Boote remained imprisoned for several months in Charleston, until they were granted parole in October based on their “pressing entreaties to the...[South Carolina] General Committee” and after “having first voluntarily taken an oath to observe a conduct of strict neutrality.” They promised to not “directly or indirectly, in any shape interfere in the present unhappy dispute between Great Britain and America.”143 Henry Laurens claimed they “readily submit[ted] to the Jurisdiction of the So Carolina General Committee & [underwent] an Examination of an hour & an half Standing all the time as Culprits.”144 It was not long before Dunn was in trouble again, this time for arguing in a Charleston tavern in support of British measures against the colonies. According to a witness, Dunn appeared very drunk, and told him that he was a Loyalist, and he had named his stray dog “Tory.” Another witness confirmed Dunn was inebriated, and claimed while he did speak in favor of British measures, he also “spoke somewhat in favour of the American Cause.” Based on the witness testimony, a committee of the South Carolina Provincial Congress that met in November found, “his imprudent conduct was, in a great degree, the result of intoxication,” and recommended “that Mr Dunn be admonished to be more cautious in the future.” Dunn was summoned before the Congress in

142 The Congress offered to reimburse any expenses required for the confinement of the two men and offered to provide a similar service for South Carolina when needed. Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 29 August 1775, CRNC, X, 184.
143 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 7 November 1775, CRNC, X, 306.
144 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775 in David R. Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens (PHL), X (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 324-325.
November and warned to more strictly adhere to his neutrality oath, and that if he broke his parole again, he would return to prison.  

Dunn and Boote remained confined to Charleston on parole for more than a year, until September 1776, when they were allowed to return on parole to Salisbury. Boote appeared before the North Carolina Council of Safety on 10 September to take an Oath of Fidelity to the new state of North Carolina and become a citizen. This new allegiance only lasted until after the fall of Charleston in 1780, when he fled to British lines. Dunn, however, remained on parole in Salisbury, where he had to provide bail of £1,000 for his good behavior, remain within five miles of town, and appear daily at the house of Maxwell Chambers, a committee member. Eventually he was allowed to return to practicing law. In 1779 the General Assembly named him a commissioner for the construction of a new courthouse in Salisbury, along with Adlai Osbourn, one of the men responsible for his abduction and imprisonment.

Despite the different outcomes for Boote and Dunn, however, the rebels were successful in their purpose for targeting the two men in the first instance. They prevented two prominent Loyalist leaders from raising men to support the British at a critical juncture in the war when the rebels were trying to establish control over the colony and its inhabitants, and Governor Martin was attempting to raise Loyalist forces to resist their efforts. Dunn and Boote’s ordeal is also illustrative of the rebels’ effort to dismantle royal government at every level. This included targeting the

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145 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 6-7 November 1775, CRNC, X, 305-306.
146 Minutes of the North Carolina Council of Safety, 10-11 September 1776, CRNC, X, 828-829; Acts of the North Carolina General Assembly, 14 April 1779, CRNC, XXIV, 240
royal governors until they felt compelled to flee the colony for their own safety, but it also meant disrupting the routine administration of governance by targeting local governing structures. Most important, perhaps, was the need to break down the existing judicial system and replace it with the new system of committees and councils of safety. Making government officials targets of the rebel strategy would sometimes prove controversial, particularly as both the royal officials themselves and even some of the leading rebels did not immediately fully understand the purpose and importance of the Association. Nevertheless, just as they were successful in preventing Loyalist inhabitants from actively supporting the government, the rebels would prove overwhelmingly successful, working both inside and outside the government, at breaking down the authority of the royal government and seizing control of the levers of political power for themselves.

**Targeting Crown Officials**

When the South Carolina Provincial Congress passed and signed the Association in early June, many on both sides of the conflict did not think the rebels would require royal officials to sign. According to reports the Congress received on the morning of the 10 June, only thirty people in Charleston had declined to sign the Association. Nearly all of those thirty, however, were Crown officials, and Henry Laurens told his son John the Congress would therefore take no action against them.\(^{147}\) Governor William Campbell informed Dartmouth that based on what he had been told, he did not think the rebels would force royal officials to sign the

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\(^{147}\) Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June 1775, PHL, X, 168-170.
Association.\textsuperscript{148} His personal secretary Alexander Innes held the same opinion, arguing it would be cruel to force government officials to subscribe, as they would have no choice but to refuse. Furthermore, Innes believed such measures were unnecessary at best and self-defeating at worst, since the purpose of the Association “was only to be able to distinguish those upon whom [the rebels] could depend.”\textsuperscript{149}

While identifying friend from foe was certainly one objective of the Association, it was also about establishing control over the entire population in each province, friend and foe. This control would remove the base of support the government needed to survive, thereby leading to its ultimate collapse and giving the rebels political control. Enforcing the Association on royal officials, many of whom had received appointments to their positions from the King, had a broader effect beyond simply suppressing a single individual. Without these officials, the royal government in the southern colonies could not function, and without a functioning government, there was nothing and nobody to protect Loyalists who wished to demonstrate their loyalty, and no government to compete with the rebels for control of the province. Exempting royal officials from any of the measures used to force Loyalists to support the rebels, drive them from the province, or render them politically impotent would defeat the purpose of the Association. Those rebels who initially agreed to exempt government officials quickly realized the fundamental flaw in their strategic thinking. Only weeks after expressing his initial

\textsuperscript{148} William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.

support for exempting government officials, Henry Laurens had started to change his mind. In late June, he noted a number of people were beginning to consider Innes “unfriendly to our Cause,” and he hoped Innes would comport himself appropriately if he wanted to remain in the colony.\textsuperscript{150} At about the same time, the Provincial Congress sent representatives to meet government officials and convince them to sign the Association. While many refused, some acquiesced, as Campbell reported to Dartmouth, “some few here in the service of government have so far forgot their duty” and signed the Association, and that he would “take care to mark” those individuals.\textsuperscript{151}

After most of the government officials refused to sign, the General Committee and Council of Safety held a number of meetings to consider the course of action it would take with those individuals. They tried again between 10 and 13 July, sending representatives to inform the Crown officials that if they continued to refuse, they would be called before the General Committee “and be dealt with according to sound policy.”\textsuperscript{152} When they refused again, they received summonses on the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} to appear before the General Committee on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} and explain why they would not sign the Association. The officials called before the General Committee held a wide ranging list of positions, and included Innes, Thomas Gordon Knox, the Chief Justice of the colony, Attorney General, James Simpson and his deputy, Richard Lambton, as well as other justices and the clerk of the Court of Common Pleas, the Collector and Deputy Collector of Customs, the Comptroller of Customs, the

\textsuperscript{150} Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, X, 195.
\textsuperscript{151} William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 23 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{152} Thomas Knox Gordon, et al. to William Campbell, 1 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
Secretary of the Province, and the Chief Surgeon to the His Majesty’s forces in South Carolina. At the meeting of the General Committee on the 22nd, they were called into the room individually, again given the chance to sign the Association, and asked to justify their actions when they again refused.\footnote{153}

The Committee initially set a date of 26 July to pass judgment, but by early August it was still considering how to handle the royal officials. Arthur Middleton, one of the more radical members of the Council of Safety, supported seizing the estates of some of the non-subscribers, but even he realized there was little support at the time for such measures among the rest of the members.\footnote{154} The rebels offered the government officials an oath to take in place of signing the Association, whereby they would swear, “not to write Speak or Act in any manner against the American cause.”\footnote{155} By this time there was no support left among the rebels for exempting the royal officials, with even Laurens responding to Innes’ request “to a friend for advice” on how he should respond to the offer of the oath by telling him to obey the Committee’s summons.\footnote{156}

Only one official agreed to the take the oath, and on the 23 July the General Committee ordered the remaining be declared enemies of America, with their names published in the \textit{South Carolina Gazette}. In the last days of August, the rebels confiscated firearms and swords from these individuals, and limited their movements by confining them to Charleston and ordering them to report regularly

\footnote{153} David Chesnutt, et al., eds., \textit{The Papers of Henry Laurens}, 322n.  
\footnote{155} Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 323-324.  
\footnote{156} Alexander Innes to Henry Laurens, 13 August 1775, PHL, X, 299-300.
to ensure they did not flee the city. This process yielded the desired results for the rebels as Gordon, the Chief Justice, and several other government officials reported to Campbell that their confinement was “an affront to the dignity of the King and an endangerment to their own safety” and they could no longer “give the illusion of King’s officers continuing in their positions in the province.” They decided to cease fulfilling the duties of their offices until they could “resume them with the powers and dignity intended by the Constitution.”157 Campbell approved of their decisions, and by the beginning of September was himself the sole remaining vestige of royal governance in South Carolina.158

Innes was the only one who did not comply with the Committee’s demands, sending his arms out of the province to prevent the rebels from seizing them. The Committee responded by ordering him to leave the province within twenty-four hours, though it eventually extended the deadline to four days.159 At about the same time, Robert Dalway Haliday, the customs collector, asked the Council of Safety for permission to leave the colony, which the Council allowed.160 Campbell did not hold out for much longer either. On 14 September he fled to the HMS Tamar, the sloop of war anchored beyond the bar of the harbor, providing one of the few places Loyalists in the province could find refuge from the rebels. Campbell informed

157 Thomas Knox Gordon, et al. to William Campbell, 1 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
158 William Campbell to Thomas Knox Gordon, et al., 4 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
159 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
160 Council of Safety to South Carolina Delegates in Congress, 18 September 1775, PHL, X, 401.
Dartmouth, “the King's dignity and the honor of his government would not permit him to remain any longer in Charleston.”

While the General Committee was determining how to handle the government officials, two incidents in Charleston helped many of those officials decide their own courses of action. In the hot and humid early afternoon of 12 August 1775, a group of men seized George Walker, the gunner at Fort Johnson located on James Island, for cursing the General Committee in an “insolent speech,” and for “nothing less than damning us all.” The men tarred and feathered him, or, as Arthur Middleton described it, they gave him “a new suit of Cloathes...without the assistance of a single Taylor.” Walker was paraded through the streets of Charleston, past the houses of many of the non-Associators whose fate the Committee was at the time debating, including Wragg, Simpson, and Innes. Peter Timothy, the printer and secretary of many of the committees, noted, “[T]here was not a non-subscriber who did not tremble” after witnessing Walker’s ordeal.

The rebels brought Walker to the door of George Millegen, the Chief Surgeon to His Majesty’s Forces in South Carolina and a known Loyalist. Along with Walker, Millegen had been one of the government officials the rebels had tried to coerce into signing the Association, and his refusal ultimately resulted in his being declared an enemy to America with the rest of the officials. Within days of the Provincial Congress approving the Association, it had sent representatives to Millegen, like

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161 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September, TNA, CO 5/396.
many other royal officials, to demand he subscribe. Millegen refused, as he also did at the end of June when the rebels tried again. On 22 July, he received the summons from the General Committee to attend its session the following day to explain his reasons for not signing. He initially considered ignoring the Committee by not attending, but when he informed Campbell of his intentions, the governor told him it would do no good to try and fight the rebels, and the rest of the royal officials intended to attend the meeting. Millegen ultimately took Campbell’s advice and attended, where he was told his reasons for refusing to sign were not acceptable to the Committee. He received another summons on 11 August to take the oath being offered to the royal officials, but before the day came for him to attend the Committee session, Walker had been tarred and feathered.

On the afternoon of the 12 August, after they had tarred and feathered Walker and paraded him through the streets for several hours, the rebels passed the house of Millegen’s mother-in-law, where he and his wife were visiting at the time. He was sitting outside her house in the shade of a second-floor balcony when he saw the rebels move toward him with Walker. They immediately surrounded him, called him a scoundrel and threatened to put him in the cart with Walker. He remained seated for several minutes as the men threatened him. His wife fainted when she saw what was happening, and when he tried to take her inside, the rebels followed him, scaring his mother-in-law. To protect his mother-in-law from the crowd, Millegen took his wife and went to his house three doors away. The rebels followed him through the gate into his yard, knocking down a servant girl in the process
before Millegen was able to force them out and lock the gate. The rebels then proceeded through the streets with Walker, leaving Millegen behind.

The next day, Millegen learned from some of his friends that the threats against him came from the General Committee, which was targeting him for “treating them with disrespect and speaking of them with contempt, and trying to form a party to oppose their proceedings.” His friends urged him to leave the province, and according to Millegen, one member of the Committee told him the most lenient treatment he could expect if he stayed was “disgraceful and dangerous imprisonment.” When he spoke to Campbell on the 14th, the governor also advised him to leave the province, and recommended going on board the Tamar. Millegen decided to attend the 15 August session of the General Committee, which offered him an oath, whereby he would swear not to act against the rebels. Millegen refused to take the oath, and from that meeting proceeded directly to board a canoe to take him to the Tamar. Arthur Middleton later credited the tar and feather punishment given to Walker with convincing Millegen to flee the city.

A similar process of targeting government officials in an effort to shut down the royal government occurred in Georgia, where Sir James Wright found himself the frequent target of rebel threats. In the first months of 1775, the rebels published correspondence between Wright and Dartmouth, dating to the previous year, in which he had cast the revolutionary movement in a negative light. The publication of these letters “enraged some in Georgia” against Wright “to the greatest degree.” In

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164 Testimony of George Millegen, 15 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
early June he received word from friends in South Carolina that the rebels in Charleston intended to seize him to thwart his efforts against the nascent revolutionary movement in Georgia. Militia officers in and around Savannah told Wright that he could depend on them for protection, but not their men, who had given reason to believe they would not remain loyal.

The questionable loyalty of the militia led Wright to believe there was little that could be done to protect him and the other government officials, especially with no “place of the least security or defense to retire to” if threatened by the rebels. In an effort to replicate the security the Tamar offered South Carolina officials, Wright recommended building fortifications in the middle of Savannah for himself and other officials and Loyalists who might be harassed by the rebels. His correspondence with Dartmouth demonstrates the level of his anxiety at the time, as it is full of speculation on his vulnerability to assassination and the ease with which he could be taken in the night, “before any alarm can be given or assistance could be had.” While there is nothing to suggest the rebels considered political assassination in their efforts to weaken Wright, his words demonstrate the extent of the fear and paranoia the rebels inspired with the measures they did take against him and other government officials. Wright responded by repeatedly asking Dartmouth for permission to return to England, as he had done everything he could to sustain the government, and could not “continue in this very uncomfortable situation without the means of protection and support.”

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166 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 9 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
As the summer progressed into autumn and the rebels in Georgia gained power, they used increasingly more direct measures to target officials and weaken the government. When customs officers, who were still loyal to the Crown, seized a vessel for violation of trade laws, the Council of Safety ordered representatives to break into the Customs House to steal the register to remove evidence of any such violations. When the rebels initially could not find the register, they threatened customs officials until they gave them the register. The rebels also threatened provost marshals with threats of violence if they were to serve writs against rebels involved in seizing British vessels or cargo.\textsuperscript{167}

At the end of November, the Provincial Congress made public its order to close down the courts of justice and sent notice of this order to all attorneys in the province. When the Attorney General refused to comply with the notice, the Congress ordered him to appear at their meeting on 6 December. When he ignored this order, the Congress issued a warrant for his arrest. The rebels initially considered ordering him to be tarred, feathered, and carted around town, but eventually decided on ordering him to leave the province. After the rebels ordered the Attorney General’s banishment, the Chief Justice ordered disbarment for any attorney who delayed a client’s case based on the order from the Provincial Congress. At the end of December the Council of Safety responded by calling the Chief Justice’s order “highly derogatory to the authority of Congress,” as well as “arbitrary and illegal.” The Council of Safety made a show of forming a committee to search the files of the prothonotary, or the clerk of court, to determine if the Chief

\textsuperscript{167} Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 4 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
Justice had any right to make such an order, ultimately concluding he did not. The Congress was making a point to demonstrate how little authority the government actually exercised, largely due to rebel efforts against government officials.168

As with their efforts to enforce the Association in the various counties, the rebels in North Carolina were ahead of their neighbors to the south in targeting government officials. Before William Campbell had even been in Charleston a few weeks and before James Wright asked Dartmouth for permission to return to England, the rebels in North Carolina had already forced the royal governor, Josiah Martin, to flee the province and take refuge on a naval vessel off the coast. This was in part because he was he was more vocal than Campbell or Wright in demanding loyalty to the King, but also because the rebels believed he was trying to recruit Loyalists and even slaves to fight for Britain. They also believed he attempted to obtain arms and ammunition from Boston and New York for these groups to use against the rebels.

On 23 May, members of the New Bern committee visited Martin at his residence. They were upset that he had ordered several cannon pieces, usually used for celebrations, to be dismantled. The rebels had heard news that the Earl of Dunmore, the governor of Virginia, had moved ammunition from the magazine in Williamsburg to prevent it falling into rebel hands, and the New Bern committee was concerned Martin intended to do the same thing. They told Martin to order the guns be remounted and restored to working order. The governor became indignant

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168 Minutes of the Georgia Council of Safety, 20 December 1775, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society
at their demands, and informed them the guns belonged to the king and he was not required to explain himself to such a group of men with their “very extraordinary” motives. Nevertheless, in an attempt to pacify the committee, he explained he had dismounted the guns because the carriages needed replacing in time for the celebration of the King’s birthday the following week. Martin later explained to Dartmouth this was only one of many explanations for his actions, and that he had heard for weeks rumors of the committee’s plans to seize the guns by force and he wanted to make it as difficult as possible for them to do so.

Martin’s explanation was enough to mollify the committee members who had come to his house. Shortly after this incident, however, he received reports that the rebels may have seized secret correspondence between himself and General Thomas Gage, commander-in-chief of British forces in Boston, in which Martin requested supplies of arms and ammunition. With his recent experience with the New Bern committee in mind, and concerned these letters would give “reason for insult to me, and my family… and might probably become a pretext for seizing my person and detaining me according to the design… of making themselves masters of the King’s servants among them,” Martin ordered the guns spiked. He immediately sent his family to New York while fleeing himself to Fort Johnston, still in British hands, at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Only a few weeks later, a group of men led by the committee members attacked Martin’s New Bern residence with the intention of seizing the cannon behind the house. Though Martin was no longer
living there, they threatened his servants for the keys, only to find the guns were unusable.\textsuperscript{169}

When Martin arrived at Fort Johnston, he had many local inhabitants come to him asking for relief and protection from the Wilmington committee, which was using “vile impositions and menaces...to deceive the King’s subjects, and seduce them from their duty.”\textsuperscript{170} On 16 June, he issued a proclamation in an effort to counteract the work of the committees. He dismissed their claimed grievances as illegitimate and dishonest, and ordered all officers and ministers of the royal government to work “to the utmost of their power, in counteracting and opposing all Promoters of Sedition, and Disturbers of the Peace and tranquility of this Colony.”\textsuperscript{171} For his efforts to show “people embarked in a bad cause have no problem using the basest falsehoods and calumnies to support it according to custom,” the rebels declared Martin to be an enemy to both the province and America. Martin told Dartmouth they should expect the same to happen to “every servant of His Majesty, and with every other subject whose sense of duty to His Sovereign and the State does not permit him to take part in the most unprovoked, & unnatural rebellion that has ever been known.”\textsuperscript{172} The rebels continued harassing Martin into early July. Joseph Hewes, one of the colony’s delegates to the Continental Congress, told Samuel Johnston, “[T]he powers of Government must soon be superseded and taken into the hands of the People.” Johnston should therefore keep

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\item \textsuperscript{169} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 41-50.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Proclamation by Josiah Martin Concerning Loyalty to Great Britain, 16 June 1775, CRNC, X, 16-19.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 41-50.
\end{itemize}
a close eye on Martin, and if he did anything suspicious, “he ought to be seized, and sent out of the Colony.” At about the same time, during the second week of July, Martin fled Fort Johnston to take refuge aboard the *Cruizer* at the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

While Martin received particular attention from the rebels, the committees also worked to dismantle royal government at the local level. James Cotton was a prominent citizen and magistrate of Anson County, as well as a member of the Colonial Assembly. In early July, members of the Anson County committee summoned Cotton to the county courthouse where the chairman, Samuel Spencer, informed Cotton he had been summoned specifically because of his role in the royal government. They sought his support for the resolves of the Continental Congress, but Cotton merely informed them, “they would be all deemed Rebels and their Principals would be hanged.” The committee replied it would give him two weeks to reconsider his answer. Two weeks later, David Love, the same Provincial Congress delegate, committee member, and militia officer who had targeted Jacob Williams, came to Cotton’s house and entered his bedroom with a rifle, informing Cotton the committee had sent for him and he had militia outside to escort Cotton to the committee. Cotton looked out his window and saw many of the same men who had attacked Williams, including Samuel Curtis and Thomas Love. Cotton told them since they were armed, he would carry his weapons as well, but they forbid him from doing so. When one of the men aimed his gun at one of Cotton’s slaves who was

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173 Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, 8 July 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
running to alarm the rest of the neighborhood, Cotton threatened to send him to jail. Love informed Cotton he was no longer a magistrate, but a prisoner. For the moment, Cotton “persisted no further.”

On the way to meet the committee Cotton managed to escape from his captors, but from then he was constantly on the run. He slept in the woods near his home, and Love offered a sizeable reward for anyone who would capture him and deliver him to the committee. He tried to raise some Loyalists to suppress both the committee and men rumored to be coming from South Carolina to assist the committee. Cotton was disappointed by the response, however, as “fear and treachery” limited the number of men who were willing to fight. Cotton continued to hide from the committee in the woods before fleeing to the coast and joining Governor Martin on the Cruizer. As with Jacob Williams, Martin could not do much to help him at the time since he could not find a quorum of Council members to advise him on what actions to take. The Wilmington committee then summoned Cotton, who eventually acquiesced and signed the Association.

When the Provincial Congress finally met at Hillsborough in late August 1775, the royal government in North Carolina was already in a state of disrepair thanks to the efforts of the local committees. At the end of August, a man named Pryce arrived at New Bern with appointments to serve as provincial secretary and deputy auditor.

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174 Deposition of James Cotton Concerning Treatment of Loyalists in Anson County, 13 August 1775, CRNC, X, 127-129.
175 Ibid.
176 Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 19 August 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina. Cotton would later discard that oath and fight in a failed Loyalist uprising at Moore’s Creek Bridge in February 1776, after which he fled to St. Augustine in East Florida. Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 23 December 1776, CRNC, X, 1002.
With Martin by this time taking refuge on the Cruizer and no longer in New Bern, however, and given the state of the rest of the government and the province in general, Pryce immediately became “alarmed with the disorders of the place and disgusted with the climate” and promptly returned to England without writing to Martin or making an effort to see him.\textsuperscript{177} The disorder Pryce encountered was in large part the result of the rebels adopting ever more harsh and coercive measures to neutralize the remaining government officials.

**Targeting the Clergy**

One particularly effective means of breaking royal authority over the provinces was to target clergy who remained loyal to the King. This measure not only removed individual Loyalists, but also had second and third order effects that allowed the rebels to control the message coming from the pulpits and shape the way numerous inhabitants viewed the conflict with Britain. The Provincial Congress of each colony, on at least one occasion in 1775 and on recommendation from the Continental Congress, ordered a “day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer.” In January, South Carolina’s Provincial Congress ordered 17 February be observed as such “to inspire the King with true wisdom and to defend the people of North America from the impending calamities of civil war.” The Congress ordered clergy throughout the city and province to “preach a sermon suitable to the importance of the occasion.” For the rebels, it was particularly useful to have this message emanate from pulpits throughout the province at a time when they were trying to convey the message that Parliament and the King, and not themselves, were responsible for the conflict

\textsuperscript{177} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 230-237.
threatening to bring war. On the 17th, the Commons House of Assembly was in session, with many of the same members in attendance as at the earlier Provincial Congress. The Assembly processed together to St. Philip’s, where the Reverend Robert Smith preached a sermon favorable to the rebel cause.178

Only St Michael’s refused to recognize the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, holding instead its usual services. The rebels already saw the clergy at St. Michael’s as unfriendly to their cause. One of the ministers, the Reverend John Bullman, had recently been dismissed from his position by the church vestry for “preach[ing] a sermon disparaging the...’low-breed’ critics of government” the previous August. In the weeks following the February day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, Bullman lost his fight to reverse his dismissal and was forced to leave the province and return to London.179 In June, the Provincial Congress called for another day of fasting and prayer on 27 July, to “implore [God’s] Favour to this oppressed Country, and success upon all endeavours for the security of the liberties of the American colonies.” The Congress again ordered the clergy to preach appropriate sermons, and ordered the local committees to enforce the resolve in their towns and districts.180

On 20 July 1775, the New Bern committee in North Carolina held its own day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer to “humble ourselves before God and to deprecate
his impending judgments now held over this land for their sins and offences.” The day before, representatives of the committee had visited the Reverend James Reed to ask him to perform the service and preach a suitable sermon. Reed declined, explaining he was a representative of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and did not want to “render himself obnoxious to the Ministry and lose his mission.” Indeed, reports to the Society from the Reverend Daniel Earl, a parson in Edenton, spoke highly of Reed as one of “the Society’s very worthy Missionary at Newbern.” The committee members told Reed he was abandoning his congregation and disobeying the Continental Congress. They ordered the church vestry to suspend Reed and stop payment of his salary. The vestry went even further than the recommendations of the committee, dismissing Reed altogether.

The Reverend Haddon Smith, rector of Christ Church in Savannah, met with a similar fate in July after he too refused to preach at a service held on 20 July. Two days later, he received a visit from several delegates from the Provincial Congress and members of the Council of Safety, including Edward Telfair, George Walton, Jonathan Cochrane, and Oliver Bowen, as well as Peter Taarling, also a member of the Congress. Taarling declared him an enemy of America, and read a declaration sent by the Congress saying as a result of his refusal to preach a sermon, “he should not be permitted to preach in the Church of Savannah or officiate as a clergyman.” Wright tried to help Smith, asking the Governor’s Council what could be done, but the Council could only advise taking an affidavit on the matter for the record and

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182 Daniel Earl to Richard Hind, 30 August 1775, CRNC, X, 237-238.
183 Minutes of the New Bern Committee of Safety, 21 July 1776, CRNC, X, 115-116.
little else, with “all powers of government being obstructed.” On the night of the 24th, as they were carting a tarred and feathered John Hopkins through the streets, the rebels made sure to pass by Smith’s residence. They told Hopkins, “if they could lay hold of the parson they would put him along side of me in the cart,” and, “Mr. Smith should be next and that they intended to continue on until they had tarred and feathered all the Tories.” According to Smith, he no longer felt safe in his current position, and on the 25th he fled to Tybee Island, and from there to England.

William Bull noted to Dartmouth that many Church of England clergy supported the rebels, and he had no jurisdiction to remove those parsons. While the Bishop of London once had a representative in the province that would have had that authority, the Church had been unable to fill that office for the previous twenty years as it not only came with no salary, but also required some expense for whoever filled the position. Between this support and removing those clergy members who would not support them, the rebels were able to make effective use of religion to push the message that their actions were justified by the tyranny of Parliament and the King, and that the conflict required sacrifice from all colonists. They targeted clergy of other denominations as well. For example, the committee for Rowan County in North Carolina ordered a Baptist preacher named Cook to appear, as he had signed a Loyalist protest that had been circulating in the Yadkin River.

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184 Deposition of the Reverend Haddon Smith, 25 July 1776, TNA, CO 5/664; Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 25 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
186 Deposition of the Reverend Haddon Smith, 25 July 1776, TNA, CO 5/664
region of the county. When he appeared before the committee, Cook “in the most explicit and humiliating terms profess[ed] sorrow” for signing the protest, “and [for] other parts of his conduct in opposing the just Rights and Liberties of the Nation in general and American Liberties in particular.”

Daniel Earl, the parson from Edenton, had his own troubles with his congregation for failing to openly profess his support for the revolutionary cause. He did not, however, openly support the King either. Instead, he attempted to remain neutral, “never introduc[ing] any Topic into the Pulpit except Exhortations and Prayers for Peace, good Order, and a speedy Reconciliation with Great Britain.” In August, Earl described to the secretary of the Society for Propagation of the Gospel the difficulties for clergy in the southern provinces. He called the situation “critical, on account of the difficulty of comporting themselves in such a manner as to give no umbrage to the inhabitants.” Those who opposed the rebels risked suspension and loss of salary “in the American manner,” meaning their punishments in one province applied to all the rebellious provinces, making it near impossible for them to get jobs elsewhere in the thirteen colonies. He noted how politics overtook religion, to the extent that even if “the most learned and eloquent Divine in England was to endeavour to dissuade the Americans from their present Resolutions, he could make no impressions upon them, but contrarilywise rather inflame them, so tenacious are they of the measures they have adopted.”

188 Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 1 August 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
189 Daniel Earl to Richard Hind, 30 August 1775, CRNC, X, 237-238.
The Enemy Within and Government Response

In addition to targeting government officials and Loyalists who provided support for the government, the rebels also worked from within the government to bring about its collapse and expand its control over inhabitants of the provinces. In some instances the British officials, particularly the governors and their councils, did not understand the significance of what was happening, leaving known rebels in positions of power and allowing them to use their offices to benefit the rebellion. For example, the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly ordered an inventory of public arms and audited the province’s supply of gunpowder mere weeks before the same people led the April 1775 break-ins at the magazines and armory. At other times, even if government officials understood the shifting power dynamic, there was very little they could do to counter the threat. Often, when they did recognize the threat, they were constrained by bureaucratic rules for dismissing and replacing these officials. They not only had to explain their decisions to remove Crown appointees in detail to Dartmouth and his successors in London, but also had to gain their approval for the replacements as well. Sometimes there were no viable candidates for vacant positions, in large part due to rebel actions against Loyalists and existing officials. With events unfolding rapidly in the colonies, the result of all of these challenges was ineffective, and often counterproductive, royal governance.

In South Carolina, there was a long-running dispute between the Commons House of Assembly and a succession of governors and their Councils. In 1769, the Assembly voted to pay £1,500 to the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, a London group that supported John Wilkes, a radical Member of Parliament who
had been expelled from office for his fierce criticism of the King. The South Carolina Assembly made this payment without the knowledge of the governor or the Council and in violation of instruction from the King. The response from London was swift. An additional instruction issued April 1770 required Lieutenant Governor Bull, acting at the time as governor, to ensure oversight by the governor and Council over new tax bills raising revenue for any purpose that was not local in nature. A battle of wills ensued between the Assembly, which held that its authority came from its constituents, and the governor and Council, who argued the Assembly’s authority derived from the Crown. As a result, the Assembly did not pass a tax bill after 1771, and the conflict between the two sides resulted in the downfall of the governor, Charles Montagu, and a weakening of the powers of the Council, both of which tried a variety of tactics to urge, demand, and trick the Assembly into passing a revenue bill. Each time these efforts failed, Montagu or Bull would prorogue the Assembly to prevent it from conducting any further business hostile to British interests.

By 1775, therefore, many of the members of the Assembly were also supporters of the revolutionary movement, and they used their positions to thwart Bull, once again acting governor after Montagu’s departure in 1773, and weaken the rest of the government. In January, the Provincial Congress, an illegal body meeting to oppose British measures in the colony, nevertheless met in the State House, where the Assembly also met. When the Assembly met around the same time, it passed an official motion to thank the representatives from South Carolina to the

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Continental Congress, most of whom were also members of the Assembly. Bull refused to recognize the Provincial Congress on the occasions it addressed him, including a complaint it sent in January about the “long disuse of the Assemblies” and in February when it asked him to declare a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. He explained he would not recognize any body of “men assembled without legal authority and for purposes derogatory to the King’s government”\footnote{Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 17 January 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 28-29; William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 22 February 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.}

Lieutenant Governor Bull was, however, reluctant to take effective action against the rebels, many of whom were friends, and in the case of his nephew William Henry Drayton, family. His inconsistent opposition to the rebels and unwillingness to enforce royal prerogative in the colony, as well as the various circumstances that delayed Campbell’s arrival nearly two years after his appointment to succeed Montagu, meant a near absence of royal leadership in South Carolina. At the same time the rebels were gaining power not only through establishing a system of shadow government, but also within parts of the royal government itself, thereby allowing them to assume increasing political control of the colony. For example, Bull was inconsistent with his approach to the Assembly, at times allowing it to meet because he feared proroguing it would only anger the people further, while at other times trying to avoid the problem until Campbell arrived. On 1 May, Bull adjourned the Assembly until 1 June, when he believed Campbell, who was due to arrive in late May, could take the responsibility from him.
When Campbell had not arrived by 1 June, Bull again adjourned the Assembly, this time until 19 June, by which time Campbell had finally arrived.192

In the meantime, Bull retreated to his country home outside of Charleston, where the Provincial Congress sent him an address in June with a “declaration of motives” for its meeting. News of Campbell’s arrival off the harbor bar prompted them to make a final attempt of explaining themselves to Bull before Campbell took office. When he again refused to recognize the Provincial Congress, two representatives, William Henry Drayton and Stephen Bull, also a nephew of the lieutenant governor, went to Bull’s home to present him with the address. Bull, however, refused to hear them, as he “he did not think he could, with any propriety, receive the address as he had been advised that [Campbell] was already arrived off the bar.”193 When the Provincial Congress then sent Campbell this “address of a very extraordinary and criminal nature,” the governor “was strongly inclined to have answered it in such terms as it merited,” but eventually decided against responding.194

In mid-July, Campbell complained to Dartmouth that Bull did not call on him when he arrived, and still had made no effort to communicate with him nearly a month later, not even to send him the official papers he had that Campbell needed for his new position.195 Campbell felt insulted by Bull’s “pointed and

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192 William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 1 May, 1 June 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
193 Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 18 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 57.
194 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
195 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
contemptuous...neglect,” as well as his treatment of “the commission of his
Sovereign with such studied disrespect.”\(^{196}\) Alexander Innes had prior to Campbell’s
arrival told Dartmouth the new governor would “find the province in bad shape and
will not be able to do much about it but watch,” and blamed Bull for being “rather
ambivalent about the troubles,” remaining at his home in the country and “waiting
with anxious impatience” for Campbell to arrive.\(^{197}\) Opinions of Bull’s commitment
to British interests were no better among James Wright and Josiah Martin than
Campbell and Innes. Even as early as February, Wright told Dartmouth if the
government officials were threatened because they “dare do their duty...my
neighbour Lieutenant-Governor Bull will be very safe.”\(^{198}\) While Bull remained a
Loyalist, he was a lukewarm one when it came to his responsibilities as acting
governor.

The conflict between governor and Assembly continued through the summer
after Campbell’s arrival. For the first month, the members of the Assembly ignored
letters from Campbell that referred to it as the “Lower House of Assembly,” as they
believed such a title implied Council authority over the Assembly, a notion the
Assembly refused to accept.\(^{199}\) Despite his recognition of the true nature of many of
the Assembly members, Campbell decided he could not “fall on a more effectual
method to embarrass the faction than suffering the Assembly to sit some little time
longer and putting it in their power to complete the necessary business of the

\(^{196}\) William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\(^{197}\) Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\(^{198}\) James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 February 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
\(^{199}\) Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 24 July 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives
and History.
province.” This would prove to be a mistake, however, as the Assembly would instead embarrass Campbell by openly flaunting its disloyalty. In August, Campbell wrote the assembly informing them of “Outrages I little expected ever to have seen in this place.” He mentioned as just two examples the government officials being called before the General Committee to explain why they would not sign the Association, and the tarring and feathering of George Walker. He expressed concern even for his own family’s safety, and asked the Assembly to “aid me with all the Assistance in your power in enforcing the Laws and protecting His Majesty’s Servants and all other peaceable and faithful Subjects in that quiet possession of their Liberty and Property.” Campbell wrote this letter only a day after telling his Council, “the Commons House of Assembly if they pleased might prevent and put an end to all those tumultuous proceedings.”

Three days after Campbell sent his letter to the Assembly, he received its justification of the rebels’ actions. In a reply written by Thomas Bee, also a member of the Council of Safety and delegate to the Provincial Congress, with input from Laurens and others, the Assembly argued, “[W]hen Civil Commotions prevail and a people are threatened both with internal & external dangers, they would be unwise not to entertain a jealousy of intestine Foes & take every precaution to guard against their secret machinations for this purpose.” The Assembly justified the attack on Walker, about which Campbell “so pathetically complains,” by blaming Walker for

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200 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
201 Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 15 August 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
202 Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in South Carolina, 14 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
cursing the very people who paid his salary. They otherwise denied all knowledge of the incident, reporting only what “We have been told” upon inquiring into the incident. They claimed, “It is not in our power...to prescribe limits to popular fury,” and when individuals publicly “condemn measures universally approved of,” they must deal with the consequences. They furthermore dismissed Walker’s punishment as no different from actions taken by English mobs against petty offenders “surrounded by an active Magistracy and even in full view of their Majesties palaces.”

In other words, the members of the legislative body of the royal government for the province justified to the governor actions taken by revolutionary organizations in which they themselves were members as necessary given the current disorder in the province, a disorder they played a significant part in creating. They used the legitimacy of the Commons House of Assembly to provide cover for the coercive measures taken by the revolutionary government established to compete with the royal government for political power. They then claimed there was nothing more they could do because they simply framed laws and were not responsible for enforcing them. The Assembly concluded the letter with a veiled threat against Campbell and his family, saying they regretted he feared for his safety, but “hope[d] and trust[ed] that your Excellency’s wise and prudent Conduct will render such apprehensions altogether groundless.” After receiving this letter,

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203 Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 18 August 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; Commons House of Assembly to Lord William Campbell, 18 August 1775, PHL, X, 305-308.
204 Ibid.
Campbell realized, as he told the Council, “the Assembly seems more desirous of promoting the disturbances than putting an end to them.” Since this occurred at the same time the rebels decided to disarm and confine the remaining Crown officers in the province to Charleston, Campbell asked for the Council’s advice on whether the government should be shut down, as “[A]ll the material powers of government were wrested out of his hands.” One member of the Council agreed with his proposal, but the remaining four suggested he wait a while longer to see if he could improve the situation.\footnote{Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in South Carolina, 2 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.} Campbell only lasted another ten days after that Council meeting, before the situation in the province convinced him to dissolve the Commons House of Assembly, shut down the rest of the government, and flee to the \textit{Tamar}. By this time, however, even the Council was a shell of its former self, and provided little assistance to Campbell. The Council had lost three of its members since the beginning of the year. William Henry Drayton had been appointed in 1772 as a result of his previous opposition to colonial resistance efforts dating back to the Stamp Act Congress. By 1774, however, he had grown increasingly radicalized, and in February 1775 Bull reluctantly suspended him from the Council in consequence of a pamphlet he wrote and charges he presented, in his role as a justice on the Court of Common Pleas, to grand juries in late 1774 criticizing Parliament and supporting the Continental Congress.\footnote{Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in South Carolina, 28 October 1774, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 22 February 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.} His father John, whose membership on the Council preceded his son’s, resigned in mid-1775. Although it was clear that he supported the rebels, Campbell insisted John Drayton attend a Council meeting in
July, but by that point he had simply stopped attending any of the meetings.\textsuperscript{207}

Finally, Barnard Elliott, who was the only other native-born member of the Council besides the Draytons, resigned his seat in May, two days after news of the conflicts at Lexington and Concord arrived in Charleston.\textsuperscript{208} Following these resignations, Bull and Campbell had a difficult time finding new members for the Council, as potential nominees were either individuals of questionable loyalty or were unwilling to hold such a public office. Several non-native members of the Council, or placemen, remained in England, and it was unclear if and when they intended to return.

Innes told Dartmouth in May that Campbell would “find the Council to be of very little use” and when Campbell arrived in June, he struggled to find even three members of the Council, the number necessary for the body to reach a quorum. Even then, he had to force an ill Thomas Irving, the colony’s receiver general, to attend. Thomas Skottowe, the provincial secretary, was outside of town and knew of Campbell’s arrival. Due to the “contempt with which government had lately been treated,” however, it took several letters before Skottowe returned to Charleston. A frustrated Campbell told Dartmouth if the Council was not already reduced in membership, he would have suspended Skottowe.\textsuperscript{209} Shortly thereafter, Irving went north to recover his health, and Skottowe also became ill, forcing Campbell to name Robert Dalway Haliday, the customs collector, to the Council simply to have

\textsuperscript{207} William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.

\textsuperscript{208} Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, 16 May 1775, “The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes,” 128.

\textsuperscript{209} William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
enough members to hold a meeting. Whatever Campbell thought of Haliday, he was the only option since “there is not another person in the province I can recommend who would accept of that honour, in so low estimation is it at present held.”210

The relationship between the Assemblies and governors in Georgia and North Carolina were not poisoned to quite the same extent as in South Carolina, but they each had significant tensions that made governing difficult at a time when strong, effective governance was particularly important. Governor Wright, like Montagu and Bull, had to maintain constant vigilance over Georgia’s Commons House of Assembly and prorogue it whenever its proceedings came into conflict with British interests. After initially deciding on 9 January 1775 to prorogue the Assembly, Wright instead called for the Assembly to meet on the 18th in the hopes it would temper the actions of, and support for, the Provincial Congress meeting at the same time. To some extent, Wright succeeded, since the Provincial Congress only had representation from fewer than half the parishes in the province. As in South Carolina, however, many of the delegates to the Provincial Congress were also members of the Assembly, which had representation from all thirteen parishes and could therefore confer legitimacy on its proceedings that the Provincial Congress could not. The Provincial Congress therefore passed several resolutions calling for non-importation and non-exportation; promoting manufacturing and other means of self-reliance by “encourag[ing] frugality, economy, and industry;” and preventing

210 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
price gouging in times of limited supply of goods.\textsuperscript{211} The Provincial Congress then urged the Assembly to adopt these same resolutions, but before it could act Wright prorogued the Assembly until May, as he believed it would “enter into Similar resolutions with some other Provinces to Adopt the proceedings and Association of the Continental Congress.”\textsuperscript{212}

Before Wright prorogued the Assembly, however, it passed several resolves reaffirming certain rights of Englishmen, calling for the repeal of several Acts of Parliament, giving the thanks of the Assembly to the First Continental Congress even though Georgia had not sent any delegates, and resolving to send as of yet unnamed delegates to the Second Continental Congress in May.\textsuperscript{213} In early February, Wright again told the Council he was concerned that if the Assembly were allowed to meet again, it would pass the resolutions of the Provincial Congress. He proposed “prevent[ing] the Commons House Entering into such Proceedings by Adjourning them to a future day,” and the Council approved. When, in early May, however, Wright issued a proclamation requiring the attendance of the Assembly on the 9\textsuperscript{th} to proceed with the public business and “finish the several matters recommended to them at their last meeting,” many of the Assembly members refused to attend. Since the Assembly did not have a quorum, Wright again adjourned it until November, by


\textsuperscript{212} Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 10 February 1775 in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), X (Savannah: The Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{213} Proceedings of the Georgia Commons House of Assembly, January 1775, RRG, I, 48-53.
which time, however, the rebels were firmly in control of political and military power in the colony.214

Unlike Bull and Campbell, who engaged the rebels only enough to tell them they did not recognize the various committees and councils the rebels had established, Wright tended to grant them too much legitimacy. In January, when the *South Carolina Gazette* published the proceedings of the Georgia Provincial Congress, including the Continental Association, Wright and the Council decided against responding. They did so not to avoid legitimizing the Congress by granting it recognition, but because the copy published in Charleston “did not appear to be by Order of the Committee of the said Congress nor even Signed by their Clerk,” and therefore “no notice should be taken of the affair.”215 Were it not for this absence of bureaucratic niceties, the Council and Wright likely would have engaged with and inadvertently legitimized the Congress. This step would come when the Provincial Congress again met in July, and asked Wright to declare a day of fasting and prayer throughout the colony. Wright agreed to do so, even though the rebels specifically intended these days to allow for the preaching of their own propaganda from the pulpit, and usually included prayers for the British, rather than the rebels, to correct their mistakes. This was the same day of prayer at which the Reverend Haddon Smith would refuse to preach, resulting in his eventual flight from the colony, and

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214 *Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 10 February 1775*, CGHS, X, 11-12.
215 *Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 7 March 1775*, CGHS, X, 15.
yet it had received the official approval of the governor, because the request was polite, and “Expressed in such Loyal and Dutifull Terms.”

At about the same time, the Provincial Congress also wrote to Wright explaining the rebels’ grievances and informing him they had joined the other colonies and sent delegates to the Continental Congress. They justified this meeting as a result of the “absolute necessity of taking some measures for the security and preservation of their liberties and every thing that is near and dear to them” given the “critical and alarming times.” They told Wright he was responsible for their meeting, as a result of the constant prorogations and adjournments of the Assembly, preventing them from securing their liberties. As in South Carolina, the Council in Georgia was severely undermanned and weakened. Wright argued to Dartmouth the governors in the colonies needed more authority to name replacements to offices as they become vacant to ensure continued political authority, rather than having to wait for approval from London.

Instead of ignoring the letter, and despite being undermanned and facing continued challenges in exercising political control, Wright and the Council took time to provide in painstaking detail a full accounting of the minutes of the January session of the Assembly to show that Wright was not to blame for that session being cut short. They also explained in detail the reasons for the absence of an Assembly session in May. Wright then wrote to Dartmouth of the Council’s detailed explanation for why the Provincial Congress’s charges against Wright were false,

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216 Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 7 July 1775, CGHS, X, 30.
217 Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 17 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
and gave Dartmouth even more detail on each prorogation and adjournment dating back to the previous November. In attempting to justify his actions to both the rebels and Dartmouth, Wright legitimized the charges of the Provincial Congress, and in the process legitimized that illegal body and its members who sought to weaken his government. Unlike Campbell and Bull, therefore, Wright actively, if unconsciously, contributed to making the Provincial Congress rather than the Assembly the legitimate body of the people’s representatives.

In North Carolina, the main local issue dividing the Assembly and Governor Martin was whether the court system in the province should include a “clause empowering the courts to attach the North Carolina property of defaulting debtors living in England.” Based on opposition from British merchants who did business and owned property in North Carolina, the Crown had ordered Martin in 1773 to oppose any new bill to continue the court laws of 1767, set to expire, that sought to include the attachments clause. The Assembly, however, refused to pass any bill funding the courts that did not include this clause. At its core, the issue was over whether the Assembly held authority over judicial matters as the elected representatives of the people, or whether Parliament held the ultimate authority.

This conflict continued into January 1775, when James Hassell, the acting governor while Martin was in New York, prorogued the Assembly until March given Martin’s absence and “the present temper of the people” that would impel the Assembly to “precipitately adopt and give sanction and approbation to the measures

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218 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
of the Philadelphia Congress.” The Assembly had not met since March 1774, and when it met in April 1775, it blamed Martin for perpetuating the courts crisis, to the point that both criminal and civil court system in the province had collapsed. It also blamed him for creating a fiscal crisis in the colony by not convening the Assembly in the autumn of 1774 to pass a tax bill. Martin defended himself against this charge to Dartmouth, claiming even if a tax bill had passed in late 1774, collection of taxes would not have started until June 1775, and would have done nothing to address the Treasury’s currency shortage at the time. 

The Provincial Congress was also meeting at the same time as the Assembly, and as in South Carolina and Georgia, included many of the same members as the Assembly. In his opening address to the Assembly, Martin asked members, whom he called “the only lawful Representatives of the people,” to oppose the meeting of the Provincial Congress. He later admitted to Dartmouth he knew many of the members of the Assembly were also delegates at the Provincial Congress, but he allowed the Assembly to meet with the hope that his appeal would convince them to withdraw from the Congress. Furthermore, he allowed John Harvey, who was chosen as Speaker, to take his seat even though he had also served as Moderator of the Provincial Congress in August 1774 and had been re-elected to that position at the ongoing Provincial Congress. Martin was wary of accepting Harvey as Speaker of

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220 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 26 January 1775, CRNC, IX, 114-116.
221 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1223-1228. Though Martin later admitted he had been mistaken, and collection of taxes would have begun in March rather than June, he still insisted “not one farthing would have come into” the Treasury by the time the Assembly met. Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 4 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1242-1245.
222 Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, 4 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1191.
the Assembly, as he “considered [Harvey’s] guilt of too conspicuous a nature to be passed over with neglect.” Ultimately, however, he allowed Harvey to take the position of Speaker, but insisted to Dartmouth, “The manner...of my admitting him I believe sufficiently testified my disapprobation of his conduct while it marked my respect to the election of the House.”223

After repeatedly proroguing and adjourning the Assembly in the years prior to 1775, Martin, like the governors of South Carolina and Georgia, chose the least opportune time to finally allow the Assembly to meet, at the very time the rebel strategy was shifting from mere protest of specific Acts of Parliament to dismantling the entire structure of colonial governance. Martin tasked the Assembly with establishing a new system of taxation so public officials could be paid and public credit restored, passing “a Law for the permanent establishment of Courts” to allow for “a due and regular administration of Justice,” and allocating funds for continued maintenance of Fort Johnston.224 The Assembly, however, refused to abide by any of Martin’s instructions. On 6 April 1775, the Assembly gave official approval to the Provincial Congress as the embodiment of “the undoubted right of His Majesty’s Subjects to petition for a redress of Grievances and to remonstrate against them.” It also legitimized the committees of safety as “the result of necessity, not choice,” and “the only means left them to prevent...the operation of those oppressive and unconstitutional acts of Parliament...” The Assembly declared it was unaware of any wrongdoing by the committees, but even if the accusations against them of such

223 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1212-1215.
224 Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, 4 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1195.
wrongdoing were true, it was only because “they were compelled to take [that action] from that necessity” and because it served a “salutary purpose.”\footnote{Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, 6 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1198-1200.}

The Assembly also refused to compromise on the establishment of courts, again blamed the absence of public funds on Martin for proroguing the Assembly, and decided “[T]he exhausted state of the Finances and particular circumstances of the Country, render it inconvenient and unnecessary any longer to support the establishment of Fort Johnston.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, 1200.} As with the South Carolina Assembly that took inventory of the public arms and attempted to improve the quality of the supply mere weeks before many of the same people stole the same arms and ammunition, the North Carolina Assembly’s refusal to provide funds to maintain Fort Johnston would have consequences later in the summer when Martin fled to Fort Johnston for safety and when the fort fell into rebel hands after Martin fled to the Cruizer. The Assembly’s reference to “the circumstances of the Country,” and not just the lack of public funds, suggests many of its members already realized in April the importance of not strengthening the government’s position in a fort the rebels would eventually take by force.

It was customary when the Assembly was in session for the Clerk of the Assembly to bring to the governor at the end of each day the journals of the Assembly’s proceedings for that day. On the evening of the 6 April, however, there was “a large Blank left in the proceedings of the day,” and when Martin asked the Clerk about the blank pages, the Clerk told him the proceedings had been written on

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\textit{Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, 6 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1198-1200.} \\
\textit{Ibid}, 1200.
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a separate sheet of paper and "had been taken away by the Committee [formed to
draft an address in response to Martin's speech] or some other Members of the
House" who had told him not to enter the day's proceedings in the journal. When
Martin insisted on seeing the missing pages, the Clerk only told him he could not
obtain them before the Assembly met the next day, and so Martin would not be able
to see the missing entry until the evening of the 7th.227 Before the next evening,
however, he received an address from the Assembly that included the resolves its
members had reached the previous day and which had been missing from the
journals. The address also included language mocking his claims made in the North
Carolina Gazette of great numbers of Loyalists in the colony, asking “how so few
[examples of Loyalism] have been found in so populous a Province.”228 Martin told
Dartmouth the address “was so offensive and insulting” that he could not allow the
Assembly to sit any longer. The Assembly had not only ignored his “own solemn
exhortations to discourage the meeting of the [Provincial Congress],” but had
actually “involved itself almost inseparably in that unlawful body and shared all the
guilt of its Proceedings.” 229

Martin immediately dissolved the Assembly, but the damage had been done.
If he had seen the proceedings of the 6th he could have dissolved the Assembly
before it sent him the address, but the Assembly’s subterfuge allowed it to endorse
the Continental and Provincial Congresses, as well as the local committees of safety,

227 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1212-1215.
228 Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, 7 April 1775, CRNC, IX,
1203.
229 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1223-1228.
in an official response to the governor. It also included a subtle threat by declaring it “inconvenient” to provide resources to allow the government to continue holding Fort Johnston. Even knowing what the Assembly had done, Martin called for elections for a new Assembly in May, on Dartmouth’s order, to consider Lord North’s “conciliatory plan,” which had passed the House of Commons at the end of February. Martin advised Dartmouth such a meeting would be “ineffectual,” but when governors in the other provinces called their own Assemblies, Martin went ahead with the elections, hoping the people would have had time to “cool and reflect” since April.230 His initial suspicions proved correct, however, and on the advice of the Council he prorogued the new Assembly until September, “before which I have no doubt I shall have good reason to prorogue it further.”231

Like Campbell and Wright in their provinces, Martin had a very low opinion of the effectiveness and commitment of the North Carolina Governor’s Council. Attendance was not as much an issue as it was in South Carolina, but Martin felt the only member he could fully trust as a “truly good and worthy man and faithful servant of Government” was James Hasell, the President of the Council.232 During the March 1774 Assembly session, the Council approved legislation from the Assembly for the establishment of a court system, which Martin eventually vetoed and declared “at least as exceptionable as any Bill of that nature heretofore proposed.”233 Martin decried this “highly unworthy and unbecoming” behavior by

230 Ibid.
231 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 41-50.
232 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 September 1774, CRNC, IX, 1050-1061.
233 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 April 1774, CRNC, IX, 958-967.
the Council as “greatly injurious to the inseparable interests of Government and this Country.” He told Dartmouth of “a disposition in these Members of the Council to cultivate the favour of the Assembly,” and decided, “it is impossible to carry on the business of Government, with dignity and propriety, with a Council of such principles.”

Martin recommended the suspension of five members of the Council, who he claimed were either “strangely confused” and “had no pretensions to knowledge or understanding in anything,” or would “advocate for all popular measures” and be “extremely attentive to the favour and applause of the Assembly in all political controversies.” He also recommended replacements for each of these men, but Dartmouth declined to pass on Martin’s recommendations to the King. Martin also recommended naming two replacements for Council members who had extended their stays in England and would not be returning to the colony in the near future. One of these replacements, however, was Willie Jones, a planter who had previously been an ally of Martin’s and William Tryon, the previous governor, but who would become a leading rebel.234 Jones refused Martin’s appointment and instead became a delegate in the Provincial Congress that met in August, as well as every Provincial Congress thereafter.

Questions about the Council’s loyalty only increased in August 1774 when the New Bern Committee of Safety met for the first time in “the seat of government.” Martin summoned the Council to attempt to oppose the meeting of the committee, and suggested the members stay at his house in New Bern to avoid the members of

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234 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 6 April 1774, CRNC, IX, 969-975.
the Committee of Safety. Though the members of the Council had recommended
Martin oppose the committee meeting, to Martin’s disgust they “so far from keeping
up even the appearance of supporting the King’s Government by this
meeting...mixed with the Members of this Cabal” and “virtually contradicted the
advice they had given me as counsellors and rather abetted and encouraged the
measures they had to me condemned.” Only Hasell remained with Martin and
conducted himself appropriately.235

Martin’s problems with the Council worsened in 1775, as he found reason to
question the loyalty of individual Council members. The Provincial Secretary,
Samuel Strudwick, would also eventually join the rebels. Alexander McCulloch, who
would have no active role on either side in the conflict, nevertheless wrote the
Rowan County committee in September 1775 “expressing the most generous
sentiments in support of American freedom.”236 In April 1775, William Dry, a
Council member who was also Collector of Customs at Port Brunswick, was seen in a
tavern in Brunswick talking with William Hooper, who was on his way to
Philadelphia to act as a delegate at the Second Continental Congress. As Dry and
Hooper were leaving, another man at the tavern heard Dry tell Hooper “to be
resolute, and not give up a single point to them.”237 This was, according to Martin,
only one of a number of “extravagances...[that] are continually reported to me by

235 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 September 1774, CRNC, IX, 1050-1061.
236 Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 9 November 1775, Committee of Safety
Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
237 Deposition of John Stephen Concerning the Behavior of William Dry, 13 September 1775, CRNC,
IX, 1239.
credible authorities being of a nature that it will be impossible for me longer to overlook.”

In July, Martin decided to suspend Dry from the Council, after Dry reportedly toasted several times “success to the American Arms,’ adding that he wished ardently from his soul they might conquer.”238 By this point, the Council had reached a moment of crisis, as illness and remote residence of several members, as well as the “impertinence” and “obnoxiousness” of the rebels made it difficult for Martin to gather a sufficient number of the Council for its meetings. Those who remained on the Council, furthermore, were unwilling to condemn Dry, “lest it should expose them to…abuse and fury.” Martin noted “apprehensions of personal injury and insult,” influenced Council members to take “as little notice as possible of the matters I submitted to their consideration.”239

Even Dry’s “last unpardonable and traitorous display of his mind,” however, did not give Martin the authority to suspend Dry from his position as Customs Collector. Other known rebels held the same position at other ports, including James Iredell, who was a close associate and the brother-in-law of Samuel Johnston and in the years ahead would take an active role in building the judicial system of the new state of North Carolina. At the time, however, he was deputy Collector at Edenton while also cooperating with the Edenton committee. In April 1775, he used his official position as an excuse to travel to New Bern, where the Provincial Congress was meeting. Iredell promised the Edenton committee would “not go uninformed of

238 Deposition of William Todd Concerning the Destruction of Fort Johnston, 23 August 1775, CRNC, X, 131-132.
239 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 41-50.
any thing [in the proceedings of the Congress] that is material.”

Together with several leading rebels in Edenton, including members of the local committee and representatives in the Provincial Congress, Iredell also contributed money to establish a post rider to operate between Edenton and “Suffolk in Virginia for the purpose of receiving the earliest News and Intelligence in the Present Critical times.”

This inability on the part of the governor to remove known rebels from their government positions would prove a serious hindrance to Martin’s efforts to counter the rebels’ growing strength, particularly when non-importation measures were a key aspect of the rebellion and port collectors were working openly with the rebels. The ship commander who testified Dry had toasted to “the success of American Arms” recognized the power Dry wielded when he admitted he himself drank to the toast, “fearing his opposition might prove injurious to the owners of his Ship.”

**Conclusion**

In addition to targeting Loyalists to prevent them from contributing to the British effort to hold the colonies, the rebels also targeted Crown officials in each of the southern provinces. This ensured there was no leadership for Loyalists to look to for support, and thereby helped weaken the Loyalist cause in the region. It also meant there was no competition for the rebels as they sought to take control of the provincial governments and establish their own political authority. The rebels

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241 Subscription for a Post Rider, 6 May 1775, PJI, I, 304.
achieved this objective by using many of the same means used against other
Loyalists, including intimidation and threats of violence. They targeted every
segment of colonial leadership, including the governors, members of the Governors’
Councils, executive officers, and members of the assembly who did not sign the
Association. In addition to these obvious targets, the rebels also included minor
government officials and even members of the clergy of the established church.
Forcing the clergy to bend to their will also allowed them to reach a much broader
audience by using a conduit that enjoyed a great deal of legitimacy among the
people. The rebels did not always succeed in forcing Crown officials to sign the
Association or join their cause, and many of those who did would return to the
British later in the war. Enduring loyalty was not necessary for the rebels to achieve
their objectives, as their campaign against the royal governments was not about
gaining individual support from a few additional individuals. The more important
purpose, which they did achieve, was to dismantle the royal governments and
render the Crown officials powerless at a critical time when the rebels were trying
to establish their own political authority. By the time any Crown officials who had
signed the Association might have later recanted, it would be too late to have a
decisive impact on the course of the Revolution.

In addition to targeting Crown officials from the public sphere, the rebels also
worked from the inside to achieve the same ends. Working primarily through the
colonial assemblies and with the active support of a number of minor officials in the
royal governments, the rebels were able to weaken the authority of the
governments when they most needed to demonstrate their authority and political
control in the provinces. The rebels also used government resources for the benefit of the committees and congresses that made up their shadow governments. They allocated funds for use in support of the rebels, refused to allocate funds where doing so would strengthen the governors’ positions, seemingly proffered the provincial governments’ seal of approval on the proceedings of the shadow governments, and sustained non-importation and non-exportation regimes with the support of port collectors and customs officials. Sometimes the remaining Crown officials, including the governors, failed to recognize this threat and unwittingly legitimized rebel actions. At other times the governors understood the rebels’ strategy, but allowed the Assemblies to continue meeting or failed to remove government officials who were working for the rebels. Even when they did try to remove officials who were insufficiently loyal to the King, they were unable to fund suitable replacements due the environment of intimidation the rebels had created or because officials in London did not understand the immediacy of the danger. A number of individuals who ostensibly held government positions remained in England for a variety of reasons, and there was no urgency from the government to send them back to North America or appoint replacements who would be more diligent in carrying out their responsibilities.

For all the success of the organizations that constituted the rebels’ shadow governments, they were fundamentally political organizations. The Crown governments in the southern provinces did not have much in the way of military resources, but the rebels still needed some means of coercion if they wanted people to take their political pronouncements seriously and if they wanted to be able to
enforce the Association. During the summer of 1775 the rebels set about seizing control of the militias in each province, which created a process that proved to be self-reinforcing. The rebels took control of most of the militia regiments by employing the same means of intimidation and violence they used against the population, and in turn control of the militias allowed them to further reinforce their control over the people. Where the existing officers would not join the rebels with their units, the Councils of Safety created volunteer regiments to compete with the holdouts for control of the population. In some instances, they even out-maneuvered Crown officials into again unwittingly giving legitimacy to their efforts. Another result of this newly acquired monopoly on the use of force was that the rebels were able to steal essential materiel from the British, most importantly ammunition. By this process the rebels would acquire the means to enforce their political objectives.
Chapter 3: Wrest the Power and Command of the Militia From the Crown

Sarah Corns was at home alone in Savannah in the early evening of 3 August 1775, while her husband, Thomas, the town’s jail keeper, was transporting a prisoner to the common jail. Corns was returning the prisoner following a hearing at which he had been denied bail, and after Corns had finished this task, he locked the door to the jail and left to take care of some other duties. Around the same time, a group of men led by William Evans, a Savannah merchant and delegate to the First Provincial Congress that had met in January descended on the Corns’ house and demanded from Sarah the keys to the common jail. She explained Thomas was not at home and she did not have the keys since he kept them with him. Realizing they would not be able to obtain the keys, the men nevertheless proceeded to the jail to break the locks and free the prisoner. The Corns’ son rushed to tell his father that the men had broken into the jail, and when Corns returned to his house Sarah told him what had transpired. He went to the jail and “found that it had been broke open,” and where the old locks had been two new ones had been installed. More importantly, the prisoner was missing. Sometime later, a local carpenter named Lachlan McGillivray delivered keys for the new locks to Corns.
This jailbreak was important in one sense, as it was another example of the efforts of the rebels to prevent government officials from being able to do their jobs. Corns stated in a deposition the majority of the province “opposes government,” and that it was becoming “impossible for the King’s officers in this province to carry or put his laws in execution as things are now circumstanced.” Governor James Wright of Georgia confirmed this belief, noting the “unparalleled insolence” and the “situation his Majesty’s Government is reduced to in the Province of Georgia.”

This development, however, was even more noteworthy, as it targeted the government’s ability to maintain order in the province, and by extension its monopoly on the use of force. The prisoner who Evans and the other men freed was Ebenezer McCarty. McCarty had been jailed on the order of Anthony Stokes, the Chief Justice of Georgia, for enlisting men in Georgia for the new South Carolina regiments established by the South Carolina Provincial Congress in June. Since Georgia had not yet created a regular army of its own, the Congress and the Council of Safety in Charleston commissioned a number of representatives from Georgia and South Carolina to recruit men from both provinces. Evans, who led the men who freed McCarty, had also been enlisting men in Georgia, as had Barnard Elliott, the former member of the Governor’s Council in South Carolina who had resigned in May, the day after learning of the outbreak of violence in Massachusetts.

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243 Deposition of Thomas and Sarah Corns, 7 August 1775, included in James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 August 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/664.
244 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
245 Ibid.
On the first of August, McCarty had boarded the sloop *Friendship* in Savannah, looking for the captain, Amos Weeks, who McCarty believed had taken away two men he had enlisted in Georgia. When he found out Weeks was not on board, he threatened, “[I]f he was here I would Cut his head off for taking away two Men that I enlisted here & Carried to Charlestown.” The next day, based on depositions given by Weeks and a ship’s mate who had been on board, Stokes ordered McCarty arrested and jailed.\(^{246}\) Within a day, however, he was free again, and two days later he was again enlisting men. On the 5\(^{th}\), Corns witnessed McCarty, “at the head of four or five persons with a drummer beating about the streets of Savannah for recruits to carry to the first regiment in Charleston...raised to oppose His Majesty’s troops.”\(^ {247}\)

The rebel plan to establish political control over the southern provinces and their inhabitants through coercive means like the Association, along with ongoing concerns about possible British support for Indian attacks and slave revolts amidst the political turmoil of the times, required them to also wrest control of the use of force from the government. James Brisbane, the Charleston Loyalist who took the oath of loyalty to the rebels in 1776 before returning to the British later in the war, explained in his Loyalist claim following the war precisely why the rebels’ needed to secure the use of force. In his request for support from the Government for the persecution suffered for his loyalty, he insisted, “he did not mean to keep the Oath


\(^{247}\) Deposition of Thomas and Sarah Corns, 7 August 1775 in James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 7 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
he took longer than while compelled by Force.”\textsuperscript{248} Political and military control would prove to be mutually reinforcing, with political control contributing to the rebels’ ability to seize control of the militia, raise regular troops for their provinces, and procure the necessities of war. This last objective included arms and ammunition, and the latter required that they address a significant shortfall of gunpowder in the colonies. Though these shortages would not be fully addressed for some time, the rebels were able to manage by taking control of the royal supplies of gunpowder in each of the respective colonies, seizing them from the British, taking it from those inhabitants who possessed their own supplies, and encouraging development of its components, such as saltpeter. The consequent military power resulting from their success in each of these objectives, in turn, allowed the rebels to further solidify political control of the colonies.

**Militia and Provincial Forces**

During the final years of colonial rule in the southern provinces, militia organization included at least one regiment of foot, or infantry, in each district, as well as a cavalry regiment, or regiment of horse, in each province. The provinces could also have various other militia units, which were usually located in the cities. Charleston, for example, had a volunteer artillery company as well as, at various times, a company of grenadiers and a light infantry company. Most cities also had a town watch, a nighttime police force. In Charleston, the watch consisted of town constables assisted by males between the ages of sixteen and sixty, as well as female heads of households. They patrolled the streets, “arrest[ed] suspicious characters

\textsuperscript{248} James Brisbane, Loyalist Claim, 31 January 1785, TNA, AO 12/47
out late at night,” particularly slaves and free blacks, and “[kept] a lookout for burglars.” Each province also established a patrol system to prevent slave rebellion, particularly during times when the colony was threatened with outside attack and the militia was otherwise engaged. In South Carolina and Georgia, on days the militia mustered, the captains would select names to serve on the patrols, while in North Carolina, the county courts selected the patrol members, or searchers. The patrols would stop any slaves they encountered, check for passes allowing the slave to travel, search slave quarters for weapons and stolen goods, and prevent slaves from assembling in large groups.249

The rebel takeover of the militias throughout the southern colonies in 1775 and 1776 would both benefit from, and contribute to the establishment of political control by the new rebel governments. As early as January 1775, the South Carolina Provincial Congress sought to take control of the militia, even though it otherwise only took limited steps in resisting British rule beyond non-importation and non-exportation of goods. On 17 January, the last day of the session, the Congress recommended the inhabitants of the colony “be diligently attentive in learning the use of arms” and the “officers be requested to train and exercise them at least once a fortnight.”250 Even though it was worded merely as a recommendation, it was the first challenge to government authority over the militia. For a period of time during

the spring of 1775, however, there was some uncertainty on both sides over who
controlled the militia. At the end of April, Henry Laurens told his son John though
some thought the militia would make “a poor figure” in the field, they were
determined to stand “against a tame Submission” and their “Will [would] remain
unconquered” if forced to “appear in opposition to British troops.”

On at least two occasions throughout May, Laurens again argued the militia
was prepared to defend the colony “against the hand of Tyranny.” He first told his
son John, “the daily & nightly sound of Drums & Fifes discovers a Spirit in the People
to make all possible resistance against that arbitrary power...” A week later he
told another son, Henry, Jr., of the “sound of Drums & Fifes” heard all over the city.
He also reported, “Grenadier, Light Infantry, Artillery & the ordinary Militia
Companies are trained to Arms every day.” He noted approvingly, “[S]ome of them
exercise & March with such exactness and regularity as shew them they are in
Earnest.” Laurens believed they were becoming increasingly prepared for the day
that would bring “that dreadful scene that of shedding Brother’s Blood.” Also in
May, Laurens reported the General Committee had taken control of the town watch,
whose commander was already complicit in the April break-in at the statehouse

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251 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 22 April 1775, in David R. Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of
Henry Laurens (PHL), X (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 103-106. Writing to
Dartmouth at the beginning of May, Lieutenant Governor William Bull believed the militia remained
loyal to the Crown. He reported, “All the companies of militia of this town continue to muster very
frequently in order to accustom themselves to military discipline and be fit for service when
necessary.” William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
252 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 15 May 1775, PHL, X, 118-120.
253 Henry Laurens to Henry Laurens, Jr., 26 May 1775, PHL, X, 142-144.
armory, and supplemented its numbers with nearly a hundred men each night.\footnote{Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 15 May 1775, PHL, X, 118-120; John Drayton, \textit{Memoirs of the American Revolution}, I (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1821), 273; Petition of Michael Hubart in Drayton, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 223.} The addition of men under the authority of the General Committee only reinforced rebel control.

When the Provincial Congress reconvened in June, it again recommended the inhabitants train at least once every two weeks. By this time, however, the colonels of nine of the twelve infantry regiments in the province, as well as the colonel of the cavalry regiment, supported the Provincial Congress, and brought most of their men along with them. Since they had assumed greater control over the militia, the Congress was able to go further in its resolves. It required officers “resign their Commissions under the King & take New Commissions under the Congress.”\footnote{Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June 1775, PHL, X, 170.} It also required inhabitants to procure bayonets for their guns if they did not already have any, and mandated they be “prepared to turn out at a minute’s warning.”\footnote{Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 17 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journal of the Provincial Congresses}, 55; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, X, 186-196.} The Provincial Congress gave the Council of Safety authority to regulate the militia, remove officers, and grant commissions when necessary, and also ordered the Council of Safety to standardize training for militia throughout the province.\footnote{Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 17 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journal of the Provincial Congresses}, 54-56.} The extent to which the rebels now controlled the militia was evident when Lord William Campbell arrived at Charleston on 18 June. The Provincial Congress had militia companies turn out to receive Campbell, as was customary, but the militia
made known their opinion of the new Crown representative with their sullen silence, and by making “no feu de joie, as had ever been usual in such a case.” 258 Likewise, as Campbell and Alexander Innes walked down Meeting Street later that evening, a member of the artillery company on duty, per his orders, prevented them from walking by the cannons mounted in front of the State House. He refused to make an exception, even for the governor. 259

While the rebels were assuming control of the militia in and around Charleston, several districts in the backcountry remained under Loyalist leadership, with many of the individual members staying loyal to their officers. This included Colonel Robert Starke’s Forks of the Saluda District and Colonel John Savage’s Ninety Six District. The most notable Loyalist opposition, however, came from Colonel Thomas Fletchall, who commanded the Upper Saluda District militia. These officers and many of their men remained loyal for a number of reasons, not the least of which was all three districts bordered Cherokee territory, and the inhabitants relied on Britain to provide defense against Indian attacks. To counter the influence of these and other Loyalists, to supplement existing militia companies that supported the Congress, and to promote “better regulation of the militia,” the Provincial Congress voted in June to form volunteer companies, whereby any group of no more than one hundred men could form their own companies “as soon as thirty men for a troop of horse, and fifty men for a company of foot” signed the Association and declared themselves ready “to turn out upon all occasions of

258 A Feu de joie is a ceremonial gun salute
259 Drayton, Memoirs, I, 257-258.
emergency.” The resolution from the Congress also allowed these companies to elect their own officers, whose names they then submitted to local field officers. These field officers submitted the names to Campbell in the hopes he would grant legitimacy on the new militia companies by issuing commissions, but in the likelihood he refused, the names would then go to the Council of Safety for approval.260

The rebels had some success with forming these companies in the summer and autumn of 1775, both to supplement militia in the Low Country and to counter Loyalist influence in the backcountry. While the Loyalist militia regiments in the backcountry continued to pose a considerable threat through the autumn, part of the rebel strategy was to weaken Loyalist leaders by providing inhabitants of their districts who opposed these officers the opportunity to form competing companies under the direction of the Council of Safety. Inhabitants of Thomas Fletchall’s district, for example, who were “dissatisfied with his measures and conduct,” formed several volunteer companies and a new militia regiment. William Henry Drayton found these residents to be “active & Spirited” and “stanch in our favour,” and argued, “this method of weakening Fletchal [is] consistent with sound Policy.” He believed they were “capable of forming a good barrier against the Indians, & of being a severe check upon Fletchals People” living nearby.261

The news of hostilities in Massachusetts also convinced the Provincial Congress to create a standing regular army for the province. They ordered the

formation of two regiments of infantry, each consisting of 750 men, and a regiment of rangers, consisting of 450 men. These regiments also elected their own officers, choosing Christopher Gadsden and William Moultrie to command the infantry regiments, and William Thomson to command the regiment of rangers. Some members of the Congress did not want to make it obvious that the new regiments were for controlling Loyalists and defending against the British. They therefore publicly claimed they were for defending against slave insurrections and Indian attacks, which was in part a pretext to provide cover for their actions. Henry Laurens, serving as President of the Congress, noted “1000 Men embodied in aid of the Militia” would be more than enough to defend against insurrection and Indian attacks, whereas two thousand men would suggest they had a more formidable enemy in mind. Even if defending against the British army was the intention of the Congress, Laurens argued the “highest number of 2000 Raw undisciplined half armed untried provincials, are too few.” The Congress therefore revised the numbers for each regiment down to 500 men for each infantry regiment and 270 men in the regiment of rangers.  

Many of the militia officers sought and received commissions in these new regiments, and some militia units, such as the regiment of horse led by Moultrie, eventually dissolved as their members joined the regular forces. When the Commons House of Assembly met in July, it again demonstrated the extent to which the government had lost political authority in the province when

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it gave its approval of these new regiments, also citing "great concern about slave insurrections and depredations from Indians." The pretext that these new regiments were only for use against slaves and Indians also allowed the Commons House of Assembly to provide government approval of the new regiments without appearing to be disloyal, thereby conferring additional legitimacy on forces loyal to the Provincial Congress.

Whereas in South Carolina many of the officers commanding militia regiments supported the rebels early in 1775 and brought most of their men along with them, in Georgia the Provincial Congress and Council of Safety had the more daunting task of seizing control of individual militia units from officers who had not signed the Association. When the Georgia Provincial Congress met in July, it decided no officer who had yet to sign the Association would be able to keep his commission. Instead it recommended militia companies elect their own officers, “if those Already appointed should be thought Incapable or Unfit.” In late July, John Stirk, captain of the Fourth Company in the First Regiment in Savannah resigned his commission because he had been elected captain of the Fifth Company, in Ebenezer, a position that was more convenient for him. He applied to Wright for his new commission, assuring him “the People will, Almost to a Man, back the application.” Wright told his Council he did not recognize any vacancy in the company and had not received

264 Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 12 July 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
265 John Stirk to James Wright, 29 July 1775 included in Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 1 August 1775 in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), X (Savannah: The Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 35-37.
266 Ibid.
any complaint against the existing officers, and therefore asked the Council for advice on how he should respond. The Council observed the election of officers was the result of the illegal Congress and therefore was not valid, but then, in another example of them granting undue recognition and therefore legitimacy to the Provincial Congress, the Council ruminated on what action it might take if the Congress’s action had not been “irregular and improper.” They decided since no complaint had been made against the existing officers of Stirk’s new company, Wright should not grant Stirk’s request.267

Other companies followed the same procedure. On 28 July, the Fourth Company mustered, and Stirk, still the captain of the company at that point, asked the remaining officers, the lieutenant, William Stephens, and the ensign, William Johnston, whether they had or would sign the Association. When both men replied they had not signed, “they were told that they would not be Allowed to Act any Longer in that Company as Officers.” Stirk then informed the company of the Council of Safety’s orders that they elect new officers who had signed the Association.268

Also on the 28th, the captain of the First Company, First Regiment, Quintin Pooler, an active rebel who only four days earlier had helped lead the tarring and feathering of John Hopkins in Savannah, gathered his company to elect new officers to replace John Charles Lucena and John Randall, the company’s lieutenant and ensign

267 Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 1 August 1775, CGHS, X, 37.
respectively. This process continued with other companies. On 4 August, several members of the province's sole light infantry company offered their commanding officer, Captain Thomas Netherclift, an opportunity to sign the Association. When he refused, the elected a new officer to replace him and told the rest of the men anyone who supported Netherclift would be expelled from the company. On 11 August, George Walton, captain of the Eighth Company and member of the Council of Safety summoned his men, who replaced the lieutenant, James Robertson with David Brydie, and the ensign, James Ross, with Seth John Cuthbert as second lieutenant.

After the militia companies had voted for new officers, the Council of Safety wrote to Wright informing him many of the militia officers were “disagreeable to the people over whom they command.” Given the “danger of the times,” for which the Council of Safety was in no small part responsible, the officers had to be removed “as no set of men could be expected to fit under banners for which they had no good opinion or respect.” The members of the Council of Safety informed Wright that members of militia wanted to vote for their own officers, and noted Wright had supported the election of officers in the past. They therefore requested Wright grant commissions to the men elected by each company. Even as it was seeking to remove all officers loyal to the King's appointed representative in the province and sought to undermine the authority of the royal government, the Council of Safety

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269 John Charles Lucena and John B. Randall to James Wright, 3 August 1775 in Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 15 August 1775, CGHS, X, 43.
270 Thomas Netherclift to James Wright, 10 August 1775 in Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 15 August 1775, CGHS, X, 44-45.
271 James Robertson to James Wright, 14 August 1775 in Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 15 August 1775, CGHS, X, 45.
gave the governor obligatory, but by that point empty, assurances of loyalty. It insisted it had no intention of attacking “the prerogatives of the King.” Nevertheless, the “voice of the people” demanded new officers.272

This episode was a rare instance during the summer of 1775 in which Wright fully understood the problem and its source, and acted accordingly to avoid giving the rebels the legitimacy they sought by appealing to him for commissions for the new militia officers. Wright understood the “dangerous tendency” of this “very extraordinary” address, and told the Council the letter demonstrated an effort by the Provincial Congress and Council of Safety to “wrest the power and command of the militia from the Crown, and out of his hands and to Vest it in the Congress and Committees.” More broadly, the rebels were “subverting the law and the King’s government and establishing one of their own.” Since the only requirement for a commission, other than being elected, was to sign the Association, and anyone signing the Association was declaring support for the Continental and Provincial Congresses, “those people would have the Entire direction of the Militia.” He also recognized the irony in the Council of Safety appealing to uncertainty of times, as “it is these very people who now Apply, that have been the Cause of the whole, and who are now themselves Committing and Encouraging many Acts of Violence and oppression.” Wright saw no reason to pay attention to the Council of Safety’s request, and noted if there was any danger to the inhabitants, particularly from slave insurrection or Indian attack, “it will proceed intirely from their own

Misconduct or Imprudence,” and “these very people will bring it upon the Province.”

Wright’s Council, however, did not understand the dynamics of the situation as Wright did, and, with the exception of the Chief Justice Anthony Stokes, responded to the Council of Safety’s address as if it was written in good faith and not a trap. The Council members agreed “the powers of government are greatly relaxed, almost totally annihilated in the province,” but did not “think the proposed remedy” was “an adequate one especially as no charge of misconduct is alleged and [the ousted officers] are at least as qualified as those said to be chosen by the People.” After explaining their reasoning in unnecessary detail given the provenance of the request, they advised Wright to deny the Council of Safety’s request for commissions. Despite fully recognizing the Council of Safety’s intentions, Wright therefore sent a reply to the rebels that for a number of reasons he could not agree to their request for commissions for the newly elected officers.

Anthony Stokes dissented from the opinion given by the rest of the Council, as he alone recognized the harm even acknowledging the Council of Safety’s request would do to the government. He wrote a separate opinion, noting not only were the “powers of government...greatly relaxed,” but they were relaxed precisely because the Provincial Congress, Council of Safety, and the local committees were seeking to seize power from the King’s officers. Any threat from Indians or slave rebellion,

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273 Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 15 August 1775, CGHS, X, 39.
275 Clerk to Council of Safety, 17 August 1775 in Proceedings and Minutes of Governor and Council of Georgia, 15 August 1775, CGHS, X, 43.
therefore, would be the result of actions taken by the rebels to weaken the government. Stokes explained the larger context of the rebels’ actions, not just against the government, but against other sources of authority as well. He cited the removal of Haddon Smith from Christ Church, and their replacing him with one of their own, a layman. He also mentioned the break-in at the town jail, Barnard Elliot recruiting men in Savannah for South Carolina, and various incidents of tarring and feathering.276

Stokes also explained that while the Association claimed to promote “Peace and good order, and the Safety of Individuals, and of Private Property,” it was actually “a Test to distinguish those who are ready to take up Arms against his Majesty, from those who are not.” The only reason militia officers were losing their commissions, therefore, was because they were not willing to sign the Association. He argued the letter from the Council of Safety was full of “Clumsey Artifice and Misrepresentation,” and was intended for Wright to give his approval to taking up arms against the King by granting commissions to those who were willing to do so. Stokes concluded that the Council’s recommendation to turn down the request for commissions would be “almost an Affront” to Wright, and would likely do even more harm to government authority.277

The process of seizing control of the militia in North Carolina involved both taking over existing units and forcing out Loyalists while also creating parallel units to counter the influence of those still commanded by Loyalists. Many of the

277 Ibid.
delegates to the Provincial Congress in August 1774 were also important militia leaders, which ensured the rebels would have the loyalty of a number of key militia units even before 1775.\textsuperscript{278} After naming its delegates to the First Continental Congress, the August 1774 Provincial Congress ordered each county to provide a sum of money for those delegates. While the Provincial Congress did not specify how each county was to raise this money, many counties found it most expedient and convenient to have the militia support the delegates. The committee in Rowan County, for example, ordered each company of the militia to contribute a certain amount of money and deliver it to Maxwell Chambers, a member of the committee, to both provide Richard Caswell a sum for his expenses in Philadelphia and for “defraying future Contingencies.”\textsuperscript{279} This measure suggests either a level of sympathy for the Provincial Congress and Continental Congress already resident within many of the militia regiments, or the extent to which the committees had already managed to control the militia and force adherence to its resolves.

Elsewhere, militia units were already electing their own officers without the governor’s approval. By March 1775, Governor Josiah Martin heard the militia in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties had met to choose officers for their regiments. This process accelerated in the spring of 1775 as news of Lexington and

\textsuperscript{278} These militia colonels included John Harvey, moderator of the Provincial Congress, as well as Samuel Spencer of Anson County, William Cray of Onslow County, John Ashe of New Hanover County, Richard Cogdell of Craven County, John Simpson of Pitt County, William Thompson of Carteret County, Needham Bryan of Johnston County, Richard Caswell of Chatham County, Thomas Person of Granville County, and Allen Jones of Northampton County. See Earle M. Wheeler, \textit{The Role of the North Carolina Militia in the Beginning of the American Revolution}, Unpublished Dissertation, 1969, 35.

\textsuperscript{279} Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 23 September 1774, Journal of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, State Archives of North Carolina
Concord reached North Carolina. Richard Caswell first heard of the battles as he was traveling north to Philadelphia and the news was making its way south. He wrote to his son, informing him of the news and telling him to show the letter to his uncles, as well as several other friends from Dobbs County. Caswell told William to relay the message that it was “indispensably necessary for them to arm and form into a Company or Companies of Independents” under the authority of the Provincial Congress, elect officers, and “meet as often as possible and go through the exercises.” Caswell also suggested William’s uncles, who held the positions of County Clerk and Sheriff respectively, should avoid joining any company or risk too close an association with the militia, as doing so could have cost them their offices. For Caswell, it was better the revolutionary movement kept supporters inside government in their positions to provide benefit for the rebels when possible.280

Caswell anticipated potential objections to forming new militia companies, namely that they would “be acting against Government.” He denied this, arguing instead, “[W]e are only Qualifying ourselves and preparing to defend our Country and support our liberties.” Like Caswell suggested, some counties claimed they were defending against the threat of slave and Indian attacks to grant legitimacy to their actions against the government.281 This concern was somewhat ironic since Martin had spent the previous year trying to convince the Assembly to pass a new militia law to “put [the militia] upon such a respectable footing” in light of recent threats of

280 Richard Caswell to William Caswell, 11 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1247-1250.
281 Ibid.
Indian attack.\textsuperscript{282} The Assembly finally passed a law, but as Martin explained to Dartmouth, it was little more than an extension of the previous law, with nothing else done to strengthen the militia. Even then, the bill faced a good amount of opposition.\textsuperscript{283} Martin described the consequences at a meeting of his Council in late June, when he informed the other members “that Militia Commissions had been issued [by the government] to very few Counties since the last Militia Law passed” as a result of a lack of cooperation from the militia colonels. He asked the Council whether he should continue issuing commissions to all counties, or only to those known to support the government. The Council suggested that he issue commissions to all counties, but the situation would not improve for him.\textsuperscript{284}

The New Bern committee issued an order on the last day of May 1775 calling for inhabitants to “form themselves into companies and elect officers.” The committee also ordered these new companies to conduct patrols and search slave quarters and any other “suspected places in their district,” and confiscate any weapons or ammunition found in the possession of slaves. They were also to arrest any black person “they find under circumstances of suspicion.”\textsuperscript{285} In New Hanover County, John Ashe resigned his commission as Colonel of the royal militia for that county “on the pretend of age and Business.” Two weeks later, however, he “appeared at Wilmington...at the head of a body of between four and five hundred

\textsuperscript{282} Josiah Martin to His Majesty’s Council and the House of Assembly, 24 March 1774, Minutes of the Lower House of the North Carolina General Assembly, CRNC, IX, 871.
\textsuperscript{283} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 13 July 1774, CRNC, IX, 1009-1014.
\textsuperscript{284} Minutes of the North Carolina Governor’s Council, 25 June 1775, CRNC, X, 38-40.
\textsuperscript{285} Proceedings of the Committee for the Town of New Bern and the County of Craven, 31 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
men, menacing the People...if they did not immediately subscribe an Association dictated by the Committee.”286 Rebels in Edenton also formed an independent company that by the end of May had grown to “Fifty Men &...Daily increasing.” The company informed Joseph Hewes they were “well Armed and ready to turn out at the Shortest Notice for the protection of this or the Neighboring Towns.”287

Other counties in North Carolina were less circumspect about letting it be known why they were actually taking control of the militia. Rebels in Bute County formed an independent company, citing “our distressed brethren in the Northern provinces, who are now defending the General rights of mankind, against the arbitrary, and dispotick power of a Corrupt Ministry.” Members of the company pledged to “be in readyness to defend ourselves against any violence that may be exerted against our persons and properties.”288 On the last day of May, the committee of Mecklenburg County passed a series of resolves declaring “all laws and commissions confirmed by or derived from the authority of the King and Parliament are annulled and vacated,” and “all commissions civil and military heretofore granted by the Crown...are null and void.” It ordered inhabitants of the county to form nine companies of militia, with one in Charlotte and eight in the rest of the

286 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 41-50.
287 Independent Company of Edenton to Joseph Hewes, 31 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
288 This document is undated. The editor of the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, in a volume published in 1890, noted, “[T]radition has always assigned the Bute Association to the year 1774.” This seems unlikely, however, as it discusses events in “the Northern provinces” as if fighting had already begun. It also states a readiness to act if “ever called for by the Commanding officer of the American army,” an institution that did not exist until the summer of 1775. See Bute County Association, Date Unknown, Bute County Committee of Safety Minutes, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Wilson Library (Warrenton, N.C : Warren County Bicentennial Committee, 1977), 12.
county. They were to elect their officers, who would “hold and exercise their several powers...independent of the Crown of Great Britain and former constitution of this Province.”\textsuperscript{289} In July, the Rowan County committee denounced a proclamation issued in June by Martin in which he urged inhabitants to resist the rebels’ efforts to enforce the Association. The committee “judg[ed] it entirely false in its Tenor,” and “A corrupt gloss upon the diabolical Measures of a debauched Ministry, tending to seduce the Minds of the populace and bring them off from their true Interest in opposing the cruel Measures of an unjust Ministry.” It then ordered its response to be transmitted to the militia captains and circulated throughout the ranks.\textsuperscript{290} A number of county committees had established enough authority over the militia by summer 1775 to use it to intimidate Loyalists, as the Anson County committee did to force James Cotton to sign the Association.\textsuperscript{291}

When it met in August, the Provincial Congress also formed “an Arrangement of minute men for the Safety of the province.”\textsuperscript{292} It established battalions, each consisting of ten companies, in each of the six provincial districts. As with the militia, companies would choose their own officers, and once completed they would receive the approval of both the county committee and the members of the Provincial Council for the respective district. Once formed, the companies were to train every day for two weeks, after which they would muster at least once every two weeks.

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\item \textsuperscript{289} Resolutions by the Mecklenburg Committee of Safety, 31 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1282-1285.
\item \textsuperscript{290} Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 15 July 1775, Journal of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, State Archives of North Carolina.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Deposition of James Cotton Concerning Treatment of Loyalists in Anson County, 13 August 1775, CRNC, X, 127-129.
\item \textsuperscript{292} Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 5 September 1775, CRNC, X, 192-193.
\end{itemize}
The Congress also ordered all inhabitants support the requirements of the minute men, with those with guns in working order required to lend them for the use of minute men who did not have their own. The captains were to provide receipts and account for the guns while in use and either return them, provide payment in return for the arms, or “shew that they have been lost by unavoidable accident.” Similarly, the Congress required operators of public ferries to carry for free “every person who shall attend Musters as Militia or Minute Men, at all such times as they shall be called upon by their respective Officers.”

When it established the minute men in August, the Provincial Congress also responded to a June resolve of the Continental Congress for the formation of regular troops in the province by creating two regiments of 500 men each for the North Carolina Line of the Continental Army. The Provincial Congress attempted to establish regulations for the relationship between regulars, minute men, and militia, and authorized the Council of Safety to assume authority for all military matters when the Congress was not meeting. The Provincial Congress and Council of Safety made a concerted effort to strengthen the minute men and make the experiment work. The Council of Safety ordered the local committees “to exert their utmost influence to forward and hasten the minute service, and procure several Battalions of minute men to be completed with all possible dispatch.”

Nevertheless, despite the efforts from the provincial level, recruiting difficulties and administrative challenges.

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293 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 7 September 1775, CRNC, X, 200-201.
confusion resulting from three distinct military bodies, including the militia and regular forces, meant the minute men experiment would only last about six months.

Throughout the autumn of 1775, local committees brought more militia companies, particularly in the interior, under their authority. They also continued forming new companies as inhabitants signed the Test and sought to create a company loyal to the local committee where one did not already exist. If the actions of any officer cast doubt on his loyalty to the rebels, the men of the company could petition the local committees to hold new elections, as twenty-two men of one company in Rowan County did in October. Through the latter half of 1775 and into 1776, the militia would prove their worth as instruments of political violence directed against inhabitants as well as in battle with Loyalist forces. Their performance against Loyalists at Moore's Creek Bridge in February 1776 would influence the decision to ultimately discard the minute men concept.

The committees also had to remain vigilant, and maintain full awareness of the movements and actions of the inhabitants of their respective counties to ensure continued control over all militia officers. Loyalists, or other individuals who refused to sign the Test, would often apply for a militia commission or permission to raise a company of militia, though usually to no avail. In July, James Hepburn applied to the Cumberland County committee for permission to raise a company of militia “to preserve the Independence of the subjects, and the dignity of the Government.”

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295 Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 9 November 1775, Journal of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, State Archives of North Carolina; Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 15 November 1775, State Archives of North Carolina.

296 Minutes of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 18 October 1775, Journal of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, State Archives of North Carolina.
James Clardy of Bladen County, however, testified that Hepburn spoke derisively of the committee and attempted to intimidate Clardy and the rest of the inhabitants of the province by “falsely and maliciously assert[ing] that there were 50,000 Russians in his Majesty’s pay” on the way “to subdue the Americans.” The committee labeled Hepburn “a false scandalous, and seditious incendiary...traitorously endeavour[ing] to make himself conspicuous in favor of tyranny and oppression,” and ordered “Friends to American Liberty [to] avoid all dealings and intercourse with such a wicked and detestable character.”\(^{297}\) The Onslow County committee faced a similar situation in December when James Kebble applied for a commission. The committee decided he was “at present inimical to the Cause of Liberty,” and decided Kebble was “an improper person to hold any Commission in the Militia.”\(^{298}\)

In addition to the land forces created by the three southern provinces, the Provincial Congress of South Carolina created a fledgling navy to protect Charleston from the British ships sitting over the bar. In June, the Provincial Congress considered purchasing a vessel, the *Maria Wilhelmina*, and turning it into a ship of war by mounting fifty guns “for the better defence of this Harbour & Town” from the *Tamar* and any other British ships that might attack the town. This motion failed overwhelmingly, with only 11 members voting in favor and 180 voting against.\(^{299}\) British officials mocked this proposal, with Alexander Innes claiming, “[N]o act of the famous Knight of La Mancha would have been equal to it,” if the motion

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\(^{297}\) *Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety*, 7 July 1775, *State Archives of North Carolina*.


\(^{299}\) Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June 1775, *PHL*, X, 165.
passed.\textsuperscript{300} Only a month later, however, the Council of Safety revisited the question of arming vessels for the purposes of defending the city, and protecting the coast and inlets from British vessels. They acquired a sloop, the \textit{Commerce} in July, and between August and October took under control of several other ships, including a schooner, the \textit{Defence}, and two brigantines, the \textit{Beaufort} and the \textit{Comet}. In November, the Second Provincial Congress decided to also take control of the ship \textit{Prosper} “for the purposes of taking or sinking the men of war now in Rebellion Road,” the main anchorage at the mouth of the harbor.\textsuperscript{301}

The province lacked the requisite number of sailors to man these new ships, and in October the Council of Safety asked Moultrie to determine if any seamen had enlisted in the infantry regiments due to a lack of employment as a result of non-importation and non-exportation, and offer them a significant increase in pay to change services.\textsuperscript{302} By early November, over fifty men had left the infantry to serve in this new naval force.\textsuperscript{303} The South Carolina Provincial Congress then authorized two members “to go to Georgia...to engage all and every able seaman they may meet with there who shall be willing to enter into...service” in the South Carolina navy.\textsuperscript{304} This new naval capability would prove important as the rebel leadership sought to

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\textsuperscript{301} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 12 November 1775, in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 118-122.
\textsuperscript{302} Council of Safety to William Moultrie, 19 October 1775, PHL, X, 473.
\textsuperscript{304} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 13 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 122.
\end{flushleft}
obtain ammunition, perhaps the most critical requirement for its struggle against the government.

**Acquiring Gunpowder**

The April 1775 theft of gunpowder from the public magazines in Charleston, as well as the similar incident in May in Savannah, came in response to a perceived escalation in tensions between the colonists and the Crown. These thefts were as much an attempt to deprive the provincial government of a supply of ammunition that could be used against the people, as they were to provide the rebels with its own reliable supply. As Lieutenant Governor Bull explained to Dartmouth, the rebels were successful in this sense, as the government would be unable to acquire any gunpowder as long as an Order in Council prohibiting its exportation from Britain to America remained in effect. Nevertheless, from the start of the conflict, ammunition was in short supply in the colonies. The rebels took advantage of the control they had established over the population by seizing political and military power to acquire whatever sources of gunpowder they could find, while also preventing the government and Loyalists from doing the same. This included purchasing supplies, contracting with individuals to manufacture or import gunpowder, and even seizing known supplies by means of force and coercion. The most effective means of acquiring large amounts of gunpowder in the summer of 1775, however, was to take advantage of the control they held over the seacoast, including wharves and inlets. This allowed them to seize several ships carrying

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305 William Bull to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
gunpowder intended for the governors and Indian traders as they approached southern ports and passed beyond the protection of the British ships.

The rebels bought what they could from their supporters. In South Carolina, the General Committee purchased 1,450 and 150 pounds respectively from ship captains James Leckie and Robert Cochran in early May 1775, as well as 125 pounds from a Mr. Prince. Similarly, the Mecklenburg County committee at the end of May ordered “Colonel Thomas Polk and Dr. Joseph Kennedy to purchase three hundred pounds of powder,” as well as other supplies required by the militia such as lead and flints, and put it all under committee control. This process continued throughout 1775, but by the end of the year, the threat from British ships and Governor Josiah Martin’s efforts to raise Loyalist forces had increased significantly. In December, therefore, the North Carolina Provincial Council of Safety issued a general recommendation to “all Friends to American Freedom” to purchase whatever powder saltpeter, and sulphur they could, “and lodge the same with the several Town and County Committees.”

The rebels also contracted with individuals to manufacture the materials necessary for ammunition or to import supplies. As early as March 1775, the General Committee in Charleston encouraged the production of gunpowder in the colony. In June, the South Carolina Council of Safety contracted with William Bartey to “produce good and merchantable gun-powder, made by him.” By December,

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306 Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 105n.
307 Resolutions by the Mecklenburg Committee of Safety, 31 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1282-1285.
Bartey had produced 462 pounds of gunpowder. In August, the North Carolina Provincial Congress voted to encourage manufacturing of needed supplies, and agreed to pay £200 to anyone who could manufacture within the province and provide within six months to the Provincial Council of Safety, “five hundred weight of good Merchantable Gunpowder, equal in goodness to Gunpowder imported from Great Britain.” It offered similar payments to anyone who could manufacture saltpeter, sulphur, steel, iron, and other manufactures required by the militia. The rebels would also contract with ship captains to acquire any sources of gunpowder they could find and import them into the colonies. In July 1775, for example, the Pitt County committee in North Carolina contracted with Captain Paul White to import “a Quantity of Powder & Ball,” which he delivered to the committee in November to the amount of 717 pounds of gunpowder and 1,782 pounds of lead.

If inhabitants would not sell their gunpowder to the rebels, the latter were content with taking those supplies by force. In January 1775, the committee of Wilmington, North Carolina warned a number of merchants, at least one of whom was also a town commissioner, “to avoid the censure of this committee” and not sell or remove from the town any of the supplies of gunpowder in their possession. The committee informed the merchants, “[T]his committee will endeavor to collect [the gunpowder] by subscription, and they doubt not of success,” and promised to “pay you for the whole of it at the reasonable price.” The committee furthermore

311 Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Congress, 10 September 1775, CRNC, X, 216.
312 Journal of the Pitt County Committee of Safety, 11 November 1775; 16 December 1775, State Archives of North Carolina.
informed them it was their duty to provide the gunpowder, as “it is intended...to be made use of as much for your security as of the rest of the inhabitants of this part of the province.”

In June, the Council of Safety in South Carolina ordered the Cheraw committee to take 500 pounds of gunpowder from John Mitchell, a storekeeper and “malcontent” in that district, on the belief that Mitchell had stolen the supply from Robert Cochran. When it turned out Mitchell had bought the gunpowder legally with the intention to sell it at profit, the Provincial Congress nevertheless held on to the supply and ordered Mitchell be paid a “reasonable price,” as determined by the Provincial Congress. Also in June, the Rowan County committee ordered a militia colonel named Walker to “take into his possession a certain Quantity of powder now in possession of Conrad Hildebrand,” and if he refused, to “forthwith take in possession the said powder.”

Since the committee's goal at the time was as much to deny supplies of powder to the government as it was to collect supplies for itself, it was also content with ordering Hildebrand to promise not to remove the gunpowder from the county, sell it to the enemy, or take advantage of the shortage of gunpowder by raising prices. In August, however, the committee ordered simply, “all powder in this town be taken into the possession of this Committee.” It ordered committee member Matthew Troy to seize all the powder owned by a John Kelly and deliver it to the committee, and dispatched several other committee members and militia officers to

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314 Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 19 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 58.

315 Journal of the Rowan County Committee of Safety, 1 June 1775, State Archives of North Carolina.
take powder owned by other inhabitants of the county. Recognizing the dubious legality of these measures, the committee provided protection against those who took the gunpowder, as it did when it promised to “indemnify Mr Troy” for taking Kelly’s powder.316

Two weeks later, the Tryon County committee gave blanket authority to militia officers “to raise sufficient force in order to detain and secure all powder and Lead that may be removing or about to be Removed out of the County.”317 Other counties would do the same, and by early February 1776, facing the specter of Loyalist uprisings instigated by Governor Martin, the Rowan County committee ordered two militia officers to “immediately, and without Delay...demand and receive of James Cook...all the gun powder and other ammunition in his possession, or by him lent or lodged in the hands of any other person or place.” Unwilling to negotiate given the threat the rebels faced, the committee agreed if Cook should refuse to turn over the gunpowder, the militia captains were to raise “a sufficient Number of Militia to take the powder and other ammunition.” To prevent him from potentially supplying the enemy, and encouraging others to supply the militias, the committee also ordered the officers “to take the Body of said Cook and all others opposing the delivery of the said powder and him or them convey and have confined in the common Jail of this County untill further order is given concerning them.”318
Despite these many methods of acquiring gunpowder, the rebels faced persistent shortages. They soon found the quickest way to obtain a large supply of gunpowder was to take it as it arrived by ship in the ports en route to government officials and Loyalist merchants, many of whom sold or provided these supplies to Indian tribes to keep them loyal to the British. In June 1775, Thomas Savage, a militia captain and member of the South Carolina Provincial Congress, received intelligence “from a gentleman in Georgia” of a shipment of several tons of gunpowder that was sailing from England for Savannah.319 James Wright had petitioned the British Government to allow the exportation of this shipment to be distributed to the Indian tribes to retain their loyalty to the Crown. Savage informed the Secret Committee in Charleston, which sent several men to Savannah to help the rebels in Georgia keep watch over the inlet until the ship arrived. They boarded at least one other ship that came into Savannah to search for the shipment of gunpowder, and Wright admitted to Dartmouth it was within the rebels’ power to seize the gunpowder and there was nothing he or the government could do to stop them.320

The Secret Committee in Charleston also commissioned Captains John Barnwell and John Joyner to keep watch for the vessel, and intercept and seize the gunpowder when it arrived. Together with forty men, Barnwell and Joyner took two large barges to Savannah and waited at Bloody Point, north of the mouth of the Savannah River. The Georgia Provincial Congress was scheduled to begin on 4 July,

319 Drayton, Memoirs, I, 268.
320 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 8 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
and John Drayton, the son of William Henry Drayton, later credited the arrival of Barnwell and Joyner with both “[throwing] the friends of Administration in Georgia, into apprehensions for their personal safety” and “giving new life and support [in Georgia] to the friends of America.” It also encouraged them to form a Council of Safety and pass an Association. The Georgia Council of Safety offered its support to Barnwell and Joyner, and William Henry Drayton and Arthur Middleton, members of the Secret Committee encouraged Georgians to “fit out a schooner on the occasion to be used as circumstances might require.” This schooner, initially called the Elizabeth, was taken into service by the rebels, renamed the Liberty, captained by Joseph Habersham and a Captain Brown.\(^{321}\)

On the 8\(^{th}\) of July, the ship Philippa appeared, captained by Richard Maitland. As it turned out, this was not the ship either the rebels or Wright had been expecting. Its shipment of gunpowder was not for supplying the Indians, but was instead intended for merchants from Charleston to St. Augustine in East Florida. Nevertheless, it was carrying thousands of pounds of gunpowder for those merchants, and so proved to be a suitable alternate target for the rebels. As the Philippa came to anchor off the Tybee bar, it noticed the Liberty heading out to sea in its direction, eventually “hovering around the [Philippa]” without coming “nearer than 3-4 miles” away. In the meantime, Maitland had to wait for a pilot to come on board the Philippa to navigate the ship over the bar. As the Philippa approached the bar, the Liberty came “right athwart the ship.” Maitland could see it was “full of armed men,” with ten six pound guns. After the Philippa mounted brief resistance,

\(^{321}\) Drayton, Memoirs, I, 269-270.
Oliver Bowen, a militia officer and later a member of the Council of Safety, gave the pilot instructions to take the ship to Cockspur Island, at the mouth of the Savannah River. After a calm night and ebb tide forced both ships to anchor for the evening, they approached Cockspur the next morning. There, and on Tybee Point on the south side of the river, were two armed forces totaling approximately 300 men in addition to the men on the Liberty.322

When the Philippa anchored, the men on both shores came out to it in boats, and Bowen, Joyner, Joseph Habersham, and Seth John Cuthbert, another militia officer, climbed on board and told Maitland they would take all the gunpowder, shot, lead, and arms intended for the Indian trade. Habersham gave Maitland an order from the Provincial Congress and signed by the secretary, George Walton, “requiring them to take all the ammunition and arms out of the said ship.” Maitland told them the order meant nothing to him, and he “could not deliver the goods until he had seen the proprietors [of the Philippa] and had their orders for doing so.” The armed rebels took by force from the hold of the ship approximately 16,000 pounds of gunpowder, 700 pounds of “leaden bullets,” as well as all the arms and shot on the ship. After they left, Maitland continued in to Savannah, where he informed Wright of what had happened even though he had no faith in Wright’s ability “to take any measure [in response] or even enforce the laws.”

Maitland had such little faith in the ability of the government to take any effective action in response to the attack on the Philippa that he did not even bother making an application to the chief justice, Anthony Stokes, until September as he

322 Information of Richard Maitland, 21 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
hoped Stokes would “not issue any warrant in the case.” This was in part the result of “an apprehension that some injury might have been offered to him or his property,” but he also witnessed the break-in at the jail on 3 August to release Ebenezer McCarty and concluded, “[I]t is out of the power of the chief justice to bring the persons [who attacked the Philippa] to justice.” Instead, when Maitland encountered Joseph Habersham and several other men on 11 July, he asked Habersham “if he would suffer his name to be entered in a protest” of the raid on the Philippa. According to Maitland, Habersham replied that he “wished he could see the man that dared” to make such a protest.323 Maitland appealed to Henry Laurens, citing his acquaintance with Laurens’ brother and late wife. He told Laurens he never intended “Prejudice of the province,” inquired about his stolen cargo, and asked Laurens’ advice on what he could carry in the future based on resolves of the Continental Congress.324 Laurens’ response is unknown, but any reply he did send was not likely to Maitland’s satisfaction, as he decided it was not worth pushing the issue with “there being no civil or military power sufficient to protect him.”325

The rebels wasted no time planning for the next raid on gunpowder shipments from England, and again used their control over the seacoasts and the cover of everyday activity along the riverfront in Charleston to facilitate the process. In the middle of July, they learned of two more ships that had left London for Savannah with arms and ammunition on board. The South Carolina Council of Safety ordered two schooners be taken into service and armed, and on 16 July, wrote to

323 Ibid.
Tunes Tebout, a blacksmith from Beaufort, asking him to travel to Charleston and “be prepared for an Excursion, by Water chiefly, in which you will probably be engaged three or four weeks.” In the letter, sent via Daniel DeSaussure of the Beaufort committee, the Council of Safety suggested Tebout land in Charleston, but somewhere inconspicuous as to not raise any suspicions. The letter suggested landing at the wharf owned by Christopher Gadsden, one of the largest and busiest wharves on the riverfront, and proceeding directly to Henry Laurens’ house less than a mile away. There Tebout was informed of the plan, and told if anyone “tries to stop him on behalf of the King,” they would “be dealt with severely” by the Council of Safety.\(^\text{326}\)

Tebout joined approximately forty other men, including ship captains Clement Lempriere, Robert Cochran, and Simon Tufts, on the \textit{Commerce}. They intercepted the \textit{Betsey} off the St. Augustine bar where it was unloading its cargo, as the vessel was too big to navigate over the bar. On 7 August, the rebels boarded the vessel with orders from the South Carolina Council of Safety, signed by Henry Laurens, to seize its cargo. They took nearly 12,000 pounds of gunpowder belonging both to the King and to private merchants.\(^\text{327}\) The rebels continued targeting British gunpowder shipments throughout August and September. On 20 September, Savannah rebels seized the cargo of the \textit{Polly}, including 7,000 pounds of gunpowder

\(^{326}\) Council of Safety to Tunes Tebout, 16 July 1775, PHL, X, 224-225.
belonging to private merchants and the King, which the government intended to
distribute to the Creek Indians. Wright was concerned the loss of this gunpowder
would make it difficult to keep the Creek on the side of the British.328

After seizing the gunpowder from the ships, the rebels found ways to move
supplies unimpeded and unnoticed between colonies. After the attack on the
Philippa, the South Carolina Council of Safety sent William Henry Drayton and Miles
Brewton to Georgia to purchase as much of the gunpowder as possible. They were
able to secure a loan of 5,000 pounds of gunpowder in addition to South Carolina’s
share of the gunpowder taken from the Philippa, which had amounted to 5,212
pounds.329 The army in the northern colonies, by this time in open conflict with the
British army, was in particular need of gunpowder, and the South Carolina delegates
to the Continental Congress recognized the help their province could provide in this
respect. At the beginning of July, even before the raid on the Philippa, they asked the
Secret Committee to send all the gunpowder they could provide for “the Use of the
armies actually in the Field.” They dispatched a vessel from Philadelphia to collect
the gunpowder, and to prevent raising suspicion of any British vessel it might
encounter, they loaded the ship with bushels of Indian Corn. The Secret Committee
was then to use the casks to conceal the gunpowder and sell the corn in the

328 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 23 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/664; Henry Laurens to John
Laurens, 26 September 1775, PHL, 425-430.
1775, CSCHS, II, 49.
The Council of Safety sent men to Savannah to guard the gunpowder and transport it to Charleston, where they stored it in the magazine in town and made preparations to send 4,000 pounds to Philadelphia. Georgia assisted them in this clandestine operation, loading a vessel at Savannah and also providing a brass field piece and carriage belonging to the King, without the royal authorities ever noticing. Governor Wright did not learn of this shipment until it was too late to respond, and claimed there would not have been anything he could do to prevent its departure even if he had known.

After the August raid on the Betsey, Clement Lempriere returned to Charleston with six tons of gunpowder. The Council of Safety decided to store 20 barrels, or about 2,000 pounds, at Beaufort under the protection of the committee for that district, for the use of the Georgia Council of Safety should the need for its use arise. The committee also held the remainder of the gunpowder in the town's courthouse until it could continue on to Charleston. They then received a report that an armed British vessel with 120 men on board had arrived off the coast of their town. Between this report, and a passing squall, Lempriere was initially prevented from sailing on to Charleston. To protect the supply of gunpowder, Stephen Bull, colonel of the Beaufort regiment, had to quickly muster a number of men, as he had previously dismissed two companies to return home, “where there were the fewest

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331 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
white men in proportion to the Domestics.” The remainder of the gunpowder was sent to Charleston to be stored in the magazine there. The report of the armed vessel threatening Beaufort turned out to be false, but noting the “effect which it produced” in mobilizing the rebels and keeping them vigilant, Henry Laurens later commented to his son John, “I am convinced that a false alarm now & then, would do no harm.”

Even with the success the southern rebels had in seizing British supplies of gunpowder, the militia and provincial forces still faced persistent ammunition shortages. The rebel leadership therefore had to maintain a delicate balance between keeping tight control for themselves over gunpowder by limiting access to supplies with also providing gunpowder to the local committees to meet militia requirements. Prior to the raid on the Betsey, Stephen Bull described this shortage to Laurens after he received a rebuke from the Council of Safety for helping himself and his militia regiment to 600 pounds of gunpowder taken from the Philippa. According to Bull, there was an “exceeding scarcity” of powder for the militia, with half the men in some companies not having “a single charge of Powder. This left the district vulnerable to "any...unfortunate Attack upon the People of this County." Bull was so concerned by the shortage of powder he bought 100 pounds with his own money to distribute among the men, and “would have bought much more” if there had been any available. Two weeks later, Bull wrote again to Laurens to let him

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333 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 320.
know of continued shortages, whereby “a large Company of Men have not three pound of powder or lead among them.” He asked that the Council of Safety allow for some decentralized control over the gunpowder, since in the case of an emergency it “would take several days for me to distribute Powder in so large a district as this of one Hundred Miles.” He suggested the Council instead allow the captain of each company to hold and distribute 25 pounds of powder as required by the circumstances rather than having to apply to the Council of Safety, or even to Bull as the regimental commander.335

As with all political and military matters in the colony, the Council of Safety insisted on concentrating authority over the use of the gunpowder in its own hands rather than grant Bull’s request for decentralized distribution. It informed Bull that “necessary demands from other parts of the Colony,” and the need to “further expostulate with our friends in Georgia before we part with the twenty Barrels detained for them at Beaufort” meant there was little powder left to allow for Bull’s proposal.336 The Council of Safety told the Beaufort committee not to use the powder stored in that town, even if it received another request for its use, until it heard from the Georgia Council of Safety on its requirements for the powder.337 The Council of Safety also sought to limit the number of people with access to the gunpowder and artillery stores in Charleston, following a recommendation from Moultrie that there were too many people with access to the magazine in Charleston and that the “too frequent going into that place” would only lead to “some dreadful

335 Stephen Bull to Henry Laurens, 18 August 1775, PHL, X, 309.
337 Council of Safety to Beaufort Committee, 23 September 1775, PHL, X, 420-421.
accident.” The Council of Safety responded by removing the artillery from the magazine and addressing “the frequent access of people to the gunpowder.”

**Conclusion**

By early 1775 the rebels had established a comprehensive political program with shadow governments and the Association, but they knew if they wanted to have any coercive power they would need to secure a monopoly on force in the provinces. During the summer of 1775, they took control of individual militia regiments until they had a preponderance of force in each province. They were able to achieve much of this using the same tactics of intimidation they used to establish control over the Loyalist population. The rebels gained control of many of the regiments when their leaders gave their support to the Provincial Congress, and they forced out any subordinate officers who would not sign the Association. The political and military leadership would inform the enlisted men in the regiments that their officers were no longer in command, and that they would need to elect new officers. Underlying all of this was the implied threat of violence by the militia units already loyal to the rebels. As they consolidated their support among the militia regiments, the rebels gained an increasingly powerful coercive tool that allowed them to also consolidate control over the population. Where they could not oust the existing leadership, they formed independent and volunteer units to compete with the few regiments who remained loyal to the King. In these districts, they relied on coercive measures to obtain signatures on the Association and fill the

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338 Council of Safety to William Moultrie, 12 September 1775, PHL; Chesnutt, et al., eds., Papers of Henry Laurens, 380n.
ranks of the volunteer regiments. This process also had a self-reinforcing effect that allowed the rebels’ to extend their political authority throughout the provinces over the population and terrain. Finally, they organized regular provincial forces that would serve throughout the province to allow the militia to act as home defense against slave insurrection, Indian attacks, and potential British invasion.

Even with the loyalty of the militia and the new regular forces, however, the rebels could not enforce their authority without the arms and ammunition they would need to be effective. They acquired these necessities using a variety of means, including buying them from some supporters and contracting with others to manufacture them. The most effective means of obtaining these supplies, however, was to take them from the enemy. Even though they knew they would be at risk of being taken, the British government and merchants continued to have shipments of arms and ammunition sent to them in Charleston and Savannah. Most of these shipments were intended for the Indian tribes on the frontier as a means of keeping them loyal to the Crown. By stealing them the rebels both harmed British strategy and gave the rebels much needed supplies. The first shipment they stole, from the *Philippa*, even went to the Continental Army in the North, which was desperately short of ammunition.

The rebels took advantage of their growing control of the population and cities in the southern provinces to facilitate these seizures of ammunition. In return, they provided significant propaganda value that also helped speed the same process along, as it became clear just how little authority remained with the royal governments. The rebels had degraded the existing governments to such an extent
that there was no opportunity for the merchants who owned these shipments, or
the Indians who the British needed to remain on their side, to seek redress or
compensation. Capturing these shipments also allowed the rebels to establish a
growing control over the seacoast and littoral. They owned many of the wharves
that gave the opportunity to bring agents like Tunes Tebout to Charleston without
raising the suspicions of the Crown officials. By late summer in 1775 they were able
to extend their reach as far as the coast of East Florida, as they took the Betsey near
the bar at St. Augustine. Extending this control over the coast provided the rebels
with additional benefits, including the ability to control communications between
the interior of the provinces and the coast. This would give them the ability to
prevent communication between Loyalists in the interior and Crown officials who
sought refuge in ships across the bar, or even with British forces that might be sent
to the southern provinces.
Chapter 4: That No Improper Correspondence Be Carried On

The packet boat Sandwich arrived at Charleston on 2 July 1775 with official mail from London intended for James Wright, William Bull, William Campbell, Josiah Martin, Patrick Tonyn, the governor of East Florida, and other government officials in the southern provinces. During the preceding weeks there had been rumors spreading throughout the southern colonies the rebels intended to intercept the mail. The rebels intended to gather intelligence and hinder communication both between London and the colonial governments, and among the southern governors, to further limit the effectiveness of the royal government. Four days before the arrival of the Sandwich, the governor of South Carolina, Lord William Campbell, consulted with the Deputy Postmaster General for the southern colonies, George Roupell, on the best way to secure the mail. Despite knowing what would happen if, in the words of Patrick Tonyn, Roupell “is not very alert and does not do his duty with spirit and forecast,” Roupell and Campbell ultimately decided to handle the collection and disbursement of the mail in the usual manner. When the Sandwich arrived at 2:00 in the afternoon, the mail was delivered to Roupell at the post office on the corner of Bay Street and Longitude Alley. Roupell and his clerk, Jervis Henry

339 George Roupell Testimony, 12 July 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/396.
Stevens, spent the next several hours sorting the mail and preparing it for delivery, after which Roupell returned home while Stevens remained at the post office.

Shortly after 8:00 that evening, William Henry Drayton, chairman of the Secret Committee, arrived at the post office with Thomas Corbett and John Neufville, members of the Committee of Intelligence. Drayton demanded Stevens open the door, but Stevens refused and instead offered to speak to Drayton through the adjacent window. Drayton demanded all the government dispatches that came in the mail, but Stevens again refused. He proposed either sending for Roupell or locking the post office until the next morning at which point Drayton could talk to Roupell, but this only made Drayton angry and he threatened to break open the door. Stevens soon realized he could not prevent Drayton entering the building, and fearing for his own safety he opened the door for the three men. Drayton, Corbett, and Neufville went through all the letters that had arrived that afternoon. In the end they took 25 letters intended for Martin, Bull, Wright, Tonyn, Peter Chester, the governor of West Florida, and John Moultrie, the lieutenant governor of East Florida and brother of William Moultrie. Campbell was the only one whose correspondence they did not take, as he had sent a servant to the post office that afternoon to collect his mail.341

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Drayton, Corbett, and Neufville told Stevens they would return the letters the next day. Shortly after they left, Roupell received a message from Stevens telling him he was needed at the post office immediately. He learned what had happened, and that the letters would eventually be returned, and so went home without taking any other action. The next morning, upon returning to the post office, he found the letters were still missing, and he sent a message to Drayton demanding their immediate return. In the early afternoon, he learned from Stevens that the mail had been returned around noon. Roupell found that many of the letters had clearly been opened, and he wrote on each envelope that that the committee had opened and inspected the contents of each letter. He then sent the letters on to their intended recipients, but at several of those locations the local committees again seized and inspected the letters. In Savannah, a committee of the Provincial Congress, then in session, ordered the local postmaster not to send Wright any of his letters. After further deliberation, however, the rebels relented and allowed delivery to Governor Wright after they first inspected the contents of the letters. In North Carolina, the rebels intercepted several of Governor Martin’s letters and sent copies to the Edenton and Wilmington committees.

The letters from the post office provided a propaganda coup for the rebels. They made clear the intention of the British to use force “for reducing the Colonies

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342 Testimony of George Roupell, 12 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; J. Henry Stevens Affidavit, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
343 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 10 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
344 Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, 8 July 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection
to the constitutional authority of parliament.” Letters from Dartmouth also included notice of the King’s approval of Martin’s effort to raise Loyalists in North Carolina “to breathe a spirit of loyalty to the King, and attachment to the authority of Great Britain.” Henry Laurens, who had his reservations about seizing the mail, which he considered “altogether contrary to my opinion,” admitted he was wrong when he learned the contents of the letters, which “Seems now [to] Sanctify the Act.” He called the contents “Cruel designs of Government against us distressed Colonists” and “exceedingly Shocking to humanity,” and believed publicizing the contents would turn people against Dartmouth, who would be unable to “reconcile Such politics with his Creed, Christianity, & Methodism.”

Throughout most of 1775, the rebels and the royal governments of the southern colonies engaged in a near constant struggle to define the terms of the conflict between the two sides and coordinate an appropriate response for weakening the enemy. Each side therefore sought to improve communications within and between provinces while also disrupting the ability of the enemy to do the same. The rebel ability to control populations and their familiarity with the terrain, as well as a general understanding of the importance of these communication networks, allowed them to better facilitate the flow of information. Just as important for the rebels was their ability to establish control over the coastal terrain to prevent British vessels from being able to establish communication through the use of force. Preventing the British from making use of the services of

346 Drayton, Memoirs, I, 310
347 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 14 July 1775, PHL, X, 219-222.
harbor pilots, particularly black pilots, was one means of ensuring control of the sea coast. Other means included capturing forts through a combination of intimidation against the remaining British soldiers manning those forts and the use of force once those forts had been sufficiently weakened.

The rebels also understood the importance of acting as seamlessly as possible with the northern colonies, while the Crown officials often had no idea of what was happening elsewhere in the colonies. The rebels gained the initiative over the governments in the backcountry and were able to prevent the royal governors from communicating with Loyalists in that region. They also sought to prevent communication among Loyalists and between Loyalists and the government by preventing them from congregating, controlling their movements, and banning them from meeting in person or otherwise having any contact with the royal governors.

The general inability of many of the British officials to recognize the importance of establishing more effective methods of communication usually meant they were constantly reacting to events rather than shaping narratives, anticipating their opponents’ next moves, or successfully implementing a coherent strategy for defeating the rebellion.

**Isolating the Southern Provinces**

The July attack on the Charleston post office was not the first time the rebels targeted mail delivery between London and Crown officials in the provinces. The rebels in Georgia had already intercepted several of Wright’s letters to Dartmouth from the preceding year, in which Wright had condemned the meetings the rebels held to pick representatives for the Provincial Congress. The rebels published those
letters, and the widespread dissemination of Wright’s opposition to their cause led
to a rapid weakening of his authority in the province, particularly as the people
realized he could do nothing to stop the meetings he opposed. Any efforts he did
make, including issuing proclamations opposing the Provincial Congress, were met
with scorn and derision. Eventually the Council suggested he take no action at all, as
it “would only be held in contempt and expose the weakness of the executive
powers.”

This experience convinced Wright of the dangers of “the government
letters...becoming the object of resentment of a people ready to tear to pieces any
man who writes something contrary to their own position or in opposition to their
actions.” He told Campbell they would have to think of alternative means of
communication and identify ways of protecting those channels if they had any hopes
of mounting a coordinated defense against the rebels. Wright’s letter did not reach
Campbell, however, as the rebels intercepted it before it could reach Charleston.

Following the arrival of the Sandwich packet, Campbell sent his servant to collect
only his own letters, while leaving at risk those addressed to the other Crown
officials in the other southern states. Additional attacks on the postal system
followed. On 11 July, rebels stopped Thomas Burnett, a post rider carrying mail
between Savannah and Charleston, and took him into custody at Ashley Ferry
outside Charleston. They took him to the house of a member of the General

348 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 17 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
349 Ibid.
350 James Wright to William Campbell, 27 June 1775 in “Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton,”
The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 27 (July 1926): 115-116.
Committee and confiscated the mail he was carrying. They told him to return to his lodgings, where the mail would be returned to him.\textsuperscript{351}

Wright was not happy about these developments, and told Dartmouth he could no longer respond to Dartmouth’s letters through Charleston. He knew this would greatly disrupt his correspondence with London, one of the rebels’ objectives in seizing the mail, but if he were to send his letters “to Charleston in order to go by the packet...they would certainly be intercepted,” either en route to Charleston or on the packet destined for London.\textsuperscript{352} He reiterated this point in another letter at the end of July, and told Dartmouth he would only send his correspondence via Charleston if it were “under cover as private letters,” so the rebels would not know the sender or recipient. He also noted, however, that it was even becoming difficult to send mail from Savannah, as “the Committee here take upon them to order ships and vessels that arrive here to depart again without suffering them to come up to the town and unload.” While they would admit some, others they would “order away, just as they please.”\textsuperscript{353}

For the next several months, rebel ability to intercept Wright’s communications significantly impeded the governor’s ability to correspond with London and coordinate a response with the other southern governors. Throughout August the rebels, including the General Committee at Charleston, succeeded in intercepting more of Wright’s letters. That autumn, Wright tried sending letters to Dartmouth via “a trusted friend,” but he had no way of determining whether they

\textsuperscript{351} Information of George Roupell on Thomas Burnet, 19 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{352} James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 10 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
\textsuperscript{353} James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 29 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
had arrived unopened in London. As Wright’s letters became increasingly sporadic, Campbell had to do his best to provide Dartmouth with information from Georgia by relying on Georgia newspapers, as he did in July when he recounted the formation of the Georgia Council of Safety and the raid on the Philippa.\textsuperscript{354}

In addition to the propaganda value of the governors’ correspondence, the rebels’ ability to intercept official communications also yielded specific military benefits. At the end of June, the Secret Committee at Charleston intercepted letters from Wright intended for Admiral Samuel Graves and General Thomas Gage, the naval and army commanders in the northern colonies. In these letters, Wright said the news of Lexington and Concord, as well as provocation by the rebels in South Carolina, “have at length drawn and forced the people of this Province into the same predicament with others,” and that Georgia would follow the other rebellious colonies. He lamented the fact that he had neither troops nor ships, and as time passed, the number of each required to pacify the colony would only increase.\textsuperscript{355}

The Secret Committee was able to replace these letters with a forgery informing Gage that the news of Lexington and Concord merely required Georgia “to put on an appearance,” of joining the other colonies, and “I have the pleasure to assure your Excellency, [it] is by no means real.” The letter told Gage there was “nothing really formidable in the proceedings or designs of our neighbours of South Carolina,” and that he should disregard any concerns he heard from Campbell as the worries of a governor who had just arrived in the province and was “inexperienced

\textsuperscript{354} William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 and 20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
in affairs of Government.”\textsuperscript{356} The letter to Graves likewise instructed him to disregard any “little alarm [he heard] about two or three canoes from South Carolina in this river” waiting to steal gunpowder. The letters concluded by informing Gage and Graves that there was no need for ships or troops, and any that were sent would only harm the government’s authority in the province.\textsuperscript{357}

Graves likely suspected that the report he was receiving from Wright was misleading, particularly given his correspondence with Campbell and Governor Martin, as well as recent reports of 400 barrels of gunpowder stolen by the rebels, which he mentioned in his response to Wright. Nevertheless, he was happy to hear there was no need for a sloop of war at Savannah, for as he told Campbell in August he did not have permission from the Admiralty to send one, and would in fact have to recall the \textit{Tamar} to Boston.\textsuperscript{358} Wright must have assumed his plea for support had simply been ignored. For the next six months he would complain to Dartmouth, Graves, and anyone else who received a letter from him that the expected sloop of war had not yet arrived at Savannah, leaving him incapable of mounting resistance to the rebels.\textsuperscript{359}

Despite Campbell’s failure to secure the letters that arrived on the \textit{Sandwich} packet for the other royal officials, the attack on the post office sent him scrambling to find a way to protect future deliveries. The danger became particularly acute

\textsuperscript{356} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{357} James Wright to Samuel Graves, 27 June 1775, Original and replacement in Drayton, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 348-350.
\textsuperscript{358} Samuel Graves to William Campbell, 22 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{359} See for example James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 9 December 1775, James Wright Papers, Georgia Historical Society.
following the attack days later on the *Philippa* and the theft of the gunpowder, as armed schooners continued to patrol the waters between Charleston and Savannah. With another packet, the *Eagle*, set to arrive later in July, Campbell wrote to Captain Edward Thornborough on the *Tamar* to wait for the incoming packet as it approached the bar, and take the mail on board his ship. Campbell would then travel out to the *Tamar* to read his mail and find a safe opportunity to send the rest of the governors their letters. He soon learned, however, that the rebels also intended to seize his letters to Dartmouth as his private secretary Alexander Innes carried them to the outgoing packet, which now lay beyond the bar under the protection of the *Tamar*. Campbell had to order Thornborough to pick up Innes at night to ensure the safe delivery of the letters. Like Wright, Campbell realized the result of these new procedures for transmitting the mail would make regular correspondence difficult, and he told Dartmouth that he was unsure how he would be able to send his next letters.³⁶⁰

Just as Campbell adapted to the rebels’ tactics by keeping the official mail on the *Tamar* rather than having it delivered to the post office, the rebels adapted to Campbell’s new security measures. Despite the final decision of the General Committee to disarm and confine the royal officials to Charleston, and despite the tarring and feathering of George Walker and the attack on George Millegan, it was the continued efforts of the rebels to intercept Campbell’s mail that would ultimately convince the governor to flee the colony for the safety of the *Tamar*. On 13 September, another packet boat, the *Swallow*, arrived from London, and left the

³⁶⁰ William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 and 20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/665.
mail with the Tamar. That evening, Campbell went out to the Tamar to read the mail that “he had not thought it safe...to bring...up to Charles Town,” and returned to town the same evening.

The next day, Campbell intended to return to the vessel to continue reading the mail and draft replies. On his way through town, however, he “was accosted in the street” by several men, including Thomas Ferguson, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Thomas Bee. The three members of the Council of Safety, along with the other men, took Campbell back to his house and made “the most insolent and audacious demand of delivering” Dartmouth’s letters. They were primarily interested in learning whether British troops would be sent to South Carolina. Campbell refused to turn over the letters, and was able to get away from the men, but was left shaken by the incident.\footnote{Council Minutes, 15 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.} He realized the conflict with the rebels had reached a point where it would only be settled by violence, and decided he “could no longer think of remaining in Charleston.” He held a final meeting of the Council, shut down most of the government offices, dissolved the Assembly, and fled that evening for the Tamar, never to return to Charleston.\footnote{William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.}

Governor Josiah Martin of North Carolina faced many of the same impediments to communicating with Dartmouth in London, Campbell and Wright, and Gage and Graves in Boston. The rebels’ ability to intercept Martin’s communications, however, yielded an even greater benefit than similar actions against Wright or Campbell. Martin was particularly active in trying to rally Loyalist
support in the colony and needed to coordinate these efforts with Dartmouth, and secure weapons and ammunition from Gage. He understood the need to protect the incoming mail at Charleston, and expressed dismay when he learned that the Secret Committee had taken the mail in July.\textsuperscript{363} Despite Martin’s understanding of the importance of communications with Charleston and London, the rebels were successful in isolating him from the other royal governors in the South, preventing them from mounting any kind of coordinated response to growing rebel control of the colonies. Martin even had trouble securing his letters that were sent from Charleston to Wilmington in July. Members of the Brunswick committee stopped a messenger on his way to collect Martin’s letters at the post office in Wilmington, and made him “swear that he had no Letters for [Martin] before he was suffered to proceed.”\textsuperscript{364} After this incident, Martin, now on board the \textit{Cruizer}, tried to send for his mail in Charleston rather than have it delivered to Wilmington. It was more than a month, however, before Martin, could get the mail that arrived at Charleston at the end of July on the \textit{Eagle} packet, as he had no vessel that could contend with the “armed vessels fitted out by the people of Charles Town, constantly cruizing off that place.”\textsuperscript{365}

Martin faced the same challenges as Wright and Campbell in securing other means of communicating with Dartmouth. Over the next several months, Martin’s letters from Dartmouth arrived “bearing the most palpable evidence of violation,”

\textsuperscript{364} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{365} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 230-237.
and he suspected “the most material of [Dartmouth’s] dispatches have been withheld from me” by the rebels. Martin even tried to warn Dartmouth to only send correspondence to North Carolina using certain channels he knew were safe, but the rebels likely either prevented the letters containing the warnings from reaching Dartmouth or intercepted and held them long enough that they reached Dartmouth too late for him to send his own dispatches safely.\footnote{Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 12 November 1775, CRNC, X, 321-328.} As late as January 1776, letters Martin had written to Dartmouth in November had still not left Charleston, as the British were unable to get a packet boat to the town to pick up the mail.\footnote{Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 12 January 1776, CRNC, X, 406-409.} Campbell had previously noted the packet boats arriving at Charleston were “totally defenceless, without powder or shot,” which gave him “a great deal of trouble as well as much anxiety about the safety of the mail.” Furthermore, rebel intimidation had caused some packet boat captains to “seem more anxious to avoid giving offence to the people of Charleston than promoting the King’s service.”\footnote{William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.}

The rebels were also able to intercept messages between Martin and Gage regarding the latter sending arms and ammunition to North Carolina for the governor to use to arm Loyalists. In June, the South Carolina Committee of Intelligence told the New Bern committee in North Carolina that it had intercepted a letter from Gage to Martin on this very subject, in which Gage replied that he had no arms to send at the moment but would send ammunition. The Committee of Intelligence asked the Newbern committee to do their best to counteract Martin’s efforts, and to prevent ammunition from entering North Carolina that could
eventually make their way into South Carolina. In this situation, the Committee of Intelligence requested the Newbern committee keep its possession of the letter a secret to avoid compromising the means used to intercept the correspondence. Word of the correspondence between Gage and Martin soon spread. The North Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress coordinated with local committees in North Carolina to stop Martin, as well as with the committees at New York, from where the shipment would leave for North Carolina. The rebels also used the letters for propaganda purposes, with Joseph Hewes, one of the North Carolina delegates, telling Samuel Johnston to circulate the contents of the intercepted letters and use them to justify seizing Martin and taking the powers of government out of his hands. Martin recognized the ways in which the committees could use his letters against him, and called news of the rebels intercepting Gage’s letter “most discouraging intelligence indeed.”

Even while the rebels succeeded in isolating the royal officials in the southern colonies from the northern colonies, from London, and from one another, much of that isolation was also the result of British officials’ ignorance of the need to ensure open lines of communication. On 16 May, a week after news of Lexington and Concord arrived in Charleston, Alexander Innes noted to Dartmouth the impact events in Massachusetts would have on the rebels in the southern colonies.

According to Innes, if the British wanted to counter the threat in the South before it

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369 South Carolina Committee of Intelligence to Wilmington Committee, 6 June 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection.
370 Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, 8 July 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection
371 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 16 July 1775, CRNC, X, 96-98.
lost control, Gage would have to send frequent updates from Boston to counteract the “gross and infamous falsehoods...daily circulated to the great discouragement of the Friends of Government, the deception of the Timid, and Unwary, and of course to the Detriment of the King’s Service.”\textsuperscript{372} The British were already falling behind the rebels in this sense though. The rebel communication networks spread news of Lexington and Concord far more quickly and efficiently than British sources, which allowed the rebels to shape the narrative, plan their response, and react while the governors were desperately seeking confirmation of events in the north, with nothing to go on in the meantime but the accounts spread by the rebels.

At the end of June, Governor Martin told Dartmouth that the letter from Gage with news of Lexington and Concord took more than two months to reach him, while the rebels had received reports from their counterparts in Boston in less than two weeks. The result of this delay was disastrous for the government’s efforts to maintain the support of the population. Gage’s letter came too late for Martin to “operate against the infamous and false reports of that transaction.” The rebels’ account “had already like all first impressions taken deep root in the minds of the vulgar here universally and wrought a great change in the face of things.” This had the effect of “confirming the seditious in their evil purposes, and bringing over vast numbers of the fickle, wavering and unsteady multitude to their party.”\textsuperscript{373} Campbell described similar ill consequences of an account “circulated with unremitting industry” by the rebels of the June battle at Bunker Hill. Without word from Gage of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{372} Alexander Innes to Earl of Dartmouth, “The Secret Reports of Alexander Innes,” 130.
\textsuperscript{373} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 44.
\end{footnotesize}
this battle, Campbell was helpless in trying to counter the rebels’ account, as “Nineteen out of twenty firmly believe it and I cannot express the mischief it does.”

The rebels understood the importance of rapid communications, as they quickly moved reports of events in the north through the southern colonies. Rebels in the southern colonies also coordinated their resistance efforts against the government. The South Carolina Committee of Intelligence and the local committees in North Carolina remained in constant contact to share news and relevant intelligence, as the Committee of Intelligence did with the letters it intercepted between Gage and Martin. Likewise, the South Carolina Council of Safety maintained regular contact with its counterpart in Savannah. The southern governors tried, though with significantly less success, to convince Gage and Graves, and later the Howe brothers who would succeed them, to maintain a regular correspondence so they could isolate the southern rebels and prevent discord. Martin asked Gage to keep him informed so he could “anticipate the gross and abominable forgeries of the New England people,” and also informed Dartmouth on 30 June of his request. Three days earlier, in the letter intercepted by the South Carolina Committee of Intelligence, Wright had also asked Gage to find a means of sharing information “as it has the greatest effect on the people of the province and

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374 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
375 South Carolina Committee of Intelligence to Wilmington Committee, 6 June 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection.
376 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 44-45.
may contribute much to His Majesty’s service.”\textsuperscript{377} Around the same time, Campbell wrote to Graves asking for a “constant and regular correspondence,” and requested several vessels be sent to Charleston to counter smuggling, give support to Loyalists who felt deserted, and keep open communication with Georgia and North Carolina.\textsuperscript{378} He also wrote to Gage asking for “authentick information of what is passing to the Northward,” and told him they would have to communicate by sea as the authority of the Council of Safety prevented him from sending a letter by land.

As Campbell increasingly feared for his own personal safety and recognized his declining authority, he continued to stress “the necessity of [Gage] favouring us with some accounts of his proceedings...as I every day find of what detriment it is to His Majesty’s service to be so completely abandoned as we are.”\textsuperscript{379} Campbell would not receive any word from Gage or Graves of Bunker Hill until 28 July, nearly three weeks after the rebels had received word. Even then, the account Campbell received came only second hand from Lt. Gustavus Logie, who allegedly heard from Gage and Graves that the rebels had been driven from their entrenched positions with 1,000 casualties while the British only suffered half that number. The rebels in Wilmington had already warned their counterparts in Charleston that Logie was not to be trusted, as Gage had sent “Cutters of the Fleet...along the Coast to perform the noble Feat of spreading lying infamous Pamphlets and Papers...to deceive some unwary

\textsuperscript{377} James Wright to Thomas Gage, 27 June 1775 in Drayton, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 346-347.
\textsuperscript{378} William Campbell to Samuel Graves, 1 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{379} William Campbell to Thomas Gage, 1 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
and ignorant People.” Logie had already tried spreading his “extravagant Account” when he had stopped at Cape Fear:380

Despite pleas from Martin, Campbell, and Wright for information that would give them an advantage in keeping order in their respective provinces, Gage and Graves gave little priority to the requirements of the southern governors, and Dartmouth showed little interest in pressing their case. In early August, Dartmouth wrote to Gage and made no mention of the predicament of Martin, Campbell, or Wright.381 While the Secret Committee at Charleston was able to switch Wright’s letters to Graves and Gage with one claiming he needed no support, Graves and Gage showed no urgency in replying to Campbell or Martin. On 22 August, Graves responded to Campbell, informing him not only that he could not spare any ships, but that he would eventually have to order the Tamar, the only ship at Charleston, to return to Boston given its poor condition.382

At the end of August, Campbell informed Dartmouth he still had not heard any word from Gage or Graves, and it is unclear whether he ever received Graves letter of the 22nd, since in a letter to Dartmouth dated 19 October Campbell mentions he still had not received any word from Gage or Graves.383 Campbell did not expect Gage to be able to spare troops, but held out hope that he could send a

380 “To the Printer of the South-Carolina Gazette, &c,” South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, 1 August 1775. Indeed, Logie actually had the numbers reversed, as the British suffered far more casualties than the rebels. He was, however, the only source of information Campbell had, which put Campbell at an even greater information disadvantage compared to the rebels.
381 Earl of Dartmouth to Thomas Gage, 2 August 1775, DAR, XI, 62-64.
382 Samuel Graves to William Campbell, 22 August 1775, TNZ, CO 5/396.
383 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
vessel or two. Campbell did not think “this important province [should] have been left to the care of one poor solitary worm-eaten sloop,” particularly at a time when the rebels were arming vessels to seize gunpowder and when “every day vessels are pouring in arms and ammunition from the French and Dutch islands.” In September, Campbell heard rumors that Gage and Graves had been reinforced with troops and ships, but by this time he complained, “it is forgot that His Majesty has any dominions in this part of America.” He gave up hope of hearing from Gage or Graves, let alone receiving the assistance he requested, and asked Dartmouth instead for any support that could be sent from England.

While British strategy in the summer of 1775 still focused on ending the rebellion in Boston as the key to pacifying the rest of the colonies, Campbell recognized that Boston was no longer the lynchpin it had once been. By early 1775, and particularly after news of Lexington and Concord, resistance movements in other colonies began to stand on their own. Campbell recognized that the rebellion in the South was no longer dependent on success or failure in Boston. Instead, Charleston became to the other southern colonies what Boston had once been for all of the colonies, the “fountainhead from whence all violence flows.” If the British could stop the rebels in Charleston, “the rebellion in this part of the continent will I trust soon be at an end.” While Campbell’s latter claim is debatable, he was on firmer ground in his contention that focusing entirely on Boston would no longer automatically end the rebellion elsewhere. While the southern governors made their

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384 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
385 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
386 Ibid.
share of mistakes that allowed the rebels to seize control of those provinces, it was this strategic miscalculation by Gage, Graves, and Dartmouth of the relative unimportance of the southern colonies that gave the rebels the freedom to consolidate control over the population and levers of political power. This would in turn make success significantly more elusive for the British after 1779, when they eventually decided the southern provinces were indeed important.

**Controlling the Sea Coast**

As the rebels successfully dismantled the royal governments in the southern colonies, seized political control, and established authority over the militias, the biggest threat they continued to face was the presence of British war ships off the coast of the Carolinas. The number varied depending on the presence of ships sailing to or from St Augustine or the northern colonies, but at a minimum the *Tamar* and *Cruizer*, and later in 1775 the *Scorpion* at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, continued to threaten the coastal regions. Just as the rebels would prevent movement of Loyalists and government officials on land, they also sought to prevent these ships and the persons on board from harassing inhabitants, damaging property, meeting or corresponding with Loyalists and royal officials, or otherwise destabilizing political or military life under the new revolutionary governments.

This objective required the rebels to take control of key terrain, passes, and inlets to prevent the British freedom of movement against the coast. The rebels established defenses in the cities, took possession of existing forts, and attempted to block the British ships from entering inlets. In pursuing these measures, the rebels benefitted from existing control of inhabitants of the provinces, for example taking advantage
of their knowledge of daily waterfront operations as they did when they brought Tunes Tebout to Charleston for the raid on the Betsey. At the same time, they used a combination of intimidation and violence to weaken the remaining British presence at key positions along the coast.

By mid-September 1775, the rebels in Charleston had succeeded in taking control of the government and imprisoning or banishing key Loyalists and royal officials, including William Campbell, who had fled to the Tamar. The primary remaining threat to their authority now came from the presence in Rebellion Road of the Tamar and the Cherokee sloop of war that had arrived the week before, as well as any other ships the British would send in the future. Through the use of a spy on board the Tamar with Campbell, the rebels had also learned that Campbell expected the arrival of British troops in South Carolina in the autumn to subjugate the rebels.387 The rebels’ first objective, therefore, was to take Fort Johnson, located on James Island at the southern end of the mouth of Charleston Harbor. On 13 September, the Council of Safety ordered William Moultrie, colonel of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, to select 150 men to leave that evening to seize the fort. They were to leave immediately from Christopher Gadsden’s wharf in Charleston, and “land at a convenient place on James’ Island.” They were to meet with Joseph Verree and William Gibbes, both members of the Provincial Congress, at the home of Benjamin Stone, a large landowner on James Island. From Stone’s house, they were to “enter and take possession of” the fort “with as much secrecy and silence as

possible." The Council of Safety ordered that no one in the fort be allowed to escape to prevent informing the British that the rebels had taken the fort. The commander of the force was then to wait for further orders for the Council of Safety unless the Tamar "should make an attempt to attack the fort or proceed towards this town," at which point the commander was to "do every thing in his power to prevent her progress."\(^{388}\)

Moultrie responded the next afternoon, ordering Captains Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Barnard Elliott, and Francis Marion to have companies of fifty men ready to march within three hours. He gave command of the forces to Captain Isaac Motte, also a delegate to the Provincial Congress. The forces departed from Gadsden's Wharf that evening and arrived at James Island early the next morning. They took the fort "at the Dawn of Day without the least opposition." The British garrison had been reduced to only five soldiers, including four privates and the gunner, George Walker. The remaining men were "made prisoner and are closely confined."\(^{389}\)

The Council of Safety gave Motte strict orders to not take any action against the Tamar other than to prevent its movement should it try to approach the city.\(^{390}\)

\(^{389}\) Isaac Motte to Council of Safety, 15 September 1775, PHL, 382-383. Walker had been tarred and feathered in Charleston in August, which had likely contributed to the reduction of the size of the garrison over the next month.
\(^{390}\) Before he fled to the Tamar, Campbell had ordered some of the guns at the fort dismantled, and some of the carriages broken. Nevertheless, he "was loath to order them to be spiked up...as they are good guns and were brought from England at some expense to government." Motte informed the Council of Safety that if he could be supplied with carriages to mount the heavy cannons he would be able to take effective action against the Tamar, as there was "plenty of Ball for the heavy Cannon." William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA CO 5/396; Isaac Motte to Council of Safety, 15 September 1775, PHL, X, 382-383
Almost immediately after the fort fell to the rebels, however, the British chose to test the new commander. On the 15th, the *Tamar* approached the fort and Campbell demanded to know “by what authority [Motte] took possession of this fort & by what authority he holds it.” Their answer that it was by the authority of the Council of Safety did not satisfy Campbell. Edward Thornborough, captain of the *Tamar* prepared to attack the fort, “but unfortunately it fell calm and the tide being against him,” he could not attack before the rebels were able to mount guns and reinforce the men at the fort. Campbell and Thornborough eventually decided the *Tamar’s* six-pound guns were not sufficient to retake the fort. 391

One morning several days after taking the fort, Motte received word of a boat leaving Charleston “with Liquors and Provisions for the Man of War,” and had his men keep close watch for the vessel as it approached the fort. When it appeared, Motte dispatched a vessel “with a Party of Volunteers well Armed” to stop the boat so it could be searched. Motte had the three men on board, Elias Painter, John Jeffries, and Patrick Murray, arrested and confined to the fort, where he questioned them. 392 Motte eventually learned from the three men that the British expected “3

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391 Isaac Motte to Council of Safety, 15 September 1775, PHL, 383-384; William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396. After learning of the threat from the *Tamar*, the Council of Safety increased the planned reinforcements of 150 men to 250 instead.

392 The three men came from the *Swallow* packet, but would not say where they were going. They did say they were not going to the *Tamar* and that the provisions were for themselves, an answer Motte found to be suspicious. Nevertheless they claimed that Lieutenant John Fergusson, captain of the *Cherokee*, and Captain Arthur Clarke of the *Diligence* packet came on board the *Swallow* and pressed the crew into service. Painter, Jeffries, and Murray claimed when they refused to go, “they were damned for Rascals.” Isaac Motte to Council of Safety, 15 September 1775, PHL, X, 382-383; William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396. Arthur Clarke provides an example of why the rebels believed every person needed to take the Association, without exceptions. On 9 September, he had appealed to the General Committee to be classified as a “transient person” so he would be exempted from the Association. He said he had no property in South Carolina and had remained longer than expected in Charleston because his father-in-law had died and he needed to
Men of War and [a] Bomb Ketch shortly,” and that they “are first to attack...Fort [Johnson] & then...proceed to burn the Town.”\textsuperscript{393} After the arrival of the Cherokee in the first week of September the Council of Safety had issued a Declaration of Alarm, ordering militia throughout the province “to be held in readiness as in time of Alarm.” At the same time it armed the schooners Defence, Comet, and Beaufort “with two Nine pounders each, for defence of this Harbour.”\textsuperscript{394} Upon receiving this news of possible British reinforcements, the rebels enacted several additional measures to ensure control over the coasts and weaken the position of the British ships by limiting interaction with individuals in Charleston. The Council of Safety ordered Motte to “prevent people from going on board the ships of war in the Road, or any where below the fort; without a permission from the Council, or their giving a good account of their intended business.”\textsuperscript{395}

The Council of Safety also ordered Motte to prevent any ships from passing Fort Johnson, either to enter the harbor or going from town to the Tamar without its permission.\textsuperscript{396} The rebels would use other resources as well in the coming months to accomplish the same objective. In early November, the Provincial Congress formed a committee that would have authorization “to give permits...for boats and vessels to pass Fort Johnson, in all cases where it may be done without prejudice to

\textsuperscript{393} Isaac Motte to Henry Laurens, 19 September 1775, PHL, X, 407-408.
\textsuperscript{394} Council of Safety to William Henry Drayton, 5 September 1775, PHL, X, 364-366
\textsuperscript{395} Drayton, Memoirs, II, 53.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid.
the colony.”³⁹⁷ A week later, the Congress ordered the commander of Fort Johnson to “strictly examine all fishing and other boats passing the said fort, as well as those who shall have permits...in order that no improper correspondence be carried on, which might prove injurious to the colony in its present state.”³⁹⁸ Later that same month, it ordered a volunteer infantry company to “scour the sea coast from Sewee Bay to Haddrel’s Point” to prevent the British from landing men.³⁹⁹

Likewise, in December, the Council of Safety learned that a sloop heading for Georgia was carrying some of William Campbell’s possessions, and ordered that it be located, stopped, and Campbell’s effects be removed.⁴⁰⁰ In mid-December, the Council of Safety ordered Moultrie to obtain “five proper boats” and “cruize across the channels from James Island to the marsh of Shute’s Folly, and within Hog Island.” He was to “cut off all irregular correspondence with the men of war and other ships in Rebellion-Road.”⁴⁰¹ The Council of Safety similarly ordered Colonel Stephen Bull of Beaufort to post “a few men upon Hilton-Head Island, to bring to, and search all schooners, boats, and canows, suffering none to pass...without a permit from some authorized committee.” The Council of Safety informed Bull of its guiding principle for determining who should be allowed to pass. It said, “There is no middle way, if

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she will not be a friend, an honest, faithful friend, she must be held to be an enemy.\textsuperscript{402}

At the same time, just as they tried to improve their own communications networks and disrupt those of the British, the rebels also sought to facilitate movement of their own vessels in light of the presence of the \textit{Tamar} and \textit{Cherokee}. In early November, the Provincial Congress ordered two armed pilot boats that had recently been commandeered by the Council of Safety “be employed in cruising along the coast, to the northward of the bar, to warn vessels against coming into harbor at Charleston, and to advise them to go into other ports or inlets in the colony.”\textsuperscript{403} Later the same month, the Provincial Congress ordered the committees for the coastal islands to erect look-outs to give “signals of alarm” at the approach of any threat.\textsuperscript{404} The Congress also formed a committee to study and determine “what communications between different rivers in the colony, the present or future circumstances...may render absolutely necessary to be opened, or prove beneficial.” The committee received instructions to focus in particular on ways to connect the Santee River with the Cooper River, as well as the Edisto River with the Ashley River.\textsuperscript{405}

\textsuperscript{403} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 4 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 92.
\textsuperscript{404} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 28 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 160.
\textsuperscript{405} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 29 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 166.
The second measure the rebels took after learning of possible British reinforcements joining the *Tamar* and *Cherokee* in September was to order the fortification of Sullivan’s Island, across the mouth of the harbor from Fort Johnson. Control of that position would put the entire entrance to the harbor within range of the rebels’ guns. At the same time, however, after the *Tamar*’s failed attempt to attack Fort Johnson on 15 September, the British moved to establish their own defenses on Sullivan’s Island to prevent the position from falling into rebel hands. Escaped slaves learned of the British presence near the island and made their way there in the hopes of gaining refuge on board one of the ships. The British particularly took advantage of the knowledge these escaped slaves could provide in navigating over the bar and in the harbor. In October, the Council of Safety wrote to Edward Thornborough, the captain of the *Tamar*, accusing him of taking on board a runaway slave named Shadwell, and informed Thornborough this was a “felony by the laws of the country.” Thornborough denied harboring the runaway, but Sullivan’s Island became a haven for runaway slaves seeking refuge on board a British vessel.406

On 7 December, Samuel Butler confirmed the Council of Safety’s suspicions, informing its members that the previous evening he heard a conversation “between a mulatto fellow and some slaves belonging to the inhabitants of this town,” during which the former told the latter that they could go on board one of the British ships. Since the conversation, one of the slaves had gone missing. The Council of Safety

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acted immediately, ordering William Moultrie to “proceed to Sullivan’s Island, there to seize and apprehend a number of negroes, who are said to have deserted to the enemy,” and return all prisoners to Charles Town. Moultrie sent Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to Haddrell’s Point on the mainland and ordered him to ford across to Sullivan’s Island where he was to burn the pest house on the island where the runaway slaves slept, while “every kind of live stock [was] to be driven off or destroyed.” The raid had to be postponed when the local inhabitants told Pinckney there was no safe fording place. On 14 December, however, Captain Alexander Wylly of the George Town packet, reported to the Council of Safety that he had been on board the Tamar after the British seized his vessel, and “saw a number of slaves belonging to the inhabitants of this town on board some of the ships of war.” He also reported that after the British learned of the rebels’ intention to clear the runaway slaves off the island, the slaves “were taken off the shore in boats sent from the ships, and...about twenty of them [were] carried on board” the vessel the British had seized from him.

Two days later, on the 16th, the Council of Safety learned that a sentry standing guard on Gadsden’s Wharf the previous night “intercepted a canow, clandestinely attempting to go through Hog Island creek to the Cherokee armed ship.” The guard discovered on board, “two of the domestic slaves of Lord William Campbell, three negroes, the property of inhabitants of this town, with sundry quantities of provisions and other articles.” After learning of the presence of the escaped slaves

on the vessel, and citing “several robberies and depredations” committed by the escaped slaves “on the sea-coast of Christ Church,” the Council of Safety again ordered that “measures be forthwith taken to apprehend and disperse the runaway slaves upon Sullivan’s Island.” On the morning of 18 December, a company of Rangers crossed to Sullivan’s Island, burned the pest house “in which the Banditti were often lodged killed three or four escaped slaves and arrested three more, and “destroyed many things which had been useful to those wretches.”409 In coordination with the raid on Sullivan’s Island, the Council of Safety appointed Captain Simon Tufts of the provincial schooner Defence to ensure escaped slaves and free blacks did not board any ships in the Ashley River, as well as to prevent those ships from holding a correspondence with anyone on shore.410

The third measure the rebels took in September was to severely curtail the means by which the Tamar was able to obtain provisions from town. Until that point, the British had used an agent in Charleston, Fenwicke Bull, to secure provisions for any ships sitting off the coast. On 15 September, the Council of Safety ordered Bull to cease provisioning the British ships until he received further notice. It justified this step by citing the “hostile Dispositions” Thornborough had shown by imprisoning harbor pilots, seizing sailors, stopping private commerce, and firing on peaceful inhabitants of the province. The next day, following a protest from Edward Thornborough, the Council of Safety allowed the ships to continue receiving provisions, but decided to “alter the Mode of Supply.” The ships would have to be

supplied on a daily basis, leaving them immediately susceptible should the Council
of Safety again decide to use the ships’ provisions as a coercive tool.\textsuperscript{411}

Thornborough did not protest further at the time against these new
restrictions, but did reply that he had every intention of continuing to use the
services of harbor pilots and procure supplies, and would do it “by force, if I cannot
obtain them in an Amicable way, which I shall prefer.”\textsuperscript{412} He did not raise the issue
again until 1 November, when he insisted if Fenwicke Bull was not allowed to
regularly supply the ships without being harassed by the rebels, “I am determined
from this Day, not to suffer any Vessel to enter into, or depart from Charles-Town,
that it is in my Power to prevent.”\textsuperscript{413} William Henry Drayton, who succeeded
Laurens as president of the Provincial Congress, replied two days later that he
“[knew] of no ‘unprovoked insults’ the King’s servants have received from any
assembly by authority of the people.” He warned the rebels were “not destitute of
means enabling us to take vengeance for any violence you may think proper to
perpetrate against the shipping bound to, or out of this port.”\textsuperscript{414}

Thornborough replied the next day, the 4\textsuperscript{th}, accusing Drayton of “sophistry,
falsehood, and the grossest misrepresentation,” and claiming the accusation of
harboring a runaway slave was “not worthy a written answer.” He again told
Drayton he intended to procure provisions by every means in my power,” and any

\textsuperscript{411} Council of Safety to Edward Thornborough, 19 September 1775, PHL, X, 405-406.
\textsuperscript{412} Edward Thornborough to Council of Safety, 19 September 1775, PHL, X, 406.
\textsuperscript{413} Edward Thornborough to Council of Safety, 1 November 1775, PHL, X, 507-508.
\textsuperscript{414} William Henry Drayton to Edward Thornborough, Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress,
3 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congress of South
Carolina}, 88-90.
hardship that came to the people of Charleston as a result would be the fault of the rebels, “who have plunged this late happy country into misery and distress.” The Council of Safety allowed for daily provisioning of the ships to continue until 16 December, when the guard intercepted the vessel taking the escaped slaves and provisions to the ships. The Council of Safety therefore ordered “all further supplies of provisions to the king’s ships will be prohibited, unless the fugitive slaves of the inhabitants...are forthwith delivered up.” Two days later it wrote to Thornborough informing him of the decision to cut not only supplies, but also all communication between the ships and the city as long as the British harbored escaped slaves. This contributed to the British decision to sail to Savannah in the hopes of securing provisions there. As in South Carolina, however, the Savannah Council of Safety refused to allow the British ships at Cockspur “a free intercourse between His Majesty’s ships...and the Town of Savannah,” thereby preventing the ships from being able to purchase the food and supplies they needed.

The most controversial measure the rebels took in the autumn of 1775 was to scuttle ships to block the British from using several key passes over the bar. This idea was proposed in the General Committee as early as May 1775, but met with broad opposition based on the potential economic consequences and doubts about the plan’s feasibility. In June, furthermore, the delegates to the Continental Congress

415 Edward Thornborough to Council of Safety, 1 November 1775, PHL, X, 507-508.
418 Captain Andrew Barkley to Sir James Wright, 19 February 1776, Kendall-Simms Collection, South Caroliniana Library
stated their opposition to this plan, which would not be proposed again for several months.\footnote{While many historians have suggested that the opposition was due to moderate members of the General Committee and Council of Safety who were not ready to break with England and wanted to avoid “unnecessary provocations” that would forestall any attempt at reconciliation, the larger concern was instead the unintended economic consequences. When the idea of scuttling ships was first broached in the General Committee in May, Henry Laurens told his son John that it would “reduce in value at least 9/10 of all the estates in Charleston, and will ruin it as a trading city” if commerce could not move freely in and out of the harbor. Perhaps more importantly, Laurens and others did not think it would work, and would be “a fruitless expense” that would subject “the Americans to ridicule and censure through future ages.” Laurens believed if the rebels were willing to “ruin both the Town and the most valuable part of the country,” they should at least ensure it would yield the desired result of preventing British ship movements against Charleston. Daniel J. McDonough, \textit{Christopher Gadsden and Henry Laurens: The Parallel Lives of Two American Patriots} (Selingsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2000), 167; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 30 May 1775, PHL, X, 157-161; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 September 1775, PHL, X, 421-423.} When the proposal again came before the General Committee in September, the Committee commissioned ship captains Thomas Tucker and Edward Blake and harbor pilots Bryan Foskey and Alexander Elsinor to conduct a study estimating requirements for blocking two of the channels over the bar, the Main, or Ship Channel, and Lawford’s Channel. They found that blocking the Ship Channel would require sinking eleven schooners, while blocking Lawford’s Channel would require sinking twenty. Henry Laurens interpreted this report to mean “the plan would be ineffectual and expensive,” but he saw the Committee was moving towards supporting the proposal. Indeed, the General Committee voted 32-14 to recommend the plan to the Council of Safety, which was evenly divided between supporters and opponents. Laurens therefore had to cast the deciding vote, and voted in the affirmative. While he doubted the practicality of the plan, his belief that it would keep public support high “while a better measure might be devised” was more important than his personal opposition to the plan.\footnote{Drayton, \textit{Memoirs}, II, 54-56; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 26 September 1775, PHL, X, 425-430.}
Implementation of this plan stalled for several weeks after more than 350 Charleston residents signed a petition against the measure. It would require that the British warships that were already in the harbor be “first, secured, destroyed, or removed,” and the petitioners feared doing so would bring about the destruction of the city. Laurens reported that by mid-October, however, the plan was “now talked of again.” On 19 October, the Council of Safety approved a less ambitious plan to block the Marsh Channel and Hog Island Creek, both farther into Charleston Harbor and closer to the city itself.421 After blocking the former by sinking two schooners, the rebels prepared to sink four schooners to block Hog Island Creek.422

One of the vessels involved in the process was the Defence, a schooner commanded by Captain Simon Tufts with two nine pound guns, six six-pounders, two four-pounders and 35 marines on board. On 11 November, as Captain Edward Blake was busy scuttling the ships to block the creek, the nearby Tamar fired on the Defence. Though the shots missed, the Defence returned fire with the nine-pound guns. This back and forth exchange of fire allowed Captain Blake to proceed with sinking the schooners, but he was prevented from scuttling the last one by a changing tide. The Defence remained at Hog Island Creek overnight, as Blake planned to sink the last schooner in the morning. During the night, the exchange of fire continued for nearly three hours to little effect on either side. Blake returned to

sink the last vessel the next day, but it sunk slowly, which allowed the Tamar to eventually tow it from its position where it was blocking the creek.423

Neither side suffered much damage or any casualties, but this did mark the first actual shots fired between the rebels and British forces in South Carolina and motivated the rebels to become more serious about improving defenses in Charleston. There had been initial disagreement among members of the Council of Safety during the summer as to whether they should plan to mount a defense of Charleston if the British attacked, or fall back beyond the neck of the Charleston peninsula, to a location like Dorchester. Henry Laurens was initially skeptical of defending Charleston, as he worried it would be prohibitively expensive and result in the destruction of the town. The rebels did establish positions in Dorchester to which they could fall back if needed, and by September, after the Cherokee’s arrival, had sent “the weaker inhabitants” along with their “household goods and valuables” to Dorchester. Upon news of additional warships or troops arriving at Charleston, “hundreds more stand ready to take the same course.”424 At the same time, however, the Council of Safety also decided to defend the town, beginning in July when it placed Thomas Heyward and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney in charge of improving the city’s defenses.425 The pace of improvements increased significantly after 12

423 Ibid.
424 Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 20 October 1775, PHL, X, 476-483; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 26 November 1775, PHL, X, 518-520; John Laurens to James Laurens, 31 August 1775, Kendall-Simms Collection, South Caroliniana Library. Likewise, after the hostilities between the Defence and the Tamar, the Provincial Congress rebels sent most of the province’s records to Dorchester for safekeeping. William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth (George Germain), 22 December 1775, Secretary of State Correspondence with Governors of South Carolina, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
November, and even more so later that month when the Council of Safety received an order from the Continental Congress “that Charles-Town ought to be defended to the last extremity.”\textsuperscript{426} The skirmish with the \textit{Tamar} led the Provincial Congress to add another ship to its fleet. It ordered Moultrie to send men to “whatever wharf in Charles-Town the ship \textit{Prosper}…shall lie; and to guard and protect the said ship against any attempt that may be made to injure or remove her.”\textsuperscript{427} 

The Congress also ordered repairs to existing defenses, including Lyttleton’s bastion and Granville bastion along Bay Street, ordered construction of “six heavy pieces of cannon” at Gadsden’s Wharf, and ordered that additional cannon be “mounted on the wharves, near the center of the bay.” It also ordered construction of batteries near Cummin’s Point and at Wappoo, “to prevent vessels of force lying in Ashley River.”\textsuperscript{428} Several weeks later the Council of Safety ordered construction of another battery at Haddrell’s Point.\textsuperscript{429} The order from the Continental Congress to defend Charleston also prompted the Provincial Congress to pass a resolution recommending that “all such persons who are by law considered as residents of Charles-Town, and liable to bear arms, and have departed, do forthwith return to

\textsuperscript{426} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 28 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 160; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 26 November 1775, PHL, X, 518-520.  
\textsuperscript{428} Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 12 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., \textit{Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses}, 120.  
\textsuperscript{429} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 2 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 40.
Charles-Town.” Additionally, it ordered anyone who met the same conditions but were still in Charleston, not to leave the city.430

By early December, another man of war, the Scorpion, had arrived in Rebellion Road, leading the Council of Safety to also consider defense of the other coastal cities. It ordered six pieces of cannon be sent to Georgetown for use there, and appointed commissioners “for repairing and putting Fort Lyttleton, near Beaufort, into a proper posture of defence” with instructions to complete the work as quickly as possible. The Council of Safety ordered that all cannon at the fort or the town “be secured by removing them to a distance out of reach of a Man of War’s guns and under the protection of a proper body of militia.”431 Meanwhile, on 4 December, the Council of Safety ordered Captain Robert Cochran, the ordnance storekeeper, to supply Moultrie with cannon, carriages, and gunpowder for a battery at the entrance to the North Edisto Inlet south of Charleston.432

Like their neighbors in South Carolina, the rebels in North Carolina also made it a priority to establish control over the sea coast, including fortifications and inlets, to limit the interaction between the British on the Cruizer and Scorpion and any inhabitants of the province. The most important of these fortifications was Fort Johnston, in Brunswick at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Even in the years before 1775, the members of the Lower House of Assembly, most of whom would later join the rebellion, made a concerted effort to weaken both the governor’s authority over

430 Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 28 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses 1775-1776, 160
431 Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 6 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 59; Council of Safety to Commissioners for Repairs to Fort Lyttleton, 6 December 1775, PHL, X, 540-541.
432 Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 4 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 45.
the fort and its readiness. Throughout 1774, Governor Martin urged the Assembly to provide long term funding for the operation of the fort, but in each session the Assembly would only allocate money until the beginning of the next session.

In part, this opposition to supporting the fort’s operations was the result of the anger of the Assembly members that Robert Howe, a North Carolina native, had been replaced as commander of the fort by Captain John Collet, an officer sent from England. Martin explained to Dartmouth in May 1774 that Collet’s appointment came on the recommendation of the Earl of Shelburne, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, which held authority over the American colonies until 1768. Shelburne had been led to believe the command of Fort Johnston was “a thing of consequence, as well in point of honor, as profit.” Collet found when he arrived that “Lord Shelburne had been deceived,” and Fort Johnston was “a little pitiful establishment...in all respects utterly unworthy of his attention” given the extent to which it was fully dependent on “the humor of the Assembly.” When the Assembly refused to provide the funding Martin thought necessary given its ”great importance to the security of the Cape Fear River, the great channel of the commerce of this Country,” the governor asked Dartmouth for funding directly from the Crown.433 Dartmouth refused, telling Martin since his own description of the fort’s purpose was for the security and commerce of North Carolina, any money used to support it would have to come from provincial funds.434

433 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 5 May 1774, CRNC, IX, 989-994.
434 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 6 July 1774, CRNC, IX, 1007-1008.
Martin and the rebels both understood the importance of Fort Johnston for the British if they hoped to bring war ships and reinforcements into the Cape Fear River to Wilmington and beyond in support of colonial governance. As early as March 1775, Martin learned that “it has been moved in one of the Committees to attack Fort Johnston.” The motion was overruled at the time, a month before the outbreak of hostilities in Massachusetts, but Martin reminded General Gage of the poor state of the fort and asked for support in order to retain control over the entrance to the Cape Fear River. Three months later, the rebel threat was growing, and the fort was still “in no state of defence.” The original garrison of 25 men was “reduced by desertion to less than half that number.” The fort was “destitute of powder, & in no condition to afford a sure protection to the valuable Artillery belonging to His Majesty in the said place in case of an attempt on it.” The Governor's Council recommended Martin again request support from Gage or money from the Lords of the Treasury to put the fort in a state of readiness.

Even if any support would be forthcoming as a result of this repeated request, however, it would arrive too late. In late June, the Wilmington committee learned from the correspondence between Martin and Gage that the South Carolina Committee of Intelligence had intercepted Martin’s request for ammunition and reinforcements from Gage. The committee concluded, “John Collett, commander of Fort Johnston, was preparing the said fort [under the auspices of Governor Martin] for the reception of a promised reinforcement” to reduce “the good people of this

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435 Josiah Martin to Thomas Gage, 16 March 1775, CRNC, IX, 1166-1168.
province, to a slavish submission to the will of a wicked and tyrannic Minister.”

The Wilmington and Brunswick committees attempted to weaken Collet’s authority and prevent the British from using the fort or the Cape Fear River to land troops that would act against the province. As with their counterparts in South Carolina and Georgia they did this through a combination of coercion, propaganda, and deft political maneuvering that resulted in Martin partially undermining Collet’s position.

In early July 1775, the Wilmington and Brunswick committees ordered men under the command of Robert Howe to proceed to Fort Johnston, and on 15 July it ordered “a reinforcement of as many men as will voluntarily turn out,” including independent militia companies, to immediately join Howe. They had decided that “it might be of the most pernicious consequences to the people at large, if...John Collett should be suffered to remain in the Fort.”

The next day, the Wilmington committee drafted a letter to Martin signed by “The People,” which claimed to be acting on behalf of the King and accused Collet of neglecting his responsibility to the Crown as commander of Fort Johnston. The letter noted Fort Johnston had been established to “protect the inhabitants of Cape Fear River from all invasions of a foreign enemy in times of War, and during the Peace...not only to prevent contagious and infectious disorders, but to aid and support the Trade and Navigation” of the province. The letter also claimed Collet detained ships applying for a bill of health claiming no diseases on board, threatened magistrates “whose opinion in the execution of their office he happened to disapprove,” ignored the

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438 Ibid.
county sheriff in his jurisdiction, illegally confiscated private property, encouraged slaves to escape from their owners and to “excite them to Insurrection,” and illegally seized a “Quantity of Corn.”

The rebels again used existing governmental policies and procedures for their own purposes to weaken royal officials. The letter claimed Collett had ignored writs served on him by the attorney general for debts he owed, treating them “with the shamefull contempt of wiping his backside with them.” In writing the letter the committee noted that Collet, as “both a Subject and a Soldier,” was obligated to obey the King’s writs. The committee members concluded the letter with a final charge against Collet of planning to dismantle the guns and desert the fort, which the committee claimed was “erected and supported at the real expence of this Colony for its Protection and Defence.” They informed Martin that they would be acting on behalf of the King by locating the guns Collet had dismantled and preserving them “for His Majesty when His service shall require them.” They told Martin they would proceed to the fort, and hoped their “conduct may not be misunderstood by your Excellency.”

The committee gave the letter to a boat pilot on the 18th to take to Martin, who had fled only days before from Fort Johnston to the Cruizer. Martin was fully aware of the true provenance of the letter, as the pilot had informed him that he had received the letter from John Ashe, a militia colonel and member of the Wilmington committee. In his reply of the same day, he nevertheless gave deference to the

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439 “The People” to Josiah Martin, 16 July 1775, CRNC, X, 102-103.
440 Ibid.
concerns of “the People.” In so doing he rendered a sense of legitimacy to the accusations in the letter, undermining Collet’s position and the important role Martin needed him to play in keeping the fort in British hands. Martin replied that if he had been made aware of the complaints against Collet earlier, he would have done his “Duty to enquire into, and to prevent as far as lay in my power,” any wrongdoing by the commander of the fort. Furthermore, Martin claimed that anytime in the past he had been made aware of Collet’s “indiscretions,” he had “interposed my advice and authority, and I persuade myself not without effect” as demonstrated by Collet returning a shipment of wine he had previously confiscated. He told “the People” he had only recently been informed of Collet’s seizure of corn, “and highly disapproved, and remonstrated against it.” He promised to “use my utmost authority to make him restore it.” He concluded the letter by informing “the People” that he had been the one to order the guns dismounted at the fort, and promised he would “prevent any injury happening to them where they are laid for the present.” He asked “the People” to “desist from your purpose” of seizing the guns.441

While Martin did no favors to Collet, the rebels had used other means as well to weaken the British position at Fort Johnston. Using a combination of intimidation of the remaining soldiers and threats of military force, the fort’s garrison “was reduced to no more than three or four men that [Collet] could depend upon.”442 By the time Howe’s men arrived at Fort Johnston on the 18th, Collet had also fled to the

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442 Minutes of the North Carolina Governor’s Council, 18 July 1775, CRNC, X, 106-107.
Martin summoned the Governor’s Council the same day to seek its opinion on possible courses of action, but found its members as reluctant as ever to take action against the people of the province. Instead they insisted the people would “see their error, and return to their duty.” Meanwhile, John Ashe left Wilmington with his men by vessel and that evening he sent a letter to the “Masters and Commanders of the Ships near Brunswick” to “assist him with what Boats, Men and Swivil Guns they could spare, in the glorious cause of liberty.”

At approximately 2:00 in the morning on 19 July, Martin received word that the rebels had set fire to Collet’s residence at the fort. They also set fire to the other buildings, and by sunrise, “all the buildings in the Fort, which being of wood burnt like tinders, were entirely consumed.” Later that morning, Howe’s men were joined by additional troops, who entered the fort and “with a degree of wanton malice” burned anything “that had escaped the flames the preceding night” including a “Centry Box, and some of the Parapets of wood work that Captain Collet had newly raised upon the defences of the place.” Finally, that afternoon, “with a savage and barbarian wantonness, disgracefull to humanity,” the rebels set fire to a number of buildings sitting outside the fort on land still owned by the Crown. These buildings included barns, stables, and a coach house that had all been constructed by Collet “for his own convenience.” Martin chose not to take any action against the rebels, as he “had no men to land.” He was also not certain of the identity of the rebels involved, since “all the material damage that the Fort could sustain had been

443 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 230-237.
444 Deposition of Samuel Cooper Concerning the Destruction of Fort Johnston, 7 August 1775, CRNC, X, 130-131.
effected in the night by persons yet undiscovered.” He eventually learned John Ashe and Cornelius Harnett, the head of the Wilmington committee “were ring leaders of this savage and audacious Mob,” but had no information about the identities of the other men responsible for the attack on the fort.445

Within weeks of the attack on Fort Johnston the rebels held elections for members of the Provincial Congress to meet at Hillsborough in August. In an effort to delegitimize the election and the Congress, Martin issued a proclamation in mid-August in which he recounted the events at Fort Johnston. He claimed the attack on Fort Johnston was the result of the rebels’ weakness, that their other “designs” had been defeated. He also claimed that he chose to forego “immediate vengeance” against those responsible for the attack only because of his “pity for the innocent, misguided and deluded people” who had been “blind instruments” of the rebel leaders. This was Martin’s own attempt at propaganda, using one of the few options still available to him to present a show of strength. His official reports to Dartmouth, however, demonstrated that he knew the rebels were operating from a position of strength and there was little he could do to respond. The proclamation had little effect on the people who voted for the Congress that would sit later that month. Despite the fiery tone of his proclamation, Martin could not have expected any other result as the proclamation began by describing the ways in which the rebels had “daringly and impudently” counteracted an early proclamation of his from June, which asserted the “basest and most scandalous Seditious and inflammatory falsehoods.” Martin recognized the extent to which the rebels had successfully

pushed these falsehoods "to impose upon and mislead the People of this Province and to alienate their affections from His Majesty and His Government."\textsuperscript{446}

In burning Fort Johnston, the rebels had only hoped to remove Collet from power and deny the British the use of the fort to control the entrance to the Cape Fear River and land forces at Brunswick. After the fort burned the rebels therefore did not seek to hold the position for themselves. Instead, they pulled back to Wilmington the same day, and from there they continued their efforts to prevent British movements upon the seacoast and communication with Loyalists or any officials still in the province. In October 1775, as rumors once again circulated about the possibility of additional British ships or troops being sent to North Carolina, the Wilmington committee assigned the province’s newly created regular troops to control the eastern side of the Cape Fear River three miles south of Wilmington and the west side of the river four miles north of Fort Johnston. They also sent several hundred men to both New Bern and Edenton to keep watch over the ports there.\textsuperscript{447} At each location they were given orders by the Provincial Council to “immediately oppose...to the utmost of their power” any British “attempt to land in a hostile manner.” The Provincial Council also ordered Robert Howe and James Moore, the commanding officers at New Bern and Wilmington respectively, to unspike any cannon captured from Martin’s residence in their towns, and to build new carriages and mount the guns.\textsuperscript{448}

\textsuperscript{446} Josiah Martin Proclamation, 15 August 1775, CRNC, X, 142.
\textsuperscript{447} Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 16 October 1775, CRNC, X, 264-278.
\textsuperscript{448} Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Council, 21 October 1775, CRNC, X, 289-290.
In November, the Wilmington committee learned of the imminent return of the *Scorpion*, which would join the *Cruizer*. The committee immediately began preparations for the defense of Wilmington. It ordered several individuals to “go round the town and examine the arms that may be in each Family.” They were to ensure each white man had one, and any remaining would be taken in exchange for a receipt and given to those without a weapon. The committee ordered the distribution of 56 pounds of gunpowder and 221 pounds of lead to the troops positioned on the riverbanks below Wilmington. The committee also ordered that cannon be sent to Brunswick, where Moore was leading efforts to construct a battery to protect the town and prevent entrance into the river. The Wilmington committee also ordered that “no provisions of any kind” be sent to any of the British ships since the *Cruizer* had “fired a number of times on the troops under the command of Col. Moore without their giving any provocation for such conduct.” As with the South Carolina Council of Safety, the Wilmington committee also voted to “procure necessary vessels, boats and chains to sink in such part of the channel” to block the opening to the river, though it is unclear how far the committee progressed with this plan.

The rebels continued their preparations throughout the month of December 1775, procuring fire arms, making and repairing “good serviceable Guns, Gun Barrels, Stocks and Locks, Lead and Flints...for the use of this province,” preventing

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communication between Martin and inhabitants of the province, and preventing the ships from obtaining provisions from town. As in Charleston and Savannah, the Wilmington committee also tried to prevent the British from obtaining the services of pilots who could navigate both the entrance to the river and the stretch that led to Wilmington. The British had already taken “one of more of the Branch Pilots into their custody, and...exacted from...another of the said Pilots...his Parole of Honor to return on board” the Scorpion. In early January, therefore, the committee expressed its opinion “that all pilots of this river be immediately secured.” The committee also ordered “notice be given to the Captain of the Scorpion,” that the pilot he had taken into custody was to be released to the committee.

The committee placed restrictions on the services that river pilots could provide. It ordered that they be taken into custody, and gave official permission to operate on the river between Wilmington and Brunswick to only one pilot. Jacob Phelps was allowed to move cargo and passengers only between Wilmington and Brunswick, “and no further, without permission.” Even between Wilmington and Brunswick he could only operate with the permission of the committee of either town or the commanding officer in either town. To prevent any communication with Martin or the ships of war, the committee ordered “no other person, but such as the said Phelps may employ, shall have liberty to carry any freight or passengers to Brunswick” without permission from the committee or the commanding officer at Wilmington. The committee placed tight controls on the movements of the

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remaining river pilots. One pilot had to apply to the committee when he wanted to move with his family. Another was allowed to take employment on a provincial ship, but was refused permission to travel from there to his residence. A third pilot was ordered to be ready to “pilot in any vessels which may be allowed to trade in this province,” and was given “an adequate allowance” for his services.453

Conclusion

In the absence of any British military force being sent to the southern provinces, the royal governors and Crown officials were the primary source of British authority remaining in the region and therefore the most likely threat to the rebels’ newly established authority in the South. A key element to the rebels’ strategy during the first two years of the war was to isolate these officials. They did this through the ongoing campaign of intimidation directed at the governments, but also by isolating each government from British officials in London, military authorities in Boston, and even the governors of the other southern provinces. They stole the mail coming from London and intended for government officials throughout the South, and when the British adjusted their tactics to avoid this threat so too did the rebels. Their control over the population and key terrain presented them with the opportunity to send forged letters in the place of the actual mail they had stolen. This was particularly useful in convincing military authorities in Boston that all was calm in the South and that the governors’ authority remained intact.

This account was what those military officials wanted to hear given their total focus

on suppressing the rebellion in Boston. Nevertheless, these forgeries not only ensured the British would not send reinforcements to the southern provinces, but also left the governors unable to make or implement any real plans to counter the rebels because they were uncertain about what resources, if any, they could expect from Boston or London.

The rebels were assisted in this effort to isolate British officials in Boston, London, and the South by the lack of British recognition of the importance of maintaining open communication networks that would allow each to share information with the others in a fast and efficient manner. The southern governors heard nothing from Gage or Graves in Boston despite their repeated requests for the general and admiral to keep them apprised of developments in the North that would have an effect on inhabitants in the southern provinces. They instead sometimes had to learn of developments in the North from British officials in London who relayed information from their own communications with Gage and Graves. At other times the southern governors were completely in the dark about events in the North. The rebels, on the other hand, maintained a robust intelligence network between north and south and among provinces in the South, which allowed them to spread news long before government officials received differing accounts from their superiors. This left the governors in an untenable situation of being unable to counter rebel propaganda regarding these events, which gave the rebels a free hand to shape the narrative of the conflict with Britain to their own benefit.

As they isolated British political authority in the provinces, the rebels also had to deal with the military threat they faced from the handful of British men-of-
war off the coast at Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah. The rebels adopted a similar strategy of isolation, preventing those men-of-war from obtaining the daily provisions they needed to survive, establishing contact with anyone on land, or moving within firing range of the cities. They took the last coastal forts remaining in British hands; built coastal defenses; established control over the vast network of inlets, channels, and rivers along the coast; and maintained vigilant observation of possible landing sites along the coast from North Carolina to Georgia. They scuttled ships to block key channels and inlets into rivers and harbors, and restricted British ships to daily provisioning that they could cut off at a moment’s notice.

The rebels also placed restrictions on the movement of slaves to prevent them from joining the British, and mounted raids to disperse slaves after they fled to beaches seeking shelter with the British. They placed restrictions on the activities of harbor and river pilots who the British would need to get their ships over the bar and into the Charleston Harbor or Cape Fear and Savannah Rivers. The emphasis the rebels placed on securing pilots and preventing them from working for the British would in fact intersect with the role of slaves in this fundamentally race-based society, in particular the ways in which fear of British-backed slave insurrections would help shape rebel strategy. The rebels would exploit these fears to turn Loyalists against the British by accusing the latter of instigating slave rebellions, even as the rebel leaders themselves believed their slaves posed little threat.
Chapter 5: Liberate the Slaves and Encourage Them to Attack Their Masters

On a late November day in 1774, several slaves belonging to a Captain Morris in St. Andrew's Parish in Georgia killed their overseer, along with his wife and two others, including a young boy. They moved from home to home in the parish, killing or seriously injuring several other white inhabitants before the militia was able to apprehend them and put an end to the revolt. Five white persons were killed and two seriously injured, after which two of the participants of the revolt were executed.454 A month later, at the end of December, a black man named David Margrett raised the ire of the people of Charleston for preaching to a gathering of slaves and white people.455 According to James Habersham, the father of Joseph Habersham and himself a Loyalist until his death in August 1775, Margrett had “shown some impudent Airs” and “dropped some unguarded Expressions.” He had told those who came to hear him that “God would send Deliverance to the Negroes, from the power of their Masters, as He freed the Children of Israel from Egyptian Bondage.” Habersham and others interpreted this to mean, “he meant to raise rebellion amongst the negroes,” and Habersham learned from the Reverend William Percy of Charleston that “The Gentlemen of [Charleston] are so possessed with an

455 Margrett has also been referred to as Margate.
opinion that his Designs are bad, that they are determined to pursue, and hang him, if they can lay hold of him.”456

Margrett fled Charleston for Georgia, and Percy asked Habersham to help Margrett leave Georgia and return to England. As a favor for Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, under whose patronage Margrett had traveled to the colonies, Habersham paid a Georgia captain eight Guineas for a spot for Margrett in steerage on his ship. Habersham, who was convinced Margrett was actually an escaped slave who had fled to England rather than the freeman he claimed to be, was happy to have Margrett leave Georgia. He claimed it was “best to get him away” as he “wou’d have done more harm than good” to the slaves. Habersham believed Margrett, who was “very proud, and very superficial, and conceited,” posed a threat to domestic order because while “His business was to preach a Spiritual Deliverance” to the slaves, he had instead preached “a temporal one.”457

In May 1775, news arrived in Charleston of a letter from Arthur Lee, a diplomat living in London and working for the Continental Congress. Among other warnings, it told of British plans “to grant freedom to such Slaves as should desert their Masters and join the King’s troops.” William Campbell explained to Dartmouth that it hardly mattered that this claim was false, as “Words...cannot express the flame that this occasioned amongst all ranks and degrees; the cruelty and savage barbarity of the scheme was the conversation of all companies.” Once the rebels disseminated this claim, furthermore, there was little the British could do to counter

457 Ibid.
the accusation, as “no one dared venture to contradict intelligence conveyed from such respectable authority.”458

The southern provinces, and particularly South Carolina where the slave population vastly exceeded the number of white inhabitants, had developed over a period of decades an intricate system of controlling the slave population. This included laws on where slaves, and often free blacks, could travel, to whom they could talk, where they could congregate, when they needed a white person with them, what they could wear, and the types of activities they could conduct. While not always consistently enforced, this system of control, from which the rebels would later borrow in part to guard against threats from Loyalists, required a number of enforcement mechanisms, including a slave patrol and a town watch in cities like Charleston. After the arrival of Lee’s letter, Alexander Innes reported that it had “raised a great ferment,” and led the General Committee to increase the size of the slave patrol in the province. Innes told Dartmouth that the rebels “had decency enough to send two of their body to the Chief Justice Mr. [Thomas Knox] Gordon, the eldest Councillor then in Town, not to ask his leave, but to acquaint him with their intentions; for the Guard was ordered, and mounted that evening.”459 The delegates to the Provincial Congress also used their role as members of the Commons House of Assembly to ensure the smooth operation of the town watch. In March, for

458 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/396.
example, the Assembly docked the pay of Robert Beard, the watchman who failed to regularly maintain the public lamps at night to keep the town well lit.\textsuperscript{460}

With the actions of David Margrett and the St. Andrew’s Parish Revolt still fresh in the memories of the white inhabitants of the southern provinces, the timing of Lee's letter allowed the rebels to take advantage of white fears of slave insurrection to spread rumors that the British intended to arm the slaves and encourage them to leave their masters and fight for the King. Even as they spread these rumors, however, many rebel leaders were privately claiming that they did not see much cause for alarm from the slaves, and that the precautions they had put in place to control the slave population would be sufficient to guard against future insurrection. This belief ended in early July 1775 when a British ship left Charleston for Boston with a black man who was one of the town's most skilled harbor pilots. The rebels believed the British intended to use the pilot to assist General Gage in planning an attack on the southern colonies. Fear of the assistance black harbor pilots could provide the British in conquering the town and the province sparked new concern among the rebels over the threat posed by the province’s slave and free black population.

In the meantime, however, the rebels used the long-standing concern in the southern provinces over slave insurrection to strengthen their support. Henry Laurens explained the value of exploiting this fear during a debate in the Provincial Congress, when he described how the slave threat provided a pretext by which the

\textsuperscript{460} Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 2 March 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
rebels could gain support for organizing and raising provincial forces that would be needed for the conflict against the British and Loyalists while also appearing to remain loyal to the King. The rebels also emphasized the rumors to weaken support for the British among Loyalists, most of whom were no less afraid of a slave rebellion. In March 1776, the Councils of Safety in both Savannah and Charleston spread word that the British were encouraging slaves in both provinces to escape from their masters and flee to Tybee Island where they could join the several British ships that had arrived in the province and were at the moment sitting at nearby Cockspur at the mouth of the Savannah River. Henry Laurens explained to his son John that because of this news, “the peoples Eyes are every day enlightened.” He was referring specifically to backcountry Loyalists in South Carolina whom one might not expect to be as worried as someone from the Lowcountry, where the slaves were an even larger proportion of the population than in the rest of the colony. Laurens continued, “When these came to be truly informed of the ground & nature of our dispute with England,” particularly the rumors about British intentions to harbor and arm the slaves, “they were astonished & I now depend upon most of them to be our best friends.”

The rebels also spread rumors of British support for slave insurrection to further weaken the position of, and influence wielded by, various Crown officials in the southern provinces, thereby contributing to the broader goal of dismantling the royal governments. To do this, they often attributed British plans for raising slave

insurrection to both the local government officials as well as higher-ranking officials in London. The rebels’ ability to intercept British correspondence allowed them to use the words of various British officials. That included British officials like Governor Josiah Martin, who likely did not seek to raise slave insurrections, yet nevertheless wrote vaguely and carelessly enough on the matter that the rebels who seized his correspondence merely had to publish his own words. At other times the rebels had to twist the words of British officials and engage in semantics to achieve the same effect. There were also occasions when the actions of British officials spoke for themselves, most notably when the Earl of Dunmore, the governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation in November 1775 calling on slaves to escape their masters and fight for the King. In all three instances, however, the result was the same, with British officials in America and in London linked to unthinkable plots to arm slaves and turn them against white inhabitants. This diminished the influence of British officials in the eyes of many Loyalists, and further radicalized many moderate rebels.

**The Negro Act of 1740**

On a Sunday in September 1739, while much of the white population was at church, a group of escaped slaves near the Stono River south of Charleston broke into a storehouse, killed the two clerks working there, and stole a large quantity of arms and ammunition. From there, they proceeded south through the province, supposedly headed for Spanish-controlled Florida, and ultimately killed more than twenty white men, women, and children and set fire to a number of houses. After the alarm was raised, the provincial militia surrounded and defeated the escaped
slaves, capturing or killing most of them.\textsuperscript{462} The South Carolina government responded to this terrifying event by passing a new law in May 1740 called “An Act of the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province,” which also became known as the Negro Act of 1740. There had been earlier efforts to control the movement and activities of the province’s slave population, the most notable of which was a law passed in 1712. That legislation, however, had been heavily influenced by the English slave code employed in Barbados and was eventually deemed insufficient to meet the requirements of the “peculiar…situation and condition” of South Carolina that did not “fall within the provision of the laws of England.”\textsuperscript{463} The 1740 law, by comparison, created “another class of crimes...that would apply to slaves alone,” and would later serve as a model for Georgia’s 1755 slave law after that province allowed slavery five years earlier.\textsuperscript{464}

The Negro Act was much more comprehensive than any previous law of its kind, and was intended to control nearly every aspect of the slave’s daily life. The law dictated slaves’ movements, forbidding them from leaving the town where they lived, or in the case of slaves living in the country, the plantation where they lived or worked, without a letter, or “ticket,” from the master or other person responsible for the slave’s care. Any slave discovered outside their prescribed limits “without a white person in his company,” would face a punishment of no more than twenty

\textsuperscript{462} J. William Harris, \textit{The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man’s Encounter with Liberty} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 27.


lashes. On the premise that it was “absolutely necessary to the safety of this Province, that all due care be taken to restrain the wanderings and meetings of Negroes and other slaves…more especially on Saturday nights, Sundays, and other holidays,” the act also forbade “any assembly or meeting of slaves which may disturb the peace or endanger the safety of his Majesty’s subjects.” Slaves could not travel together in numbers greater than seven without being accompanied by a white person,” and could not “[use] or [keep]…drums, horns, or other loud instruments, which may call together or give sign or notice to one another of their wicked designs and purposes.”

Slaves could not “carry or make use of fire arms, or any offensive weapons whatsoever,” unless in the presence of a white person or with a ticket from the master or overseer allowing the slave to use the weapon “to hunt and kill game.” Even then, weapons had to be “lodg[ed]…at night within the dwelling house of his master, mistress, or white overseer.” Furthermore, with the particular circumstances of the Stono Rebellion in mind, during which the slaves attacked while the white inhabitants were at church, even with a ticket, neither slaves nor free blacks could “carry any gun, cutlass, pistol or other weapon…any time between Saturday evening after sun-set and Monday morning before sun-rise.”

The act also placed restrictions on slaves’ ability to “buy, sell, deal, traffic, barter, exchange or use commodities, of any sort or kind whatsoever” in Charleston, though those who lived or were employed in town could, with a ticket, purchase or

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465 An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province, 10 May 1740 in McCord, ed., The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 397-417.
466 Ibid.
sell certain goods for themselves and “anything for the use of their masters, owners” or any other person responsible for the slave. They could also be employed “as porters, carters or fishermen.” Slaves could not “keep any boat, perriauger or canoe,” or “raise and breed...any horses, mares, neat cattle, sheep or hogs” for their own benefit. The act placed restrictions on what slaves could wear, forbade them from renting houses or rooms, and forbade teaching slaves to write, which could “be attended with great inconveniences.”

In addition to setting restrictions on the movement and activities of slaves, the act also assigned responsibility for monitoring the slave population and enforcing any violations of the act to all white persons, and not just the slave patrols and town watch. White inhabitants were to apprehend and whip any slaves found to be traveling in a group larger than seven without a white person accompanying them. If a slave “refuse[d] to undergo the examination of any white person” attempting to ensure the slave was traveling with the permission of the master or overseer, the white person was to “pursue, apprehend, and moderately correct” the slave. In particular they were to apprehend any slave found outside town limits or off of his master’s plantation on Saturday nights, Sundays, and other holidays. White inhabitants were to “[D]isperse any assembly or meeting of slaves which may disturb the peace or endanger the safety of His Majesty’s subjects” and “search all suspected places for arms, ammunition or stolen goods.” Any white person who found a slave carrying a firearm or other offensive weapon in violation of the terms of the act would be allowed to seize the weapon. They had the right to apprehend

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467 Ibid.
runaway slaves and turn them over to their master, or to the warden of the workhouse in Charleston. They were to seize illegal merchandise or goods in the possession of slaves that were not for the use of their owners, as well as any illegal boats, canoes, and horses in slaves' possession. The act also mandated a series of fines for any master who allowed his slaves to violate the terms of the act, or constables who failed to enforce the act. While there were specific prescribed punishments for slaves who violated the act, usually a form of corporal punishment, the fifty-sixth and last substantive section of the act required a slave be put to death if the circumstances of the violation so endangered the white inhabitants that they “would not admit of the formality of a legal trial of such rebellious Negroes.” The execution of slaves in such circumstances, as had been the case during the Stono Rebellion, was “declared lawful...as fully and amply as if such rebellious Negroes had undergone a formal trial and condemnation.”

Certain elements of the Negro Act were not always strictly enforced, particularly when doing so inconvenienced the slave-owner. There was a particular concern that slaves moved about too freely in Charleston while carrying out their responsibilities for their masters, and that this would give them the opportunity to gather and plot away from the eyes of any white persons. Nevertheless, the comprehensiveness of the law suggests that South Carolinians understood the requirements necessary for preventing rebellion or insurrection from an internal population, a knowledge that would prove extremely useful when applied to

\[468\] Ibid.
\[469\] Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, 28-32.
Loyalists beginning in 1775, and demonstrated the extent of the white inhabitants’ long-standing fear of slave insurrection.

**Rumors**

After the arrival of Arthur Lee’s letter in May 1775, there was a proliferation of reports throughout the southern colonies of imminent slave insurrections. Robert Smith, a member of the Edenton committee in North Carolina, told Joseph Hewes, one of the province’s representatives at the Continental Congress, of a report “that the negroes mean to take advantage of the times,” and that there was “much reason in some places to believe” the report was true.\(^{470}\) At about the same time, in South Carolina, there was a report that a schooner sailing into the interior from the coast “was robbed by Some Negroes, they took Nothing else but Powder.”\(^{471}\) The rebels also took whatever action they could to encourage the belief that the British were instigating slave revolts. In May, the New Bern committee in North Carolina issued a circular that it ordered be “printed and made public,” in which it claimed, “there is much Reason to fear, in these Times of general Tumult and Confusions, that the Slaves may be instigated and encouraged by our inveterate Enemies to an Insurrection.”\(^{472}\) Likewise, James Wright informed Dartmouth at about the same time that “[A] report...has been propagated that administration have it in view...to liberate the slaves and encourage them to attack their masters.” Wright noted these

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\(^{470}\) Robert Smith to Joseph Hewes, 23 May 1775, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.


\(^{472}\) In the Committee at Newbern, 31 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
reports “have thrown the people in Carolina and in this province into a ferment,” and even though the reports were “absurd and improbable,” they “nevertheless had an exceeding bad effect and...will involve us all in the utmost distress.”

The rebels responded to each report and rumor by strengthening their defenses against internal revolt. In South Carolina, the Provincial Congress appointed Thomas Bee to lead a committee “to make inquiries” on “Several informations...concerning insurrection of slaves.” The committee reported its findings on 14 June 1775, when it presented a list of slaves and free blacks suspected of inciting insurrection. A week later, the Provincial Congress ordered the committee to “proceed to the trial of such negroes as are or shall be apprehended.” The Provincial Congress also recommended that “the inhabitants of the parishes of St. Philip and St. Michael, when they attend Divine Services in places of public Worship...take with them their fire-arms and ammunition.” In North Carolina, after learning of the reports Robert Smith had written about to Hewes, the Edenton committee decided to maintain “a guard of Eight men in the Town every night,” while “in the Country, the same precaution is taking...all are well armed, [and] this has been keep'd up for about fourteen nights.”

The New Bern committee unanimously agreed “to appoint Patrols to search for, and take from

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473 Wright to Dartmouth, 25 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
475 Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 19 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses 1775-1776, 58.
476 Robert Smith to Joseph Hewes, 23 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
Negroes, all kinds of arms whatsoever,” and any guns found would be distributed among the members of the local militia who did not have their own. In the circular distributed to the public, the committee also ordered the militia to “send out Detachments to patrol and search the Negro Houses, and all other suspected Places,” to seize any arms and ammunition they found, and “to apprehend and carry before the next Magistrate all such Negroes as they shall find under Circumstances of Suspicion.” The Pitt County committee gave slave patrols the authority to “shoot one or any number of Negroes who are armed and doth not willingly surrender their arms.” Likewise, the patrols had “Discretionary Power, to shoot any Number of Negroes above four, who are off their Masters Plantations, and will not submitt.”

“The Rumour & Whisper of Insurrections are no more heard”

Even while the rebels made a very public effort to push the notion of imminent insurrections and took every opportunity to tie that threat to British support, many rebel leaders privately took a very different position on the likelihood of slave revolts. They downplayed the threat posed by the slave and free black population, and expressed confidence in the ability of their defenses and counter-measures to disrupt the isolated incident that might occur. After telling Hewes of general concern in Edenton that the slaves would rebel, Robert Smith

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478 In the Committee at Newbern, 31 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.

479 Record of the Proceedings of the Committee in Pitt County North Carolina, 8 July 1775, Committee of Safety Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.
admits “[H]ere we have not discovered any such intention.” Laurens, telling his son John about a resolve in the Provincial Congress that men should take arms and ammunition to church on Sundays, dismissed it as unnecessary and a “foolish affair.” Laurens also told his son of “trials of Negroes Suspected of designs to Rebel” that were the result of the Provincial Congress committee led by Bee. According to Laurens, the rebels ultimately reached the decision that the suspected slaves and free blacks “don’t appear to have been so guilty as to deserve death” and would instead receive corporal punishment “for example Sake.” Laurens opposed the idea of punishment for its own sake, but concluded that the evidence suggested, “there appears very little foundation for [the] great fear & our amazing bustle.”

Governor Campbell’s account of the events supports Laurens’ argument that there was little reason to be concerned by the slaves who had been arrested, as it was likely the result of a misunderstanding. Campbell told Dartmouth, the rebels’ “constant exercising the militia and other martial appearances,” together with “their imprudent conversations at their tables before their domestics,” were impossible for blacks to ignore. Naturally this led the slaves “to converse amongst themselves on the reasons for it.” According to Campbell, “One of those conversations was...overheard and several of those poor ignorant creatures taken up.” Once they had been arrested, “terrified at the recollection of former cruelties” committed

480 Robert Smith to Joseph Hewes, 23 May 1775, Hayes Collection, University of North Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
481 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, X, 186-196.
against those responsible for slave uprisings, the imprisoned slaves “were easily induced to accuse themselves and others to escape punishment.”

Less than two weeks after he expressed his skepticism over the threat of insurrection to his son, Laurens informed his brother James that “the Rumour & Whisper of Insurrections are no more heard,” but that the rebels nevertheless remained “constantly on their guard.” At the same time, William Henry Drayton informed South Carolina’s representatives in the Continental Congress that while the people had been “alarmed by idle reports that the Negros intended to rise,” upon further investigation they determined the threats “have all passed over” and the slaves “show the most friendly disposition towards us.” Gabriel Manigault, a wealthy merchant and one of Charleston’s leading citizens, who was more inclined towards Laurens’ moderation than Drayton’s zealously, told his son Gabriel, “We have been alarmed by idle reports that the Negros intended to rise.” Again, this report eventually “proved to be of less consequence than was expected.” Nevertheless, the rebels maintained a watch system “for fear of the worst.”

One of the men the Provincial Congress ordered arrested and tried in June for planning an insurrection was a free black named Thomas Jeremiah. Jeremiah, a harbor pilot and fire fighter of some means, “was in a thriving situation, had several slaves of his own whom he employed in fishing, and was one of the best pilots in the

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482 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
483 Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 2 July 1775, PHL, X, 203-206.
harbour.”\footnote{Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.} Jeremiah’s brother-in-law, a slave named Jemmy, testified that sometime in early April he had encountered Jeremiah on a Charleston wharf, and that Jeremiah asked Jemmy to deliver a number of guns to a runaway slave named Dewar, who would place them “in Negroes hands to fight against the Inhabitants of this Province.” Jeremiah claimed he would lead the slaves, and “He believed He had Powder enough already,” but would continue his efforts to obtain more guns.

Another slave, referred to as Sambo, testified that in March or April he was talking to Jeremiah on Simmons Wharf in Charleston, when Jeremiah asked, “do You hear any thing of the War that is coming.” Sambo replied that he had not and asked, “what shall we poor Negroes do?” According to Sambo, Jeremiah replied that the “War was come to help the Poor Negroes,” and suggested setting boats on fire to prevent their use by the rebels, and “Jump[ing] on Shore, and join[ing] the [British] soldiers.”\footnote{Evidence Given Against Jerry, 16 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.}

In addition to Jemmy and Sambo, the rebels claimed to have two other slaves who could support the accusations against Jeremiah.\footnote{Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 18 June 1775, PHL, 184-185.} It is unclear whether the rebels tried Jeremiah in June, or decided on their own that the evidence was lacking, as they did with many of the other slaves who had been arrested based on the report of Bee’s Committee in the Provincial Congress.\footnote{Henry Laurens told his son John on 23 June that Jeremiah had not yet had a trial, but Campbell told Dartmouth that Jeremiah had a trial a few days after Campbell arrived in the province on 17 June. See Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, 186-196 and Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.} Campbell claimed, “no proof could be produced to convict him or give sufficient grounds to believe any
attempt of the kind they pretended to fear was ever intended.” In either case, the apparent lack of evidence had quieted the fears of many, including Laurens who made his declaration that there was less reason for concern than believed after Jeremiah had been arrested, and the evidence against him found to be insufficient. Jeremiah was released from close confinement in the jail and sent to the Charleston workhouse along with Jemmy.

**A Sudden Panic**

Two factors influenced the rebels over the next month, however, and led to a new trial for Jeremiah in August, where he was found guilty and sentenced to hang and his body burned. First, there was concern among the rebel leadership that their public pronouncements of imminent threat from British-backed slave revolts and Indian attacks were not having the intended effect on the population. According to George Millegen, a surgeon for the British Army who lived in Charleston and had been a target of the General Committee, the public initially believed reports “that His Majesty’s ministers and other servants instigated their slaves to rebel against their masters and to cut their throats.” To “keep up their fears and distraction of mind,” rumors circulated among the public that “the Negroes of this plantation had refused to work, that...they had obtained arms and were gone into the woods,” and that “others had actually murdered their masters and their families.” When the impending slave revolts failed to materialize, however, “many people [began] to doubt the truth of instigations being used.” The rebels therefore had to show
evidence to back up their accusations that the slaves intended to revolt to convince Loyalists to turn against the British.\textsuperscript{490}

The more immediate and concrete concern, however, came on 4 July 1775, the same day Drayton wrote to South Carolina’s representatives in Philadelphia that here was no cause for concern from slave insurrection. On that day, the \textit{Scorpion} man-of-war, which had been in Charleston since June when it brought William Campbell to the province, left South Carolina under the command of Captain John Tollemache, carrying on board a local black harbor pilot. This presented the rebels with a significant threat, in that this pilot was “by far the best pilot in this harbour.” This gave the British the ability to navigate the dangerous waters of the harbor regardless of any actions the rebels would take to control the other pilots and limit the use of their services. Tollemache was also sailing for Boston, where the rebels feared Gage was planning an expedition against the southern provinces.\textsuperscript{491}

Tollemache informed William Moultrie and Isaac Huger, officers in the new provincial forces, that a number of his men had deserted and enlisted with the rebels, and if they were not returned he would have to disrupt the trade of the province. The Council of Safety replied a week before the \textit{Scorpion} set sail that “We did not know that we had enlisted any of your men; but if any of them have enlisted, we dare not give them up.”\textsuperscript{492} Historians have downplayed the extent of the rebels’ concern at Tollemache taking the black harbor pilot by arguing that the rebels knew

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\textsuperscript{490} Testimony of George Millegen, 15 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{491} Campbell to Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{492} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 26 June 1775 in \textit{Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society} (CSCHS), II (Charleston: The South Carolina Historical Society, 1859), 30.
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and understood Tollemache’s reasoning. The rebels did indeed understand that Tollemache’s actions were retaliation for the enlistment of his sailors in the provincial forces, but they were still threatened by them. The historians making this argument point to a letter in which Henry Laurens tells his son John the reason given by Tollemache for having “carried off a valuable black Pilot.” Laurens also argued, however, that Tollemache’s reaction was entirely out of proportion with any offense the rebels had committed by not returning his men. Laurens told his son that taking the black harbor pilot was not just a reprisal, but likely also done “for worse purposes.” In a letter to Campbell following Jeremiah’s conviction in August, Laurens also specifically linked Tollemache’s actions with the resurgence in rebel concern about potential British support for the slaves. He warned that a pardon from Campbell for Jeremiah would only provide further evidence of nefarious British intentions, building upon those already aroused in the people “after the recent Instance of one of their Negro pilots being illegally carried away by the Commander of one of His Majesty’s Sloops of War.”

William Campbell understood the rebels’ concerns about the role the black harbor pilots might play in the conflict, and provided some context on the effect Tollemache’s actions had among the rebels. Campbell informed Dartmouth that the issue at hand was how the General Committee and Council of Safety were going to prevent the British from adding reinforcements in men and arms as a way of

493 See for example David R. Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 329n; Harris, The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah, 144-145.
494 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 14 July 1775, PHL, X, 219-222.
495 Henry Laurens to William Campbell, 17 August 1775, in Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 329-330.
counteracting the rebels’ efforts to “boldly chang[e] the government at once.” For those unfamiliar with Charleston Harbor it could be particularly difficult to navigate, and without more intimate knowledge of the harbor the British would have difficulty bringing ships within firing range of the town or putting men on shore. To further increase the difficulty for the British to navigate the waters, the rebels sent Campbell an anonymous letter “assuring me they have determined to destroy the lighthouse and cut down the landmark trees that direct the pilots in passing the bar of this harbour.” As the governor noted, however, this would not solve the rebels’ problems entirely, and Campbell specifically mentioned the black harbor pilot who had gone to Boston on board the Scorpion. According to Campbell, this pilot had “marks of his own by which he will carry in any vessel in safety in spite of what they can do.”

The rebels knew that the British would likely use the black harbor pilots to bring their ships into the harbor to either attack the town or land men. On 11 July, a week after Tollemache’s departure, the rebels received further confirmation of their suspicions. The Council of Safety heard testimony from Elizabeth Simpson, whose husband John was a relative of Campbell’s. Simpson claimed that she had recently heard a conversation between her husband and Campbell in which the governor said that “he expected Men of War to arrive here Soon,” and that the British intended to use black harbor pilots to bring the British men-of-war across the bar to attack the city and province. Campbell had also told Simpson “a man of war had carried away a Negro Pilot in order to bring [British men-of-war] in.” Simpson’s

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⁴⁹⁶ William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 19-20 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
testimony justified in the rebels’ minds the link between Tollemache’s actions and British plans for black harbor pilots, with an impending attack on the province.497

After that first week in July, the rebels no longer claimed they had nothing to fear from the slaves. Jeremiah, still sitting in the workhouse, had previously mentioned that he would offer his services to the British and pilot their ships across the bar. With the recent news of British intentions to use black harbor pilots, and the fear that a British attack on South Carolina or one of the other southern provinces was imminent, the rebels approached the case of Thomas Jeremiah in a new light after the first week in July. Millegen noticed this shift, and commented that Jeremiah’s “real crime was his being a good pilot and his inclination to be of use to His Majesty’s ships.”498 Campbell shared Millegen’s conclusion that Jeremiah’s only crime was that “He had often piloted in men-of-war, and...that he would have had no objection to have been employed again in that same service.”499

**Other Explanations**

Some historians have offered another explanation for the sudden resurgence of fear in July that the slaves might play a role in a British attack.500 On 3 July, Thomas Hutchinson of St. Bartholomew Parish north of Beaufort informed the Council of Safety in Charleston of recent discoveries that “Several of the Slaves in the neighborhood, were exciting & endeavouring to bring abt a General Insurrection.” A

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497 Affidavit of Elizabeth Simpson, 11 July 1775, Henry Laurens Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.
498 Testimony of George Millegen, 15 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
499 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
slave named George, belonging to a local planter named Francis Smith, claimed that “the old King [meaning George II] had rece[ive]d a Book from our Lord by which he was to Alter the World (meaning set the Negroes free),” but had chosen not to do so and “was now gone to Hell, & in Punishmt.” The “Young King,” however, “meaning our Present One, came up with the Book, & was about to alter the World, & set the Negroes Free.” George and the other slaves intended to hasten the process along and “take the Country by Killing the Whites.”

Hutchinson, in his capacity as a member of the St. Bartholomew Parish Committee of Safety, “took the very earliest Opty to prevent the fatal consequences thereof” by arresting the main suspects and bringing them to trial, where “the Cort were under the disagreeable necessity to Cause Exemplary punishmts” on the leaders. The committee also learned that a Scot named John Burnet was accused of “appoint[ing] Nocturnal Meetings of the Slaves under the Sanction of Religion,” and “repeatedly inculcated such doctrines as were principally instrumental” in bringing about the supposed plans for insurrection.” The slaves claimed that “the Story of the Book was communicated to them by Burnet,” and that “Burnet had said to them, that they were equally intitled to the good things of this Life in common with the Whites.” Furthermore, George and the other leaders had made clear that during the coming insurrection, Burnet, despite being white, “was to be Saved as their Preacher.” Burnet had been known for “preaching to the...Negroes & many others very frequently” on plantations and in the woods, and had “been often told his Conduct

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was extremely Obnoxious to the People, as they were apprehensive it might be attended with mischievous consequences.”

There is no doubt that in an area like St. Bartholomew’s Parish, where 82 percent of the population was enslaved, the committee and other white residents took the threat of insurrection very seriously. It is difficult, however, to conclude that this incident was what caused a wholesale change in attitudes among the rebel leadership about the threat of British-supported insurrection. The parochial committee decided to send Burnet to Charleston for the Council of Safety to decide what should be done with him “most conducive to the Good of the Province.” When Burnet arrived in Charleston, he was placed under guard and confined until he could appear before the Council of Safety. Since the only evidence against Burnet in the specific case of the thwarted insurrection came from the slaves who were found to have conspired with him, and a white man could not be convicted based on the testimony of a black man alone, all the Council of Safety could use to determine Burnet’s guilt were “His own Narrative and Confession.” Burnet admitted he had

502 Ibid.
503 Harris, The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah, 190n. In his letter to the Council of Safety, Hutchinson initially wrote that the people in the parish “have long Since wish’d [Burnet] had remained in Scotland where he was born.” As Wayne Lee has shown, the “long-standing English discomfort with Scots, in part a result of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745” took shape in the Carolinas in a “rhetoric of violence” and “popular suspicions of the ethnicity as a whole.” After Hutchinson sent his initial letter to Laurens to be presented to the Council of Safety, some of the committee members worried that the mention of Burnet’s Scottish heritage would cause the letter to be incorrectly interpreted as merely an ethnic slander of Burnet. To keep focus on the importance of the threat of insurrection, therefore, Philip Smith, another member of the parochial committee, wrote a second letter to Laurens asking him to remove the reference to Scotland and have the letter instead say that the people “wish’d [Burnet] had never come to this Province.” According to Smith, the purpose of this change was “to avoid all appearances of national reflections.” Wayne Lee, Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina: The Culture of Violence in Riot and War (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 208-209; Thomas Hutchinson to Henry Laurens, 5 July 1775, PHL, X, 206-208; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 206n.
preached to the slaves “in the woods and in private Places without the Knowledge or Permission of their Masters,” but “utterly denied having any Knowledge of the pretended Book.” He instead claimed that rather than “exciting them to Insurrection,” his objective had merely been “to reconcile them to that Lot in Life in which God had placed them, and to impress upon their Minds; the Duty of Obedience to their Masters.” The Council of Safety determined it “could do no more than to represent to him the evil Tendency of part of his former Conduct” and have him promise to stay away from St. Bartholomew’s Parish. The Council of Safety determined the matter was closed when it noted Burnet “was then dismissed and immediately obtained an Offer of Employment in Georgia whither he is to proceed when a proper Opportunity presents.”

The historians who have attributed the dramatic shift in rebel leaders’ opinions on the threat of insurrection to this event noted these details as were included in the correspondence between the St. Bartholomew parochial committee and the Council of Safety. What they do not mention, however, is that the offer of employment that Burnet received in Georgia was from Henry Laurens himself. As late as 1777 Burnet was still a trusted employee of Laurens, working both at his Mepkin plantation outside Charleston and Wright’s Savannah, one of Laurens’ plantations in Georgia. Less than two weeks after the Council of Safety dismissed any charges against Burnet, Laurens wrote to his son of “dark Hellish plots” on the

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part of the British government, which left "no Stone...untouched...to disunite us poor
distressed Americans," including "Insurrections of our Negroes attended by the
most horrible butcheries of Innocent Women and Children." If Burnet had been
responsible for inciting the rebellion that was responsible for the sudden fears of
slave insurrection, even if his guilt could not be proven under the law, it is unlikely
Laurens would immediately give him employment on his plantations where he
would work among Laurens’ many slaves.

The other significant event that may have influenced rebel leaders in their
opinions on the likelihood of insurrection occurred in Beaufort County in North
Carolina in early July. A slave owned by Captain Thomas Respess of that district
informed his owner on 8 July of “an intended insurrection of the negroes against the
whole people which was to be put into execution that night.” As the committee later
determined, the slaves “were one and all...to fall on and destroy the family where
they lived, then to proceed House to House (Burning as they went).” Eventually they
would arrive “in the Back Country where they were to be received with open arms
by a number of Persons there appointed and armed by Government for their
protection.” Furthermore, “they were to be settled in a free government of their own”
as an additional reward for their actions. The committee immediately spread the
alarm and raised a patrol of nearly a hundred men.

By that evening the patrol had taken into custody nearly forty people and
placed them under guard in the jail. After the initial threat had passed, the

506 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 30 July 1775, PHL, X, 256-261.
507 John Simpson to Richard Cogdell, 15 July 1775, Richard Cogdell Papers, State Archives of North
Carolina.
committee met to investigate the plot, and found “a deep laid horrid tragic plan laid for destroying the inhabitants of this province without respect of persons, age or sex.” The committee ordered several of the suspects to be whipped, which “was executed in presence of the Committee and a great number of spectators.” While this report of insurrection posed a much more imminent threat to the white inhabitants than the events in St. Bartholomew’s Parish, there is no mention of it in the papers or correspondence of the rebel leaders in South Carolina, nor in the official records of the Provincial Congress or Council of Safety. In any event, the head of the New Bern committee would not have heard of these events until late July, which would suggest the rebels in South Carolina would not know about it until even later, after they had already changed their positions on the likelihood of slave insurrection.508

The most likely explanation for the new concerns about the slaves is therefore fear created by Tollemache’s actions in taking the most skilled black harbor pilot in the city with him to Boston amidst rumors that Gage and the rest of the British leadership were making plans for an expedition against the southern provinces. At this same time the rebels were attempting to pacify the South Carolina

508 Ibid. Sylvia Frey and Gary Nash both cite this incident as the reason Governor Josiah Martin fled to Fort Johnston, and then the Cherokee, and the North Carolina rebels’ decided to “[raise] a militia to attack Fort Johnston on July 17, 1775.” However, this confuses both the timeline and the geography of the events of June and July 1775. Martin fled to Fort Johnston at the end of May, arriving there on 2 June 1775, more than a month before the planned slave insurrection. Furthermore, this planned insurrection occurred in Beaufort and Pitt Counties, north of New Bern. Simpson and the Pitt County committee did not apprise the New Bern committee of these events until 15 July, making it very unlikely that the rebels in Wilmington, approximately 100 miles beyond New Bern, would have heard of these events in time to draft a letter on 16 July explaining why they were going to attack and burn Fort Johnston, which they did two days later, on the night of 18 July. In their letter, mentioned in Chapter 3 above, the rebels cited a long list of grievances against the officer in charge at fort Johnston, only one of which was threatening to support slave insurrection. See Sylvia Frey, Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 57-60; Nash, The Unknown Revolution, 165-166.
backcountry where they faced their most significant opposition from the Loyalists, while simultaneously trying to prevent the Indians from carrying out a rumored attack on the backcountry inhabitants. Faced with these potential threats on multiple fronts, the rebels acted to deter a troublesome internal population to weaken Loyalist support for the British, and establish control over the city's harbor pilots to limit British ability to navigate the harbor and threaten the city.

“Horrid and barbarous designs of the enemies”

In addition to reconsidering the case against Jeremiah, the rebels forbade “All pilots...at their peril to go on board or in any manner assist the King’s ships or transports to come into the harbor.” 509 They also increased their efforts to link the British with slave insurrection in the minds of the people. In July, the New Bern committee intercepted a letter from Josiah Martin to Lewis DeRosset, a member of the Governor’s Council in North Carolina, in which Martin claimed to abhor the idea of arming slaves, declaring, “nothing could ever justify the design, falsely imputed to me, of giving encouragement to the negroes.” What concerned the rebels in New Bern, however, was the caveat Martin added, which allowed for the consideration of the idea in the event of “actual and declared rebellion of the King’s subjects, and the failure of all other means to maintain the King’s Government.” The committee ordered the letter be made public “as an alarm to the people of this Province against the horrid and barbarous designs of the enemies, not only to their internal peace

509 Testimony of George Millegen, 15 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
and safety, but to their lives, liberties, properties, and every other human blessing.”

Upon hearing of this letter, Henry Laurens noted to his son John that Martin had in the past “repeatedly call[ed] the People in his Government & other Colonies in America Rebels.” Likewise, an argument could have been made that “all other means to maintain the King’s Government” in North Carolina had failed, since when he wrote the letter to DeRosset he had already been forced to flee New Bern for the safety of Fort Johnston near Wilmington, and would shortly have to flee again to the safety of the Cruizer lying off of Cape Fear. With nearly every member of the colonial assembly now serving as representatives in the Provincial Congress, and countless government officials fleeing the province or under arrest, the government in North Carolina had collapsed. The rebels saw in Martin’s letter what the governor likely did not intend, but Laurens was not alone in his belief that “It follows therefore that the time was come when Governor Martin thought it expedient to encourage an Insurrection of Negroes.”

On 11 August, the rebels brought Thomas Jeremiah to trial, possibly for the second time. According to the requirements of the Negro Act, he faced two Justices of the Peace and three freeholders, although evidence remains of the identity of only two of these individuals. John Coram, an active member of the rebel movement

511 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 30 July 1775, PHL, X, 256-261.
512 William Campbell had reported that Jeremiah had an initial trial after his arrest in June where he faced five freeholders. Henry Laurens claimed Jeremiah never had a trial in June, and that there were three freeholders at his trial in August. See William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; Henry Laurens to John Laurens (enclosure), 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 328-335.
and a member of the committee organized to enforce the nonimportation agreement, served as one of the justices of the peace, while Daniel Cannon, a leading member of the Sons of Liberty in Charleston and a member of the Provincial Congress, served as one of the freeholders. In the Provincial Congress, Cannon had even served as one of the members of the committee led by Thomas Bee to investigate reports of insurrection in the province.\textsuperscript{513} Jeremiah was found guilty, with his execution scheduled for 18 August.

After the verdict had been issued, William Campbell sent for Coram and asked for the details of the case against Jeremiah. As he told Dartmouth, “my blood ran cold when I read on what grounds they had doomed a fellow creature to death.” He told Coram that he found the evidence to be weak, and, according to Coram, Campbell suggested “the People should consider what might be the Consequence of executing him upon such Evidence in case the times should alter.” Campbell was issuing a thinly veiled threat, telling Coram that the rebels might be setting a precedent for their own punishments should Britain regain control of the province and bring the rebel leaders to trial.\textsuperscript{514} Campbell was also concerned that Jeremiah’s trial had not been conducted in accordance with the Negro Act, which was ostensibly for the governing of slaves rather than free blacks like Jeremiah. Campbell therefore asked for an opinion on the matter from his Attorney General,

\textsuperscript{513} Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress, 4 June 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 37.

\textsuperscript{514} Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August, 1775, TNA, CO 5/396; Henry Laurens to Alexander Innes, 18 August 1775 (enclosure) in Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 331. Innes replied that Campbell denied making this comment to Coram. Alexander Innes to Henry Laurens, 18 August 1775 (enclosure) in Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 332.
James Simpson, along with the Chief Justice of the Court of General Sessions, William Knox Gordon, and the justices of that court, including William Gregory, Edward Savage, Charles Matthew Coslett, and John Fewtrell. On Campbell’s order, Coram and Cannon provided the six men with the evidence against Jeremiah, and after taking part of the day to consider the matter, the men gave Campbell their opinion.515

Gordon, Simpson, Gregory, and Savage concluded that Jeremiah should not have been tried according to the Negro Act. In a single opinion, the four men argued the seventeenth section of the act was the only section that made attempting to raise an insurrection, rather than actually succeeding in raising one, a capital crime. This section, however, only made it a capital crime for slaves, and did not mention free blacks. They concluded that it was implausible that the omission of free blacks would have been an oversight by those who crafted the legislation since many parts of the act make a “plain and palpable distinction...between Slaves and Free Negroes.” Most notably, in the sixteenth section, “Free Negroes were in the contemplation of the Legislature,” and “had it been the intention of the Legislature to have included them in the subsequent Section, they never cou’d have so immediately forgot them.” They argued Jeremiah’s actions were not treasonous either, as “a bare Attempt to raise an Insurrection, evidenced only by words without any Overt Act in consequence of them,” were not an act of war according to Parliament.516

Charles Matthew Coslett was no supporter of the rebels, and at the same time he was considering the case of Thomas Jeremiah he, like the other Crown officials

515 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
remaining in the colony, was being pressured by the General Committee to sign the Association. Nevertheless he provided Campbell with an opinion that differed markedly from that presented by his colleagues, concluding that it was appropriate for Jeremiah to be tried under the Negro Act. Coslett pointed to the fourteenth section of the act, which stated that “all crimes and offences committed by free Negroes...shall be proceeded in, heard, tried, and adjudged by the justices and freeholders appointed by this Act” in the same manner as prescribed for slaves.\(^{517}\) Coslett interpreted this to mean “the Justices & freeholders have a power to try and convict all free Negroes for any Crime which a Slave under this Act can be tried or convicted for.”\(^{518}\)

Coslett acknowledged that the seventeenth section cited by the other justices as applying only to slaves, did not refer to free blacks. He also admitted that a penal law like the Negro Act should normally be given a strict interpretation. Nevertheless, he believed the demographics of the province created special circumstances. He argued if free blacks were to be exempted by the seventeenth section, “they will not be punishable at all under this Law or any other that I know of.” This was unthinkable for Coslett, given the serious nature of the crime and “the peculiar circumstances of the Province.” He argued that the framers of the law would never have considered making distinctions between slaves and free blacks when it came to the specter of insurrection. The alleged crime, an “offence of so enormous a nature,” therefore merited greater consideration than the status of the black man.

\(^{517}\) An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province, 10 May 1740 in David J. McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 402.

\(^{518}\) Charles Coslett Opinion on Jerry, 17 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
committing the crime since it would not make a difference to the outcome if the person responsible for the insurrection was a slave or a free man. Coslett concluded his opinion by arguing that with the vast number of slaves, free blacks, and mulattos in the province, “it might be of the most fatal consequence to the lives & properties of the white Inhabitants if these fellows once got it into their heads that free Negroes...were not punishable under this Act for such an enormous crime.”

John Fewtrell, the last judge Campbell consulted, declined to join either opinion, and instead staked a position of neutrality. In an opinion written on 19 August, the day after Jeremiah’s execution and too late to be of any use, Fewtrell provided a succinct explanation of the power and authority that the Negro Act granted justices of the peace and freeholders, on which there was no controversy whatsoever, and then stated his belief that he and the other judges of the Court of General Sessions did not have the authority to interfere. A majority of the legal minds Campbell had consulted therefore declared that Jeremiah should not have been tried according to the Negro Law. Nevertheless, the four men who had delivered that opinion told Campbell they were “well assured [Jeremiah’s] death was determined on and with particular circumstances of insult” certain to come to Campbell if he were to interfere. The judges and attorney general were united in asking Campbell to consider “whether in this situation it would be proper” for him to continue advocating in support of Jeremiah.

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519 Ibid.
520 John Fewtrell Opinion on Jerry, 19 August 1775, CO 5/396.
521 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
In addition to the issue of British use of black harbor pilots, the case of Thomas Jeremiah cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader ongoing effort of the rebels to weaken the Crown officials and dismantle the royal government. Proving the judges prescient in their prediction, there had arisen “such a clamour amongst the people as is incredible” simply as the result of Campbell’s request for an opinion on the case, and the people “openly and loudly declared if I granted the man a pardon they would hang him at my door.” As usual, however, members of the rebel leadership showed themselves to be at the center of what on the surface appeared to be a grassroots movement of crowds acting out in a fury. Henry Laurens claimed ignorance of the threats Campbell received, telling his son John that “although I know none of the out of Door Secrets of the people, & carefully avoid Such knowledge...I had heard enough to fill me with horror from a prospect of what might be done by Men enraged as Men would have been if a pardon had been issued.”

Despite Laurens’ claim to have no control over the violent mob, it was actually a leading rebel, and likely a member of the Council of Safety, who had issued the threat to Campbell. Campbell received a letter from an unnamed friend of his who was active among the rebels, “representing in the strongest terms the dreadful consequences that would attend my pardoning [Jeremiah]...that it would raise a flame all the water in Cooper River could not extinguish.” These events came at

522 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 321.
523 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396. This unnamed person was likely Miles Brewton, a member of the Council of Safety and a representative to the Provincial Congress. Brewton was married to a cousin of Campbell’s wife, Sarah Izard, who herself was the daughter of Ralph Izard,
the height of the General Committee’s effort to weaken Campbell and dismantle the government through intimidation and subversion. Only five days after Jeremiah’s execution the General Committee ordered that the names of those officials who refused to sign the Association be published and declared “inimical to the Liberties of America.”524 Less than two weeks after submitting their opinions to Campbell on the Jeremiah case, Gordon and a number of other Crown officials sent the letter to the governor informing him that they could no longer perform their duties given the actions of the rebels. With that letter, the royal government of South Carolina no longer existed.525

Thomas Jeremiah was executed as scheduled on 18 August. Before he died, however, Jemmy, the slave and Jeremiah’s brother-in-law who had given evidence against him, retracted his testimony and declared Jeremiah to be innocent. Campbell tried to get Reverend Robert Smith, the rector of St. Philip’s Church and a supporter of the rebel movement to whom Jemmy had recanted his story to convince the General Committee to spare Jeremiah’s life. After hearing of Jemmy’s retraction, the justice who had heard the case with Coram tried to obtain a petition to keep Jeremiah alive, but the General Committee refused.526 Laurens told Campbell he did

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524 Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, 323n.
525 Thomas Knox Gordon, et al. to William Campbell, 1 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
526 Campbell to Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
not think he had the authority to override the Committee after Robert Smith’s testimony because of the remaining evidence against Jeremiah.

Laurens initially believed Jemmy only recanted after learning that he had received a pardon from Campbell, but Innes informed him that he had the timeline wrong and Jemmy did not yet know of his pardon when he retracted his testimony. Perhaps to cover for his confusion on the facts, Laurens still dismissed Jemmy as “a liar of the most abominable order of Liars,” an assessment with which Innes curiously agreed. Laurens also argued Jemmy’s original evidence was still corroborated by three witnesses, including the slave referred to as Sambo and the two other slaves who came forward after Jeremiah’s arrest in June to “make very ample discoveries” supporting the evidence provided by Jemmy. He also pointed to Jeremiah’s suspicious behavior following his arrest. According to Laurens, “when he was first confronted by Jemmy, [Jeremiah] positively denied that he knew the person – that he knew the Man.” The rebels found this excuse untenable, and took his claim that he did not know his sister’s husband as evidence of a guilty man dissembling to try and hide his connection to the alleged plot.527

Any evidence that may have once existed proving definitively whether Thomas Jeremiah did or did not attempt to raise an insurrection is likely lost to history. Historians have suggested that Laurens’ claim that Jerry denied knowledge of Jemmy is “quite problematic,” because “It is hard to believe that Jeremiah could have thought that he could get away with denying that he knew his own wife’s

\[527\] Henry Laurens to William Campbell, 17 August 1775; Laurens to Alexander Innes, 18 August 1775; Innes to Laurens, 18 August 1775 (enclosures) in Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, 328-335.
brother.” They have also, following Campbell’s lead, have suggested that it is difficult to believe a man of Jeremiah’s status, a free black of some means who owned slaves himself, would attempt to raise an insurrection.\textsuperscript{528} Neither one of these attempts to acquit Jeremiah in the historiography are satisfying, as it is not inconceivable that a man who committed a crime that would bring a punishment of execution would try to deny all evidence against him, no matter how implausible his claims. Likewise, it is similarly problematic to assume someone would never act on principle even if it would negatively affect their own economic interests or well-being.

Whether or not Jeremiah committed the crime for which he was executed, his story is significant for at least two reasons. First, Campbell’s correspondence with Dartmouth shows that the Jeremiah trial and execution accomplished a broader element of rebel strategy in provoking public fury against Britain for allegedly conspiring to start a race war, thereby further weakening the British position in the province and neighboring provinces. Laurens emphasizes this element of the strategy when he pretended to have no control over “what might be done by Men enraged as Men would have been if a pardon had been issued.”\textsuperscript{529} Jeremiah’s ordeal was also significant because it demonstrates the shift in thinking among rebel leaders about the threat of insurrection during the summer of 1775, and allows for a clearer understanding of the reason for this shift. There was no new evidence presented at Jeremiah’s August trial that had not also been known in June when he was first arrested, yet throughout May and June, and even part of July, there was a

\textsuperscript{528} Harris, \textit{The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah}, 135, 147; William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
\textsuperscript{529} Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 20 August 1775, PHL, X, 321.
general lack of concern in the southern provinces about Jeremiah or any threat posed by slaves. This suggests something else drove the Jeremiah affair besides the usual concern that always existed in the Carolinas and Georgia about how to maintain order in a slave-based society. The timing suggests that what really motivated the renewed effort beginning in July to control and deter slaves was, as Laurens indicated to Campbell, Captain Tollemache’s departure for Boston with one of the province’s best black harbor pilots. With rumors about a pending British expedition against the southern provinces, the harbor pilots who were willing to flee to the British ships could be the difference in allowing the British to get close enough to attack the city.

After Jeremiah

In the months after Jeremiah’s execution, the rebels continued to deal with the problems of escaped slaves running away to join the British and, they assumed, help the British attack the city and its white inhabitants. In November, the Earl of Dunmore, Virginia’s last royal governor, issued a proclamation calling on “every person capable of bearing arms to resort to His Majesty’s standard, or be looked upon as traitors to His Majesty’s crown and Government.” Unlike other governors who had made similar proclamations during the summer and autumn of 1775, Dunmore also “declare[d] all indented servants, negroes or others...free” and called on them “that are able and willing to bear arms” to join the British troops “as soon
as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper sense of their duty to His Majesty's crown and dignity.”

The British increased their efforts to separate slaves from their masters, which further stoked fear of British intentions. In the months after the December raid on Sullivan’s Island to remove the slaves who had taken refuge there in the hopes of joining the British, a similar series of events occurred in Georgia. On 6 January 1776, the British ships that had been at Charleston set sail from Rebellion Road for Savannah, including the Cherokee, the Tamar, the Sandwich packet boat, an armed schooner, a brigantine, and a Georgia pilot boat. The British hoped to

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530 Dunmore Proclamation, 7 November 1775 in Alan Gilbert, Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 9-10. This was not the first time Dunmore had considered the effect arming the slaves might have on the population of Virginia and the other southern provinces. In 1772, a year after becoming governor of Virginia, Dunmore told the Earl of Hillsborough, Dartmouth’s predecessor as Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the people of Virginia were worried about the number of slaves in the province, and while in times of peace “a rigorous exertion of the laws relating to them” would prevent insurrection, “in case of war...with Spain or indeed any other power that might make an attack upon this colony, the people with great reason tremble at the facility that an enemy would find in procuring such a body of men attached by no tie to their masters or to the country.” At the time he did not have in mind the situation that would face him three years later, but he did understand the fear with which the southern colonists anticipated slave insurrection in time of war. As the situation in the colonies spiraled towards war in 1775, he once again considered the role of the slaves in the colony. On 1 May, even before news of Lexington and Concord would have arrived in the province, Dunmore suggested to Dartmouth the idea of “rais[ing] such a force from among Indians, Negroes and other persons as would soon reduce the refractory people of this colony to obedience.” Dartmouth replied favorably to Dunmore’s suggestion in July, though suggesting Dunmore’s proposal might only be enough to “defend Government” rather than “subdue rebellion.” There is no indication, however, that Dunmore recognized the difference in context between the situation he discussed in 1772 and the environment he faced in 1775. In his earlier comments on the effect arming slaves would have on the white inhabitants of the province, he was considering the value the slaves would have for an external force which would have seen all Virginians as the enemy. The key difference in 1775 is that the British were only trying to stop the overthrow of government by some of the colonists, and would need to maintain the support of others who held the same fear of slave insurrection as the rebels. Earl of Dunmore to Earl of Hillsborough, 1 May 1772 in K.G. Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution (DAR), V (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1976), 94-95; Earl of Dunmore to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, DAR, IX, 107-110.

531 Henry Laurens to Archibald Bulloch, 6 January 1776, PHL, XI, 3.
procure provisions in Savannah that they could not obtain in Charleston.\textsuperscript{532} The Georgia Council of Safety immediately ordered out the militia and gave the commanding officer “for the time being...power to restrain any Crown officer from going without the limits of Savannah.”\textsuperscript{533}

Like its counterpart in Charleston had done in the last months of 1775, the Council of Safety placed particular emphasis on denying the British the services of any pilots from the province. It ordered the committee for St. John’s Parish to “use the utmost vigilance in watching the motions of the pilots for the harbour of Sunbury.” The committee was also to question a certain pilot who might have been planning to work for the British and, “take such steps with him if he appears inimical to the common interest, as will be a sufficient security against his aiding our enemies.” With the recent events at Sullivan’s Island likely in mind, the Council of Safety also kept close watch on slaves in the province to avoid internal threats as the British approached. It ordered that the “houses of all overseers and negroes throughout the Province...be forthwith searched,” including those on plantations just across the Savannah River in South Carolina.\textsuperscript{534} Based on a recommendation from the Continental Congress, the Georgia Council of Safety also recommended that

\textsuperscript{533} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 7 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{534} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 8 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.
the local committees “arrest and secure every person...whose going at large may in their opinion endanger the safety of the Colony or the liberties of America.”\textsuperscript{535}

With the arrival of the British ships expected any day, the Council of Safety emphasized continued suppression of any sentiment contrary to the “liberties of America.” It ordered the immediate arrest of James Pace, a tavern keeper in Savannah, and John Hall, a local planter, who were overheard calling themselves “King’s men” and saying “that all the men in the Congress and Council of Safety were Rebels; and that they would oppose all their measures.” Colonel Stephen Drayton was also given permission to “suppress and disperse by force all and every person who shall appear in arms in opposition to the measures of Congress, or who shall declare against the liberties of America.”\textsuperscript{536} The Council of Safety also appointed a committee to “examine the printer’s office” to ensure whether there was not something to be published...that might endanger the public safety.”\textsuperscript{537}

The \textit{Tamar} and \textit{Cherokee} arrived off of Cockspur Island near the entrance to the Savannah River on 15 January. Another ship, the \textit{Scarborough}, arrived at Cockspur three days later with several hundred British marines. That same day, the Council of Safety ordered the arrest of James Wright and three other Crown officials. They were granted parole and confined to their homes the same day, but ordered to have no communication with the British ships and given the stipulation that if the

\textsuperscript{535} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 9 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{536} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 12 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{537} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 13 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.
ships entered the river and moved closer to town the officials would all “be immediately removed to and confined in the country.”\textsuperscript{538} On 11 February, however, Wright managed to escape from his home confinement and reach the safety of the \textit{Scarborough}. At the time, due to the limits on exportation by agreement of Congress, there was a backlog of ships in the Savannah River carrying rice that were waiting to be allowed to sail. On the night of 2 March, British marines boarded some of these vessels anchored near Hutchinson’s Island, where they captured Captain Joseph Rice, a rebel supporter who was maintaining the boats and was on board the \textit{Nancy}. The rebels set two of their own ships ablaze, directing them towards the rice boats with the intention of burning the crop to prevent the British from procuring the provisions they needed. Their second effort succeeded, and several of the rice ships caught fire, though the British succeeded in escaping with some of the vessels.\textsuperscript{539}

With the arrival of the British ships at Cockspur, and particularly after their qualified success in the Battle of the Rice Boats, there were reports of hundreds of slaves escaping their masters in Georgia and making their way to Tybee Island with the hopes of seeking refuge with the British. Henry Laurens informed Colonel Stephen Bull of the Beaufort militia, who had taken a hundred of his men to Savannah when the British ships first appeared there, that those ships had also “carried off some of our Negroes, in the whole amounting to no inconsiderable number.” He told Bull, “these robberies & depredations are sufficient to warrant our

\textsuperscript{538} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 18 January 1776, Georgia Council of Safety Minute Books, Georgia Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{539} Georgia Council of Safety to South Carolina Council of Safety, 4 March 1776, PHL, XI, 137-141; South Carolina Council of Safety to Georgetown Committee, 15 March 1776, PHL, XI, 164-165.
firing upon any of the Men of War their Boats & Men in attempting to Land.”

As with their counterparts in South Carolina, the rebels were convinced the British were seizing their slaves with the intention of using them in an attack on the white inhabitants of the province. A disgusted Laurens told his son John that he was ashamed of the British for engaging in a “picaroon inglorious War” and sending “Men of War...1100 Leagues across the Atlantic to plunder plantations & British Troops to rob Hen Roosts.”

Bull suggested to Laurens it would be “far better for the Public and the owners of the deserted Negroes on Tybee Island” if the escaped slaves were “shot if they cannot be taken.” Bull explained, “if they are carried away, and converted into money, which is the Sinews of War, it will only enable our Enemy to fight us with our own money or property.” He recommended having some Creek Indian allies who were in Savannah lead the raid against the escaped slaves, as “it perhaps may deter other Negroes from deserting, and will establish a hatred or Aversion between the Indians and Negroes.”

In his reply, Laurens called the situation an “awful business,” but conceded that while the Negro Act required escaped slaves be returned to their masters or the workhouse, it also allowed for rebellious slaves to be shot if necessary. Laurens did, however, suggest to Bull that the Georgia Council of Safety should be the ones to act against the slaves on the island, which it did on 23 March.

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541 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 16 March 1776, PHL, XI, 174-175,
542 Stephen Bull to Henry Laurens, 14 March 1776, PHL, 162-164.
Archibald Bulloch, formerly President of the Provincial Congress and representative at the Second Continental Congress, led a force of Georgia militia and approximately thirty Creek Indians on the raid. They “killed two Marines, one Tory who would not surrender and took one Marine and several Tories Prisoners.” They also burnt the houses that the British and Loyalists were using on the island, all while taking fire from the British ships.\(^{543}\) British officials claimed the rebels treated the British and Loyalists “in a very Inhuman manner.”\(^{544}\) Patrick Tonyn, the governor of East Florida who was not present but nevertheless heard about the incident, claimed the marines, who were on the island to cut firewood, were unarmed, and the rebels broke “the marines’ legs and thighs with a hatchet” and scalped them.\(^{545}\)

What the various American and British accounts of the incident do not mention is how many, if any, escaped slaves were on the island with the British. Cassandra Pybus argues, “There appears to be no evidence of so large a runaway encampment on Tybee Island,” and British officials, including Wright, and some Loyalists were the ones using the houses on the island, “as an alternative to the cramped conditions on the fleet.”\(^{546}\) Nevertheless, the rebels used the rumors of the British encouraging runaways to seek shelter at Tybee to great effect in achieving broader strategic ends. Three days after Bulloch’s raid, the South Carolina Provincial


\(^{545}\) Patrick Tonyn to David Taitt, 20 April 1776, DAR, XII, 108-110.

Congress approved a Constitution for the province, with a preamble that, among other grievances, accused the British of having “excited domestic insurrections,” “proclaimed freedom to servants and slaves,” and “enticed or stolen them from, and armed them against their masters.” With the approval of the Constitution on 26 March, the Provincial Congress dissolved itself and met later that same day as the General Assembly of South Carolina.547

**Conclusion**

Many historians who view the American Revolution in the South using a bottom-up lens and emphasize the role of non-elites focus on the actions of the slaves to show the pressures from below that drove the rebels into war with the British. Robert Olwell, Gary Nash, Woody Holton and others argue that the rebels reorganized the militia and established provincial regiments to defend against slave insurrection rather than against the British men-of-war sitting off the coasts of the southern provinces, or the British expedition to the South that the rebels believed was imminent. Historians have also argued that slaves determining their own future escaped to the British and thereby forced the rebels to take action against the Crown.548 These conclusions follow from the assumption that the rebel elite lost control of political authority once the royal provincial governments collapsed, resulting in anarchy. According to this assumption, the rebels also lost control of the

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slave population in the South, and spread rumors of slave insurrection precisely because they feared there was nothing they could do to prevent such an attack.

There was certainly a deep-rooted fear of slave insurrection in the southern provinces during the decades prior to the American Revolution, particularly in a province like South Carolina where slaves overwhelmingly outnumbered the white population. This fear led to a series of successive pieces of legislation in the 18th century to regulate the activities and actions of the slave population, giving the people of the southern colonies significant experience in controlling certain segments of the population. The situation was no different in 1775, and two recent incidents involving slaves preaching freedom to fellow slaves and carrying out an insurrection only heightened these fears among the white inhabitants of the South. With the outbreak of hostilities in Massachusetts, there was concern that the British would use the slaves as a weapon against the white inhabitants, encouraging them to flee their masters, arming them, and turning them against the white population. From the spring into the summer of 1775, the rebels learned of statements hinting at this possibility, which only heightened the fears of the people. The rebels strengthened the town watch and the patrol system, while the Provincial Congress appointed a committee to look into this possibility and eventually ordered the arrest of several slaves, free blacks and white persons believed to be involved in planning insurrection.

Any consideration of the immediate importance of fears of slave insurrection in bringing about the events of early 1775, however, must account for the change in attitudes that occurred even from week to week during the spring and summer of
1775. Despite this long-standing, latent fear of insurrection that permeated all of southern society even before the war, by June the rebel leadership had concluded there was little immediate threat of slave rebellion. They decided there was scant evidence to substantiate the accusations made against those individuals, including Jeremiah, arrested as a result of the investigation by a special committee of the Provincial Congress. With insufficient evidence to warrant the charges against Jeremiah, he was released from close confinement in the jail, and sent to the workhouse in town. Though they continued to publicly stoke fears of British support for slave insurrection for propaganda purposes, prominent leaders repeatedly claimed in private letters that there was little reason for concern.

It was in early July that the tone changed among these same individuals with respect to the threat posed by the slaves. The timing of this sudden shift in tone points to fears of the role slaves and free blacks would play in a British attack on the southern colonies that was believed to be imminent. A British ship captain took the most skilled harbor pilot in Charleston with him to Boston, where it was believed he would assist in the planning of a southern expedition. Several days later, the South Carolina Council of Safety heard an account of a recent conversation involving

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549 For example, Gary Nash addresses the ordeal of Thomas Jeremiah, but describes it as an unbroken narrative from his arrest in June to his execution in August, giving the impression that fears of slave insurrection consistently influenced rebel actions during this period. The release of most of the slaves and free blacks arrested in June with Jeremiah and the reduced constraints on Jeremiah, however, suggest attitudes on the threat posed by the slave population shifted dramatically sometime later in the summer. This would support the conclusion that something else drove rebel actions against the British in the summer and fall, even if the ubiquitous concern about the demographic imbalance in the province always remained. Nash, *The Unknown Revolution*, 161. See also Peter Wood, "'Taking Care of Business' in Revolutionary South Carolina: Republicanism and the Slave Society," Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 283.
William Campbell in which the governor spoke of the impending arrival of this expedition, and the critical role black harbor pilots would play in facilitating an attack by guiding the British men-of-war across the bar and within firing range of the city. The rebel leadership suddenly expressed fear even in private of the threat these black harbor pilots would pose, as well as other slaves who escaped to British lines to assist in an attack on the province. The greatest concern for the rebels, therefore, was the threat posed by the British, and as with Loyalists, action taken against the slave population was, in that moment, primarily about preventing the British from utilizing their support. Without any new evidence being presented, the rebels now brought Thomas Jeremiah to trial, convicted him, and executed him in the course of a week. Nothing changed in their public strategy, however, as they continued to push the threat to the inhabitants to both further delegitimize the British and convert Loyalists who were often just as afraid as the rebels of slave insurrection. They would take the same approach in publicizing evidence of British support for Indian attacks on frontier inhabitants. With this, however, there was less need to sensationalize the story, as the British did intend to use the Indians to open a second front against the provinces in coordination with a British attack from the sea. This opportunity for coordination would not present itself for some time, however, and this left the British in an untenable situation of trying to hold the Indians back after they spent so much effort preparing them to act.
Chapter 6: So Wicked as to Instigate the Savages to War Against Us

In the first days of July 1775, William Henry Drayton visited the Tradd Street home in Charleston of John and Sarah Stuart. John Stuart was the Superintendent for Indian Affairs for the Southern District, a job that required him to establish good relations with the tribes on behalf of the King and the British government. On the day Drayton called at the Stuarts’ house, however, only Sarah was home. Her husband had been forced to flee to Savannah and, eventually, St. Augustine in East Florida in response to accusations from many of his neighbors in Charleston that he was leading a British effort to arm the Indian tribes to attack white settlers in the interior of the country. This would open a second front against the rebels and facilitate a British invasion by sea. The rebels learned of letters Stuart had received from one of his deputies, Alexander Cameron, intimating that the Cherokee were armed and ready to act on the King’s behalf whenever Stuart were to call on them. Believing that these letters might have been delivered to the Stuarts’ house, Drayton “waited on [Mrs. Stuart] and insisted on her delivering to him some dispatches she had received a few days ago.”

The letters Drayton obtained that day at the Stuart house were seemingly “of no consequence,” but this did not dissuade the rebels from their efforts to procure

550 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/396.
the correspondence between Cameron and Stuart. In addition to the intelligence they would provide as to the enemy’s intentions, there was a second reason the rebels thought it important to find these letters. As with rumors that the British intended to arm the slaves and turn them against their masters, evidence that the British intended to arm Indian tribes to attack white inhabitants of the province would be immensely useful in turning the loyalties of the people against Britain. The rebels saw in the Stuart-Cameron letters the potential for another propaganda coup, as revelations of such British conspiring would have been a betrayal of trust invested by the inhabitants in the government. This propaganda effort would prove to be immensely effective, as many steadfast Loyalists wavered in their support for the British government after learning of its plans to arm and lead Indians against white settlers.

One such Loyalist was Alexander Chesney, a nineteen year-old settler on the Pacolet River who had arrived in South Carolina from Ireland in 1772, and in 1775 helped Loyalists escape rebel militias by piloting them out of the province by way of his father’s farm. He was captured in early 1776 and offered a choice of a military trial or joining the rebels. He chose the latter and served for more than a year with the rebels, during which time he “marched against the Indians.” He had “no objection” to fighting the Indians alongside the rebels, and “helped to destroy 32 of their towns.” Similarly, following his own capture by rebel forces, Robert Cunningham, a loyalist officer and leader of the backcountry opposition to the rebels,

551 Ibid.
refused to sign the Association until he heard the rumors that the British were supporting Indian attacks on backcountry settlers. According to Henry Laurens, Cunningham “would not at first believe that the British Administration were so wicked as to Instigate the Savages to War against us.” However, once he “was convinced of the truth his Conscience freed him from old obligations and he most heartily desired to take the Oath of fidelity to the United Colonies.”

Both Cunningham and Chesney returned to their allegiance to the King once the British captured Charleston in 1780, but their reactions in the first years of the war demonstrate the extent to which many Loyalists found British support for Indian attacks as repugnant as the rebels.

The rebels gave special attention to spreading word that the British planned to incite Indian attacks on white settlers in the backcountry. While they used such accusations against the British for purposes of propaganda, they often did not have to invent evidence of British intentions. Instead, even more so than with Josiah Martin’s letter to Lewis DeRosset about arming slaves, they primarily used the words of royal officials against them. To win the support of Loyalists, the rebels found value in the letters of some British officials who demonstrated support for arming the Indians to attack the white inhabitants. As with rumors about slave insurrection, however, they also took advantage of these fears to achieve specific strategic military and political ends. These ends included the defense against a second front in their rear, as well as weakening the British position in the southern

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colonies by depriving them of the potential support of Indians. The rebels also leveraged the fear of British-supported Indian attacks to target and delegitimize Stuart and his deputies in the eyes of the Indian tribes, and thereby disrupted British efforts to gain the support of those tribes. At the same time, the rebels used their own representatives to secure neutrality of the Indian tribes. Stuart was forced to flee his home in Charleston for Savannah, and eventually had to flee to St Augustine and later Pensacola. According to Governor Campbell, Stuart’s wife faced similar treatment in Charleston, where she was “threatened since Mr Stuart’s departure with having her house pulled down and other violences committed.”

The Superintendent vs. the Traders

Since his appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District in 1762, Stuart often found himself at odds with the inhabitants of the region over the role of the British government in colonial affairs. This was particularly true regarding relations with Indian tribes along the southern frontier. As J. Russell Snapp argues, following the withdrawal of the French in the early 1760s, the conflict between the imperial-minded Stuart and the colonists who demanded greater autonomy over frontier affairs, “inevitably became enmeshed in the broader debate that culminated in the American Revolution.” The southerners objected to the threat Stuart posed to local authority over frontier affairs, while Stuart, who

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554 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396
gained both status and wealth through the imperial system, saw centralized control of the frontier as the only way to maintain order and serve British interests.\textsuperscript{555}

For Stuart, nothing better demonstrated the need for this centralized control than the disjointed policy that had resulted from provincial control over Indian affairs, and the disorder that came from using Indian traders to conduct official Indian affairs.\textsuperscript{556} For Stuart, “The influence of the traders” and “the management of the Indian trade...revert[ing] to the different provinces” allowed for the prioritization of parochial and commercial interests over imperial interests.\textsuperscript{557} He particularly opposed provincial and individual attempts to secure land cessions from the Indian tribes, usually in return for the relief of debts. This was the case in 1773, when the Cherokee agreed to cede two million acres of land to the province of Georgia as satisfaction for debts owed to traders. Despite initial support for the cession from the Cherokee, Georgia governor James Wright, and even many officials in London, Stuart argued that the private and provincial interests at play were incompatible with imperial interests.\textsuperscript{558} Likewise, he opposed efforts of prominent residents of the southern provinces, including Jonathan Bryan of Georgia, William Henry Drayton of South Carolina, and Richard Henderson of North Carolina, to reach similar agreements for land with Indian tribes. Another example of the threat posed by provincial and individual control of Indian affairs was James Wright’s use of George Galphin, a trader with the Creek Indians, as his official agent, which caused

\textsuperscript{556} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{557} John Stuart to Thomas Gage, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/77
\textsuperscript{558} Snapp, \textit{John Stuart}, 6.
Stuart great “difficulty [in] managing the Creek Indians.” Stuart believed traders like Galphin, who had “acquired a considerable fortune” by trading with the Creek and would eventually be appointed by the rebels to act as commissioner to the Creek nation and counteract Stuart’s influence, had only their own interests in mind.

According to Stuart, experience showed that “the provinces ought not have anything to do with the Indians” and “their affairs should be conducted by officers immediately under the direction of the Crown and the commander-in-chief of His Majesty’s forces.”

For more than a decade before the Revolution, therefore, Stuart’s efforts to “protect the Indians against trade abuses and encroachments on their land” while “maintaining the peace and ensuring British political control of the hinterland” clashed with the “land hunger of both...elites and ordinary settlers, the latter of whom were rapidly increasing in number.” Then, in March 1775, Stuart received a letter from General Gage in Boston, informing him, as related by Stuart to Dartmouth, “that ill-affected people in those parts had been endeavouring to poison the minds of the Indians of the 6 Nations and other tribes with jealousies in order to alienate their affection from His Majesty and to weaken their confidence in and dependence on his protection.” Stuart told Dartmouth that he “lost no time...in writing to all the agents and deputies” to the various tribes in the South “to put them upon their guard against any attempts of the like nature to debauch the Indians in their respective districts.” Although he insisted, “the disposition of the Indians appears to be pacific,” Stuart knew he would face the same challenge of maintaining

559 John Stuart to Thomas Gage, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/77
the allegiance of the tribes. As he informed Dartmouth, "there are people in the southern provinces as ill-inclined to government as any to the northward."560

“Render me obnoxious to the people”

Stuart and many of the frontier inhabitants were already prepared to believe the worst about the other’s intentions, but with the news of events at Lexington and Concord, the rebels in South Carolina became convinced that Stuart intended to arm the Indians to attack inhabitants of the province. Shortages of guns and ammunition as a result of both a British prohibition on exporting these articles to the colonies and the rebels’ nonimportation regime only increased fears that the Indians would readily fight for the British in return for these gifts. Furthermore, as Snapp argues, “Some also remembered that past Indian wars had often driven colonists into the arms of their British protectors, and it seemed that imperial authorities might create similar circumstances to stifle the resistance movement.”561 The Provincial Congress decided to consider the accusations made against Stuart when it met on 1 June.

Before the Congress could convene, however, Stuart fled to his plantation at Lady’s Island near Beaufort. He heard from a number of friends of “an intention of the leaders of the opposition in Carolina to seize my person to prevent my making use of my influence with the Indian tribes in the southern department.”562 Rumors continued to swirl regarding Stuart’s intentions with the Indians, including that he had ordered the Cherokee to slaughter 34 families along the frontier. John Barnwell and Captain John Joyner, both members of the South Carolina Provincial Congress

560 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 March 1775, TNA, CO 5/76
561 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 May 1775, TNA, CO 5/76; Snapp, John Stuart, 159
562 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 21 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76
from Beaufort, followed Stuart to that district spreading “the most defamatory Reports and Insinuations,” intending to “blacken [Stuart’s] Character & render me obnoxious to the people.” They claimed that the Congress had confirmed Stuart intended to arm the Indians to attack backcountry inhabitants, and that “great Quantities of Arms and Ammunition were shipped for [Stuart] to arm the Negroes and Indians.” They claimed he had been responsible for betraying Fort Loudoun, which had fallen to the Cherokee in 1760 during the Cherokee War, and causing the death of the members of the fort’s garrison. According to Stuart, Joyner and Barnwell printed handbills with these claims and distributed them throughout the Beaufort area, including at local militia musters.563

Soon after his arrival at Lady’s Island Stuart fled to Savannah. The rebel leadership there spread the word that he intended to use the Cherokee and Creek Indians to attack the inhabitants of South Carolina and Georgia. Stuart arranged a meeting with several members of the rebel leadership, including Joseph Habersham and William Young, both representatives of Savannah in the Georgia Provincial Congress. Stuart wanted the “opportunity of clearing himself of some aspersions,” and he brought copies of his correspondence with his deputies and agents to facilitate this process. At first the rebels thought Stuart’s explanation “appeared...plausible” based on the letters he showed them, but “unluckily for Mr. Stuart, he produces a number of letters to his Deputy, Mr. [Alexander] Cameron, and the answers.” In one of these letters, Stuart warned Cameron of the news he received from Gage about rebel efforts in the north to divide the British and Six

563 John Stuart to (South Carolina) Committee of Intelligence, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
Nations. He ordered Cameron to “use your influence to dispose those people to act in defence of His Majesty and Government, if found necessary.”564 In his response to Stuart, Cameron “not only assur[ed] the Superintendent of their loyalty and affection,” but went “a step farther and tells him there was a large body of them ready to take arms if ever it should be thought necessary for Mr Stuart to put himself at their head.”565

The rebel leaders in Georgia relayed this information to the Council of Safety in Charleston, which promptly impeached Stuart and ordered the Committee of Intelligence to “write to Mr. Stuart to answer the Charge & recommend to him to come to Charles Town [as] his personal appearance will be more efficacious & more Satisfactory than a correspondence by letter.” The Committee gave Stuart the assurance of the Congress “that if it shall be in their power they will vindicate you from all imputation of Guilt on this subject” if he returned to Charleston.566 Stuart and William Campbell were not convinced by these promises, as Campbell told Dartmouth they were dealing “with people who did not wish to be convinced of [Stuart’s] innocence or that of the ministry.”567

Campbell told Dartmouth that “it was absolutely necessary for the carrying on [the rebels’] designs that [Stuart and Cameron] should be believed guilty.”568 The rebels in Charleston wanted Stuart so they could both use him to further create

565 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 2 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
566 Committee of Intelligence to John Stuart, 21 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
567 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
568 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
divisions between the British authorities and Loyalists who feared indiscriminate Indian attacks on frontier inhabitants, as well as to deprive the British of Stuart’s influence with the Indians. Campbell and Stuart were almost certainly correct in their suspicions. Henry Laurens, who historians have often depicted as a moderating influence in South Carolina, told his son John on 23 June that he felt “extremely Sorry for the Man & most truly feel for the wretchedness of his family,” and suggested Stuart would get a fair trial in Charleston, and only “if he is Guilty” would he “feel & ought to feel public resentment.”

Laurens, however, often represented himself in some of his letters as more moderate than he did in others or than what was reflected in his voting and other actions. Similarly, he often assumed the best intentions of the enemy, and his initial inclination therefore often appeared more moderate than his eventual actions would suggest once he changed his position. Such was the case with Stuart, as Laurens’ initial moderate position of 23 June was different from his position the following day when he wrote to his brother James that “much Charity is required” to not conclude Stuart was guilty of the charges against him. A week after that, Laurens became even more certain of Stuart’s guilt, describing it as “an ungrateful act, to write of turning the power of those Savages against a Country which gave him Bread, [and] led him in the way to affluence.” Laurens now asked, “where is

569 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 23 June 1775, PHL, X, 186-196.
570 Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 24 June 1775, PHL, X, 197.
Christianity when the twelve Apostles of the present Day can give their blessing to such Cruelties as are now in agitation for Ripping up poor America?"  

Realizing Stuart was not going to fall for this ploy to get him to return to Charleston, the Provincial Congress ordered that his “Estate...stand as a security for the good Behaviour of the Indians in the Southern Department.”  

Meanwhile, Joyner and Barnwell, together with other South Carolinians, had followed Stuart from Beaufort to Savannah, where they continued to “inflam[e] and enrag[e] our People” against Stuart. Governor Wright informed Stuart that the Georgia Council of Safety had met with Joyner, Barnwell, and others from South Carolina, and, according to Stuart, “advised me to take Steps for the Security of my person.”  

Several of the members of the Council of Safety had given him the same warning that “the people were much enraged and they could not answer for the safety of my person.”  

At the end of June, Stuart boarded the St. John, an armed schooner sitting off of Cockspur Island at the mouth of the Savannah River, and proceeded to St. Augustine. When they realized he was fleeing Savannah, the rebels tried to stop him by sending “Two Boats...down the River in pursuit of me,” as well as “several Armed Canoes said to be commanded by Capt Joiner and Mr Barnwell.” Stuart’s flight from Savannah only further convinced the South Carolina rebels of his guilt, and they informed him that “your Precipitate departure from Georgia after you had an

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571 Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 2 July 1775, PHL, X, 202.  
572 Committee of Intelligence to John Stuart, 21 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.  
573 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.  
574 John Stuart to Committee of Intelligence, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
idea that you stood accus’d here has not vindicated you in the eyes of the Public.”

Stuart ignored this, and instead called his departure “a most fortunate escape.”

“Gett Mr Cameron killed or taken Prisoner”

With Stuart out of their grasp, the rebels turned their attention to Alexander Cameron as they continued their efforts to both diminish British influence with the Indian tribes and convince would-be Loyalists of the threat posed by British support for the Indians. Cameron, however, often took sanctuary in the Cherokee lands, making it especially difficult for the rebels to capture him or force him into exile along with Stuart. In July, when Major Andrew Williamson of the South Carolina militia received a report of Cameron visiting with the Cherokee, Williamson decided to follow Cameron, who he believed was fleeing to the Cherokee Nation as a result of rumors that the Provincial Congress would have him arrested. Cameron insisted to Williamson that “he never understood Capt. Stuarts Letter to him...to be desiring him to induce the Cherokee Indians to fall upon the Province of South-Carolina, but only to endeavour to keep the said Indians firmly attach’d to His Majesty’s Government.” Furthermore, he insisted that he would resign before he ever agreed to execute any orders he may receive to have the Indians “fall upon defenceless women and Children.” Williamson then showed Cameron extracts of his correspondence with Stuart, but Cameron again insisted “that from the whole Tenor

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575 Committee of Intelligence to John Stuart, 29 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
576 John Stuart to Committee of Intelligence, 18 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
of Capt. Stuart’s Letters to him, he could not construe” the letters in the same way Williamson suggested.577

Later that month, William Thomson of the Third Regiment of Rangers learned of Cameron’s arrival at the Cherokee town of Seneca, and set off with his men to seize him. They were ambushed upon their arrival and Cameron managed to escape. Thomson responded by burning Seneca and several nearby towns, as well as six thousand bushels of corn.578 To add to the rebels’ fears, William Tennent, a member of the Council of Safety who was in the backcountry to counter Loyalist influence in that region, informed Henry Laurens that Cameron had been joined by 3,000 Indians from the upper Cherokee towns on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains. According to Tennent, there existed “all the appearance of a hellish plot” by which Cameron and the Overhill Cherokee intended to attack the frontier inhabitants and “bear down all before them. Tennent was forming volunteer cavalry units of men who had taken the Association, but the enemy “seem[s] determined if possible to bring the people to draw blood before they have time to be enlightened.”579 William Henry Drayton, also in the backcountry with Tennent, collected affidavits from individuals who had heard that Cameron was doing “all he could to influence the...Indians to join the King’s forces against the people of Carolina.”580

577 Andrew Williamson to Council of Safety 14 July 1775, PHL, X, 222-224.
It was amidst this concern about Stuart and Cameron’s activities with the Cherokee in the summer of 1775, that the rebels received the letter from Arthur Lee that had warned of slave insurrections. The letter also warned, “the ministry had in agitation...to bring down the Indians on the inhabitants of this province.” Furthermore, Lee claimed, Governor William Campbell had brought with him to South Carolina 14,000 stands of arms for this purpose. With uncertainty surrounding Cameron’s plans for the Cherokee, the rebels persisted with their strategy of fostering fear among the inhabitants of British support for the Indians while also targeting Cameron in an attempt to lessen his influence among the Indians. In September, Drayton wrote to Cameron informing him that with the rebels expecting the imminent arrival of British forces in South Carolina, they could no longer take any chances on the Indians posing a threat against their rear. They were therefore determined to “remove at a distance from us, every object that has any ability...either to counteract, or to impede our means of defence, or to assist the enemy.”

Drayton told Cameron that “we look upon you as an object dangerous to our welfare; and therefore, as an object, that we ought to endeavour to remove to a distance from your present residence.” Drayton suggested Cameron follow the example of Stuart and Campbell, who by that time had fled to the Tamar, who “did not think it proper to expose themselves to the just resentments of the public.” The rebels wanted Cameron to go someplace that would “satisfy us that you cannot

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581 William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, 31 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
582 William Henry Drayton to Alexander Cameron, 26 September 1775, DHAR, 194-195.
readily exercise the functions of your office among” the Cherokee. He demanded, in
the “politest mode of application,” that Cameron leave the Cherokee Nation, and
suggested he go to St Augustine or Pensacola in West Florida. Drayton made clear,
however, that his suggestion “carries all the force of a command,” and that Cameron
could not ignore this order “with safety to your person, and the people in your
charge.”583 Drayton authorized a rebel who was well-known by the Indians “to use
his Influence to gett Mr Cameron killed or taken Prisoner.” When that failed,
“he...offered a Considerable reward to any single person who would Shott him from
behind a bush then mount his horse & Escape.”584

Cameron was able to ignore Drayton’s ultimatum given his position of
relative safety and sanctuary on Cherokee land. With Stuart also out of reach in St
Augustine, the rebels sought other ways to diminish the influence Stuart and his
agents enjoyed with the Indians. The most successful way was to prevent the British
from obtaining the gunpowder intended as a gift for the Indians to allow them to
hunt for food and animal skins, which they used to trade for goods and repay their
debts to traders and merchants. The raids on the British vessels, including the
*Philippa, Betsey, and Polly*, left Stuart and his agents scrambling to find any
ammunition they could that would at least temporarily satisfy the Indians. Stuart
purchased ammunition with his own money and requested of the governors of East
and West Florida any ammunition they could spare. It was, however, a patchwork
process, and Stuart’s frustration was palpable as he predicted to Dartmouth that the

584 Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
Polly would meet the same fate as the Philippa, with “there being no Kings vessel at [Saint Augustine] or Savannah to protect” incoming shipments of ammunition.

Stuart recommended “stopping all supplies of Ammunition and Indian Goods to [South Carolina and Georgia] for the Present, and that the Exportation of them, under proper restrictions to the Floridas...be permitted.” He argued these steps were necessary to retain influence with the Indians and prevent the rebels from “Debauch[ing] the minds of the Indians, and Seduc[ing] them from their Duty to His Majesty and their Confidence in him & His officers.” The inability to supply ammunition, Stuart warned, “gave the greatest Reason to apprehend a general Dissatisfaction” from the Indians, and would “enable the malcontents to send in their Agents full-handed.”

Furthermore, as David Taitt, Stuart’s agent to the Creek Nation, informed Stuart based on his discussions with several Creek chiefs, “if ammunition could be got soon things might remain quiet among them, but if they could not be supplied they could not answer for what their young people might do.”

“Attend closely to Indian affairs”

In June 1775, the South Carolina Provincial Congress formed “Committees of Inquiry,” to “attend closely to Indian affairs, to correspond with and transmit every necessary intelligence to the Council of Safety.” It named a committee to act as agents to the Creek Indians, which consisted of LeRoy Hammond, David Zubly, and George Galphin. Galphin was an Indian trader who enjoyed great influence with the

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585 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 17 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/77; John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 21 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
586 David Taitt to John Stuart, 1 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
tribes and who had acted as a private agent with the Indians before the war for James Wright. The committee for the Cherokee included another trader, Edward Wilkinson, the militia officer, Andrew Williamson, and John Bowie. Several months later the Continental Congress appointed Wilkinson, Galphin, and Robert Rae, as well as Willie Jones and John Walker from North Carolina, to be Commissioners of Indian Affairs for the southern district. They were to counteract Stuart’s influence over the Indians, and if they found any of Stuart’s agents “attempting to stir up the Indians” they were to “seize upon them and send them to town to the Council of Safety for the province in which such deputy may be apprehended.” The five commissioners appointed by the Continental Congress met at Salisbury in North Carolina in November 1775 to coordinate their efforts, and decided to invite the Cherokee and Creek chiefs to separate conferences in the spring, when they would further attempt to marginalize Stuart.

They also sent messages, or talks, to the Cherokee and Creek Nations, explaining to them the causes for the war while trying to counteract talks given by Stuart and his agents. They had mixed success with these attempts at persuasion. Taitt informed Stuart that it was his belief the rebels had delivered some private talks to the Lower Creeks, as “there seems a coolness among the headmen to me not usual among them.” Some of the chiefs refused to meet with Taitt while those more friendly to Taitt confirmed this “cool behaviour” among the other chiefs “but could

588 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 14 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/665.
not tell the reason of it.” At the same time, Stuart and his deputies were often more effective than the rebel commissioners at delegitimizing the enemy. During one meeting with the Cherokee, Wilkinson failed to effectively counter an accusation from Cameron that the inhabitants of South Carolina and Georgia regularly defrauded the Indians out of their land, and “had it not been for the...order of the King they would not have had a Foot of Land left them at this day and then they would have been obliged to Serve as Slaves.” Stuart had previously told Dartmouth that there was “nothing so likely to interrupt and disturb our tranquility with the Indians as the incessant attempts to defraud them of their land by clandestine purchases,” but Wilkinson failed to recognize the significance of Cameron’s accusation. The Council of Safety expressed their displeasure with Wilkinson, claiming, “Your silence was a Tacit Confirmation of a Short Charge against us comprehending every thing that could or can be said to render us odious in the sight of the Indians.” Furthermore, Cameron “could not have said more to undo us if his Speech had been Continued from the rising to the Setting of the Sun than is contained in the few words above recited.”

In addition to sending the Indians messages and talks, the rebels also supplied them with rum, clothing, and other goods. Mindful, however, of the effect British supplies of ammunition to the Indians had on the inhabitants of the province, the South Carolina Council of Safety was hesitant about providing the Indians with

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589 David Taitt to John Stuart, 1 August 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
590 Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
large amounts of ammunition. In July Galphin suggested to the Council of Safety that a provision of ammunition for the Indians would achieve what Stuart could not, but the Council of Safety demurred, suggesting that such a provision “perhaps would be putting Arms into their Hands, which they might be influenced to use against the Colonies.” Furthermore, the members argued, “Prudence dictates that we ought, if it be possible, to keep them in such a State as to prevent their being able to make War.” They suggested instead assembling some of the chiefs, and supplying each with a small amount of ammunition. They believed this would centralize control of powder with the chiefs, and “keep the Indians, by Means of their Head men, in Peace.”

Eventually, the rebels agreed to give the Cherokee a larger supply of gunpowder after Galphin insisted that it was necessary since “we have no other means for keeping our Indian Allies in peace and friendship with us but that of Supplying them with Ammunition.” This decision resulted in predictable reactions from the backcountry inhabitants. The Saxe-Gotha Committee of Safety stopped the shipment at Congarees out of concern that the Council of Safety intended to arm the Indians to attack frontier inhabitants. In typical fashion, the Council of Safety in Charleston let the local committee know in no uncertain terms that its authority was paramount in the province, and that “we act upon good grounds & have nothing else in view but the public welfare.” The local committee allowed the shipment to proceed, but before it reached the Cherokee backcountry,

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592 Council of Safety to Georgia Council of Safety, 24 July 1775, PHL, X, 243-244.
593 Council of Safety to George Galphin, 4 October 1775, PHL, X, 447-449; Council of Safety to George Galphin, 22 October 1775, PHL, X, 491-492.
594 Council of Safety to Saxe Gotha Committee, 24 October 1775, PHL, X, 500-501.
Loyalist Patrick Cunningham, brother of Robert Cunningham, stole the shipment, throwing the backcountry further into chaos.

The rebels also knew that if they were going to succeed in convincing the Indians to remain neutral, they had to address at least some of the tribes’ grievances against white settlers on the frontier. The rebels made a concerted effort to reduce attacks or harassment by white people on the Indians. In September, for example, three brothers from Georgia named Cloud and a fourth person attacked four Cherokee Indians near an area called the Buffalo Lick on the land that the Cherokee had ceded to Georgia in 1773. The white men killed two of the Indians and wounded a third. The fourth, who was not hurt, “set up the war-hoop and the wounded men stood to their arms,” which led the white men to run away.\(^{595}\) William Thomson and Edward Wilkinson conferred on the matter, and Thomson ordered a lieutenant to “take a party of Men with him & go in search of the Persons whom the Indians mistrusted.”\(^{596}\) The rebels took action in part out of concern that the Cherokee would attack white settlers to avenge the death of two of their own, and thereby weaken the authority of the Council of Safety along the frontier. Alexander Cameron later reported that the rebels were right to be concerned, since the Cherokee “were much exasperated at this piece of treachery and were with difficulty restrained by their chiefs from taking immediate satisfaction...”\(^{597}\) The prospect of such an attack “disturb’d the minds of the back Inhabitants much.” Thomson decided to order some of the Ranger regiment to the frontier, but “not to proceed within fifteen Miles of the

\(^{595}\) Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
\(^{597}\) Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
Indian Line, for fear of alarming the Indians.”  

Despite this fear of Indian retaliation, the rebels also wanted to maintain good relations with the Cherokee, and they had the Cloud brothers arrested and imprisoned in Georgia.

“Bring his Rebellious white Subjects to...a Sense of their Duty”

The fears that Stuart would receive orders to lead the Indians in attacks on white inhabitants of the colonies became reality in September 1775. General Gage informed Stuart that the rebels’ use of Indian allies in the northern colonies justified their use in the Southern Department, and he ordered Stuart, “when opportunity offers, to make [the Indians] take arms against His Majesty’s enemies and to distress them all in their power, for no terms is now to be kept with them.”

Upon receiving Gage’s instructions, Stuart wrote to his agents, including Cameron, Taitt, and his brother, Henry Stuart, to inform them of the new orders. He recommended telling the different Indian tribes that their lack of ammunition and other goods was “entirely owing to the bad designs of the Rebells,” and that they would achieve “the greatest honour by Exerting [themselves] in the Kings cause and endeavouring to bring his Rebellious white Subjects to...a Sense of their Duty.” He also ordered his agents to “get proper persons employed to counteract the Committee agents” in their respective regions.

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599 Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77. This was also not the only example of rebel leadership going after white inhabitants who had murdered Indians. See for example Proceedings of the Georgia Council of Safety, 15 May 1776 in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), V pt 1 (Savannah: The Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 54-55; Georgia Council of Safety to Captain William McIntosh, 16 May 1776, CGHS, V pt 1, 54.
600 Thomas Gage to John Stuart, 12 September 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
601 John Stuart to Henry Stuart, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
ongoing conflict between the Creek and the Choctaw Indians, for “while [the Creek] have a powerful enemy at their backs they will not willingly engage in distressing the rebels.”

Stuart knew, however, that since there was no word yet of a planned expedition of British troops to the southern colonies, the rebels would be able to concentrate much of their force on the Indians were they to attack on their own. Stuart thought perhaps the Loyalists throughout South Carolina could rise against the rebels in conjunction with an attack by the Cherokee. In December 1775 he ordered Cameron “to prevail upon [the Cherokee] to march as soon as possible to the assistance of such of the King’s faithful subjects as may already have taken or shall hereafter take arms in defence of government and laws.” What Stuart did not realize, however, was the extent to which the rebel leadership had extended its control throughout the province, preventing the Loyalists from being able to act on their own accord. In the three months prior, the rebels had arrested much of the Loyalist leadership in the backcountry and forced those who had not been arrested to go on the run, seeking sanctuary in the Cherokee Nation, in East Florida, in the northern provinces under the protection of the British army, or to royal vessels sitting off of Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah.

The other challenge Stuart faced, and that the British would continue to face throughout the war in trying to employ the Indians, was the need for attentive leadership of the Indians. He had to ensure they limited their attacks to rebels and

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602 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 25 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
603 John Stuart to Alexander Cameron, 16 December 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
avoided harming Loyalists or their property, or any women and children. In his instructions for Cameron and Taitt to lead the Cherokee and Creek, respectively, against the rebels, Stuart took great pains to make clear, “I do not mean by this an indiscriminate Attack upon the Frontier inhabitants of the Provinces.” They were instead “to act in the Execution of any concerted Plan and to assist his Majesty’s Troops and Friends in distressing the Rebell[s] and bringing them to a sense of their Duty.” This caution nevertheless conflicted with Stuart’s insistence that “no Time be lost in employing the Indians...to give all the Assistance in their Power to such of His Majesty's faithful Subjects as may...take Arms to resist” the rebels.

In part due to this concern about the need for strict oversight of the Indians, there were few developments on the frontier over the following months. Stuart wanted to ensure any planned attack by the Indians coincided with the arrival of British troops on the coast. He “acquainted the Governours of Georgia the two Carolinas and Virginia with...my readiness to assist in...executing any concerted plan for reestab[lishing]...His Majesty's Authority in their Provinces.” At the same time, however, he needed to ensure the Indians would be predisposed to attack the rebels when the time came. He therefore spent the winter stoking resentment among the Indians against the rebels, blaming them for the Indians’ lack of ammunition, clothing, food, and other necessities. He instructed his agents to again

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604 John Stuart to David Taitt, 15 December 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
605 John Stuart to Henry Stuart, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/76; John Stuart to Alexander Cameron, 16 December 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
606 John Stuart to George Germain, 19 January 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
tell the Indians that they had the rebels to blame for their lack of ammunition and other goods.⁶⁰⁷

**Missed Opportunities**

The opportunity for a coordinated attack by British troops and Indians came in mid-March 1776, as Major General Sir Henry Clinton arrived at Cape Fear in North Carolina with the intention of leading a force of British troops and Loyalists against the rebels of that province. Under orders from General William Howe, who had succeeded Gage as commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, Stuart proceeded in February from Saint Augustine to Cape Fear to “meet Major General Clinton and with him to concert the measures to be pursued respecting the Indians.”⁶⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Patrick Tonyn, the governor of East Florida, proved an enthusiastic supporter of employing the Indians against the rebels. Within days of Stuart’s departure for Cape Fear, Tonyn planned with Thomas Brown, a Georgia Loyalist who had been driven out of South Carolina and Georgia, to lead the Indians together with Loyalists against the rebels in South Carolina while the British troops attacked from the coast.⁶⁰⁹

Tonyn also took advantage of Stuart’s absence to write to David Taitt, informing him of Clinton’s arrival at Cape Fear and that he “expect[ed] daily intelligence of the army landing.” He instructed Taitt to inform Cameron of the news, “that a spirited system may be established.” Cameron and Taitt were to “assure all

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⁶⁰⁷ John Stuart Talk to the Lower Creek Indians, 4 December 1775, TNA, CO 5/77; John Stuart to Henry Stuart, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
⁶⁰⁸ John Stuart to George Germain, 20 March 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
the Indian nations that the King’s army is at hand” and ensure they were “well prepared to receive the plan Mr Stuart may be ordered to execute by General Clinton.”610 For a number of reasons, however, Clinton decided to postpone a coordinated British-Indian attack on the rebels. Prior to his arrival, the rebels defeated a Loyalist force at Moore’s Creek Bridge in North Carolina, ending any hopes for an attack on that province. Furthermore, Clinton himself was reticent about using Indians against white inhabitants, and Stuart opposed anyone but himself exercising leadership over the Indians. Clinton proceeded with his force to Charleston to consider the options for attacking that city, while Stuart moved to Pensacola in May, where he would be able to circumvent the rebels’ efforts to block his communication with the Indian tribes from Saint Augustine.

Tonyn was livid with Stuart, and told Clinton that the superintendent was “jealous that anybody else should have anything to say or do with the Indians.” He insisted to Clinton that “the assistance [the Indians] would be of to His Majesty’s service is very great,” and their use “has been in my opinion too long delayed.”611 He claimed that preventing the Indians from making an indiscriminate attack on Loyalists and rebels alike “would be easy...nothing is necessary but arranging them under proper conductors, and fixing rendezvous, for the loyal and well disposed Subjects to assemble at.”612 He further accused Stuart of being “old and infirm, and questioned Stuart’s loyalty by suggesting “his family being prisoners in Charleston

611 Patrick Tonyn to Henry Clinton, 8 June 1776, DAR, XII, 147-150.
has likewise a strong effect” on the superintendent. Nevertheless, with the ensuing defeat of the British under Clinton and Admiral Sir Peter Parker at Charleston in June 1776, and plans for a coordinated attack with the Indians were delayed indefinitely.

**Watauga, Nolichucky, and the 1776 Cherokee War**

Historians often echo Tonyn’s description of Stuart, and his agents, as generally reluctant to use Indians as part of British strategy against the rebels unless very specific conditions were met and they had full support from the army in the form of a significant number of troops and all necessary resources. As Tonyn noted, however, and as Stuart complained upon his arrival in Pensacola when he insisted on sole authority over the Indians, Stuart was only opposed to using Indians against the southern provinces if he was not given authority over their direction. He and his agents continued instigating the Creek and Cherokee to act, even though at the time none of Stuart’s requirements had been met, with little consideration their incitement might cause the Indians to act prematurely.

For a time following his meeting with Clinton at Cape Fear, Stuart believed Clinton planned to send an expedition of British troops to Pensacola to enter the Creek Nation from the south and west, and together with the Creek Indians launch an attack on the rebels in Georgia and South Carolina. Stuart responded to Clinton with a barely contained eagerness as he listed the preparations he would make for

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613 Patrick Tonyn to Henry Clinton, 8 June 1776, DAR, 147-150.
615 John Stuart to George Germain, 6 June 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
the arrival of the British forces. This scenario, in which Indians attacked the rebels in close coordination with the British, was precisely the way Stuart believed the Indians should be employed. In addition, part of Stuart’s plans after receiving orders from Gage in September 1775 had included sending his brother Henry from Pensacola in West Florida to the Creek and Cherokee nations. He was to tell them that the rebels wanted to see “the Indians…continue poor and deprived of the means of subsistence,” while supporting the British would bring “plenty of all necessaries pouring in upon them from Pensacola and St Augustine.”

Cameron, meanwhile, constantly reminded the Cherokee of the “many occasions when by lies & Forgeries,” inhabitants of the frontier “had imposed upon them and defrauded them of their land.” Not surprisingly, this instigation had its intended effect on the Cherokee who were in close contact with westward-migrating inhabitants of North and South Carolina. At the time, however, there was no longer any foreseeable opportunity for coordinating an attack with British troops. In early May 1776, Cameron told Stuart about a brewing conflict between the Cherokee and the white settlements on the western side of the proclamation line, including Watauga and Nolichucky. In addition to anger stirred by Stuart and Cameron over being defrauded of their land, the Indians were concerned by news that the rebels were “building Forts along the Indian line from Savannah River to North Carolina.” Furthermore, rumors spread that the rebels were telling “all those poor people who

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616 John Stuart to Henry Clinton, 9 May 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
617 John Stuart to Henry Stuart, 24 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
618 Intelligence Contained in Mr. Cameron’s Letter, 8 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
are attach’d to his Majesty to Comply and Joyn with them or [they would] destroy their livings and put their Families to the utmost distress.”

One of Stuart’s agents among the Cherokee informed him, “The Indians are somewhat disturb’d about the Forts being built so near their Country and were afraid that the bad people as they call them were going to fall upon them and destroy them.” Despite the rebels’ insistence that they were only “preparing themselves for defence…and that the forts that they were building are to defend themselves against the Kings Troops which they understood were landed at Augustine [and] Pensacola,” tensions continued between the Cherokee and the rebels, particularly the residents of Watauga and Nolichucky.619 Cameron and Henry Stuart wrote to the white inhabitants of these settlements, warning them “to remove immediately or abide by the Consequence.”620 They told the inhabitants their claim to the land “never can hope to be supported by Government of the Laws of your Country,” and that “we can have no hopes of any application of ours in your behalf having any effect [on the Indians] should not your answer prove Satisfactory.”621

They received a reply from the Watauga settlers who protested that they were “determined to support his majesty’s Crown and dignity.” At the same time, however, the messenger sent by Cameron and Henry Stuart reported that one of the settlers “was employed...to transcribe our letter, “ and changed the content of the

619 Hugh Hamilton to John Stuart, 7 June 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
620 Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, 7 May 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
621 Alexander Cameron and Henry Stuart to the Inhabitants of Watauga & Nolichucky, 7 May 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
message. The transcribed copy, “which was very different from the original.” was sent on to other settlements, rebel committees in the southern colonies, and eventually the Continental Congress. Represented as a letter from Stuart and Cameron, it outlined a plan for an attack on the frontier with a special marking for the houses of Loyalists, which the Indians would know to bypass. Before they learned of the forgery, however, Stuart and Cameron again wrote the residents of Watauga and Nolichucky informing them they did not think “the dispute between Great Britain and the provinces influences the Indians in the least,” and therefore the settlers’ protestations of loyalty to the King would not help them. They again warned the settlers to leave to avoid “the discontent of the young fellows” among the Cherokee who had convinced the others to attack the settlements.

At about the same time, a party of Six Nations Indians arrived in the Cherokee Nation from the with tales of “Encroachments of white people” in the North, as well as “the Continual Steps taken by them to enslave them.” After this, Cameron reported, nothing he or Henry Stuart could say or do could prevent the Cherokee from “taking up the Hatchet.” On 1 July the Cherokee launched an attack on frontier settlements in South Carolina and North Carolina. The rebels were initially caught by surprise, since “the Cherokees had amused us by the most flattering Talks, full of assurances of friendship & promises to follow our advice

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623 Extract of H. Stuart & Alexr Cameron to John Carter & The other inhabitants of Watauga, 23 May 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
624 Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, 9 July 1776, TNA, CO 5/77.
which always had been that they should observe a strict neutrality.”625 There was a short period of disorder as the frontier inhabitants fled for safety, but over time militia members from South Carolina joined Andrew Williamson as he marched against the Cherokee, with more than 100 men a day joining his army by the middle of July.

William Henry Drayton instructed Francis Salvador, who served under Williamson, to “make smooth work as you go...cut up every Indian corn-field, and burn every Indian town...that the nation be extirpated and the lands become the property of the public.”626 Over the next several months, Williamson “burnt down every town, and destroyed all the corn, from the Cherokee line to the middle [Cherokee] settlements,” while Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford of North Carolina “Served the Middle Settlements the same.”627 A force from Virginia marched against the Overhill Cherokee settlements at the end of September as Williamson and Rutherford combined their forces and finished their attack on the middle settlements. By that time, however, Cameron had fled to the Creek nation and many of the Cherokee who remained were ready to negotiate with the Virginians.

The Cherokee defeat was a major blow to Stuart’s efforts to keep the Indians prepared to fight for the British. As Williamson and Rutherford finished their expedition against the middle and lower Cherokee, Cameron predicted that due to the rebels’ success, “the Creeks will be intimidated from raising the hatchet by the

625 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 14 August 1776, PHL, XI, 228-229.
627 Andrew Williamson to William Henry Drayton, 22 August 1776, DHAR, III, 32.
example of the Cherokees.” Cameron’s prediction proved accurate, as John Stuart reported to Germain in October that “all the southern tribes are greatly dispirited by the unopposed success of the rebels,” as well as the absence of any British support for the Cherokee once the conflict began. The Indians “were so dispirited by the number of rebels...that they fled with their wives and children to the woods” after destroying many of their own houses and crops to prevent the rebels from taking them. Stuart expressed his hope that “the distress of the Cherokees brought in by fugitives may not damp the ardour which the Creek Indians” had previously expressed to him, but admitted he could only “hope for the best.” He received no support from Creek chief Emistisiguo, who told Stuart he was concerned by the rebels’ movement through Cherokee land, but was more worried about whether “the Great King will fight strong and not drop the hatchet.” Based on the example of the Cherokee, he did not want to take the chance that the British “will...involve me in trouble and then desert me and leave me when I cannot help myself.”

What Emistisiguo understood was that regardless of claims by the Stuarts and Cameron that they did not want the Cherokee to attack when they did, and despite John Stuart’s insistence that any Indian attack be coordinated with the landing of British troops on the coast or at Pensacola, the British agents had spent the better part of a year preparing the Indians to fight. They pointed the Creek and Cherokee towards the rebels, claiming they were the source of all of the tribes’

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628 Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, 23 September 1776, TNA, CO 5/78.
629 John Stuart to George Germain, 26 October 1776, TNA, CO 5/78.
630 John Stuart to George Germain, 24 November 1776, TNA, CO 5/78.
631 Emistisiguo to John Stuart, 19 November 1776, DAR, XII, 250-251.
problems, and informed them that the landing of British forces was close at hand. At the same time, however, they continuously delayed any movement as plans to land British troops fell through, and then expressed surprise when they ultimately lost control of the Cherokee. The white settlers at Watauga, Nolichucky, and elsewhere, and the inhabitants of the southern provinces did not care about the subtleties of Stuart’s plan for employing the Indians, and when the Cherokee attacked, the rebels saw it as the fruition of Stuart’s plans dating back to the first months of 1775.

**Propaganda Value**

David Chesnutt argues that the rebels knew Stuart did not intend to use the Indians against the inhabitants of the southern provinces because they had intercepted two different letters from Stuart making clear his intention to keep the Indians neutral. However, the context of these intercepted letters suggests Stuart was referring to a much more narrow set of circumstances than general British Indian policy. He told David Taitt that the rebels had threatened him, and “by all accounts they had villainous intentions, had I been so unfortunate as to have fallen into their hands.” He then told Taitt that his treatment was not sufficient to warrant an indiscriminate attack by the Indians on white inhabitants of South Carolina. His reluctance to use Indians at that time for purposes of avenging the treatment he and his family received was also the product of his continued desire to achieve the greatest effect from use of the Indians. Rather than expose the Indians for his own purposes of revenge, he wanted to use them to achieve British policy goals, in

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coordination with British forces and under tight control by himself and his deputies “that the innocent may not suffer for the guilty.” He left open the possibility of directing the Indians against the rebels, suggesting "possibly a day of retribution and account may come." The other document the rebels intercepted was a talk Stuart gave to the Cherokee at the end of August in which he said, “There is a difference between the people in England and the white people in America” that would be “decide[d] between themselves” and “does not concern” the Indians.” The rest of the talk, however, shows that Stuart was particularly upset at the Cherokee for acting outside his authority by killing white men, harboring Indians from other tribes who killed white men, and for making agreements outside Stuart’s authority to cede land to rebels like Richard Henderson and Richard Pearis.

Even before Stuart received Gage’s instructions of September 1775 to use the Indians to attack the rebels, which led Stuart to begin overt preparations of the Cherokee and Creek, he had been careless enough with his words to give the rebels ammunition to use against him with the people. When he met with the rebels in Savannah to show his correspondence to Cameron in an attempt to clear his name, Joseph Habersham asked him who he and Cameron had in mind when they prepared the Indians to act in support of the King, “as we are not at War either with France or Spain...nor have those powers any subjects or territories against whom or which the Cherokees could act.” For Habersham, Henry Laurens, and the rest of the rebel leadership, this left only one potential enemy against whom Cameron

633 John Stuart to David Taitt, 29 August 1775, DHAR, I, 158-159.
634 John Stuart’s Talk to the Cherokees, 30 August 1775, DHAR, I, 159-161.
635 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 30 July 1775, PHL, X, 256-261.
could be preparing the Cherokee to act, as Laurens explained to his son John when he wrote “we well know what he meant by ‘His Majesty’s Service.’”

With the exception of the forged letter purported to be from Cameron and Henry Stuart conspiring with loyal inhabitants of the frontier to keep them safe during the ensuing attack by the Cherokee, the rebels were largely able to use John Stuart’s own words, and those of his deputies, for their own purposes. They succeeded in drawing Loyalists away from their support for the British while simultaneously reinforcing the support of those who already opposed the British. John Lewis Gervais, a member of the South Carolina Council of Safety, wrote to Cameron asking him to denounce the “cruel” and “inhuman” undertaking attributed to Stuart, and told him “If your duty requires dishonorable acts of you Resign and live admired, beloved, and I make no doubt I may say rewarded among your friends.” William Henry Drayton also asked him to resign or risk being implicated with Stuart in the superintendent’s plans for the Indians. Pierce Butler, a former British army officer and leading rebel from South Carolina, argued, “if the Indians are prevail’d on to attack us,” the people of the backcountry, Loyalist or rebel, would join forces against them. The rebel leadership had also had a small taste of how effective rumors could be when they themselves were briefly thought to be providing the Indians arms and ammunition to use against Loyalists.

David Ramsay, a physician and early historian of the war, who himself had served in the South Carolina legislature and was a prisoner of the British during the

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636 Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 26 September 1775, PHL, X, 425-430.
637 Pierce Butler to Unknown, 21 March 1776 in Correspondence of Hon. Arthur Middleton, The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 27 (July 1926): 140.
war, explained the effect British involvement in Indian attacks against white inhabitants had on Loyalists. According to Ramsay, this news “increased the unanimity of the inhabitants, and invigorated their opposition to Great Britain.” Ramsay adds, “Several who called themselves tories in 1775 became active whigs in 1776, and cheerfully took up arms...against Indians, and...against Great Britain, as the instigator of their barbarous devastations.” Furthermore, Ramsay argues, “Before this event some well-meaning people could not see the justice or propriety of contending with their formerly protecting parent State; but Indian cruelties, excited by royal artifices, soon extinguished all their predilection for the country of their forefathers.”

Loyalists like Robert Cunningham and Alexander Chesney who in 1775 had demonstrated their support for the British, proved Butler right and exemplified the trend Ramsay described, joining the rebels in 1776, at least for a time, in opposition to the Indians and their British sponsors. Through a combination of propaganda and military action against the Cherokee, other Loyalists drifted away from their support for Britain, with many even providing support for the rebels. In the weeks after the Cherokee attacked the frontier settlements in July 1776, for example, a number of white Loyalists who had taken refuge in the Cherokee nation in 1775 “quitted the Indians...and were delivering themselves up” to the rebels. Additionally, even more Loyalists abandoned their support for Britain when the Cherokee “killed...without distinction of party.” According to one backcountry

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clergyman, James Creswell, this “greatly alarmed” the Loyalists, who “changed their countenance and tone” so they could “look out for safety for their families.”

Stuart, his deputies, and other British officials in the southern colonies were also fully aware of the effect their use of Indians would have on both rebels and Loyalists. In June 1775, before Stuart had been forced to flee Savannah for Saint Augustine, Wright told Dartmouth that the accusations that Stuart was planning to use the Cherokee to attack the inhabitants of South Carolina and Georgia provided the rebels with “another pretence for raising men” for the provincial regiments. Wright was convinced an Indian attack would have negative repercussions for the British position in the province, because they would be blamed for providing support. He therefore went as far as sharing “fully all my Intelligence” about Indian affairs with “the Committee People who are Possessed of all the Powder and Ball in the Province.” This intelligence included talks from the Creek and Cherokee, and letters from Taitt and others. Wright hoped the rebels, who by this time had largely dismantled the Crown government in Georgia, would be able to provide the Indians with trade and ammunition or else prevent them from launching an attack on the province. Likewise, Cameron knew that he would get the blame from the people of South Carolina for any attack by the Cherokee, regardless of whether or not he had given his approval.

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641 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 June 1775, TNA, CO 5/664.
642 James Wright to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/665.
643 Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, 9 November 1775, TNA, CO 5/77.
Patrick Tonyn, the most enthusiastic supporter of using the Indians, explained to Clinton, “The Americans are a thousand times more in dread of the savages than of any European troops.” For Tonyn, however, this was precisely why the British needed to use the Indian tribes and he quickly dismissed any concern that the inhabitants’ revulsion of the idea of using Indians to attack white people would apply equally to Loyalists as to the rebels. Even Stuart was fully aware of the effect employing the Indians would have on the backcountry residents, telling Dartmouth, “nothing can be more alarming to the Carolinians than the idea of an attack from Indians and Negroes.”

The British were therefore well aware of the potential negative consequences of arming the Indians. Nevertheless, whatever preconditions they may have required before employing the Indians, including simultaneous landing of British troops and strict leadership over the Indians to prevent indiscriminate attacks, their haphazard management of the Indians provided the rebels with all the evidence they would need to convince others of a British conspiracy, even if such a conspiracy did not actually exist. Furthermore, after Gage’s September 1775 order to prepare the Indians for use against the inhabitants, whatever reservations Stuart and other British officials may have had, they played a dangerous game in preparing the Indians to attack while also trying to restrain them from attacking until an unknown time in the future when they would be able to coordinate their actions with British troops. Eventually their efforts to maintain this delicate balance.

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644 Patrick Tonyn to Henry Clinton, 8 June 1776, DAR, XII, 147-150.
645 John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth, 21 July 1775, TNA, CO 5/76.
collapsed as the Cherokee directed the anger stoked by Stuart and his deputies against the frontier inhabitants. Not surprisingly the rebels saw this as the result of planning seen in the correspondence of Stuart, Henry Stuart, Cameron, and David Taitt, as well as months of talks given to the Cherokee pointing to the people of the Carolinas and Georgia as the Indians’ object of deserved resentment. The rebels, in turn, were able to use the idea of British support for Indian attacks to weaken Loyalist support, at least for a time, while also diminishing British influence among the Indians and ensuring greater difficulty for the British in leveraging Indian support in pursuit of future British military objectives in the South.

**Conclusion**

Just as they did with the rumors of British support for slave insurrections, the rebels publicized claims that the British intended to arm the Indians and have them attack white inhabitants on the frontier. In this case, however, it was an accurate statement of British actions. Under the leadership of the Superintendent for Indian Affairs, John Stuart, the British hoped to use the Indians, particularly the Cherokee and Creek, to attack the frontier in coordination with the landing of British forces on the coast. From May 1775 the rebels in South Carolina and Georgia came into possession of letters between John Stuart and one of his deputies, Alexander Cameron, as well as correspondence between Stuart and Gage. Gage told Stuart of the possibility they would use the Indians as part of a southern strategy, and Stuart therefore told Cameron to prepare the Cherokee to fight for the King when called upon. The rebels interpreted this order to mean the Indians would attack white inhabitants of the southern provinces, as the British were not at war with anyone.
else. They harassed Stuart and his wife and drove Stuart out of the colony to Georgia, and eventually East Florida. Their propaganda efforts convinced some Loyalists of the nefarious intentions of the British. It also delegitimized and weakened Stuart as he had to conduct business from Saint Augustine, and later Pensacola in West Florida, which disrupted his communication with the Indians and his deputies.

While Stuart did intend to direct the Indians against the rebels, he only wanted to do so under his strict leadership to ensure they did not attack Loyalists, women, or children. He also wanted to do so only in coordination with broader British strategy. He fully supported what he mistakenly believed to be British intentions to land men in West Florida and attack the frontier together with the Indians, as this fulfilled both of his requirements and would allow for seamless coordination and planning. The British had no plans to land forces in West Florida, however, but there was briefly an intention to do so at Cape Fear in North Carolina. By this time Gage had sent Stuart orders to prepare the Indians to act in support of the British, and Stuart instructed his deputies to do this with the respective tribes they oversaw under Stuart’s leadership. The planned expedition in North Carolina never came to fruition, however, for a number of reasons unrelated to Indian policy. Nevertheless, by this point Stuart and his deputies had created a frenzy among the Indians, blaming the rebels for all of their woes, including lack of ammunition after several shipments had been stolen at Savannah and St. Augustine. Stuart and his deputies tried to convince the Cherokee to wait for the next opportunity to act in coordination with British forces, but to no avail.
Many in the Cherokee Nation could no longer be pacified, and launched an attack in August 1776 against white settlements from Georgia to Virginia. After a brief period of chaos, the rebels organized their militia and provincial forces in a coordinated response against the Cherokee. By the end of 1776, the rebels burned numerous Cherokee towns, destroyed acres of crops, and drove the Cherokee and their Loyalist supporters deeper into Indian territory. The British had mistaken the willingness of the Indians to act on behalf of their own interests, and though they had actually lost control of the Cherokee, many other tribes believed the British had planned the Cherokee attacks and then abandoned their Indian allies. This overwhelming defeat and the perception of abandonment made it more difficult for the British to organize Indian allies to act in coordination with British forces throughout the remainder of the war, even in support of the southern strategy beginning in late 1778. During the period of 1775-1776, however, the rebels used news of British support for Indian attacks on the frontier to their advantage, beginning with their mission into the backcountry of South Carolina and Georgia in the summer and autumn of 1775 to pacify Loyalist opposition and develop support for the rebellion.
Chapter 7: Confusion in the Different Parts of the Frontiers

Moses Kirkland entered Charleston under the cover of darkness late in the evening on Monday 11 September 1775. He was disguised and traveling with the assistance of a Loyalist officer, Captain Bailey Chaney, but the South Carolina General Committee quickly learned of his presence. Kirkland “repaired immediately to the Governor at whose house he stayed the night,” before fleeing for the safety of the Tamar the next morning. Kirkland, a merchant and planter from the Ninety Six District and a Loyalist militia leader in the South Carolina backcountry, had been on the run for more than a week from rebel militia led by William Henry Drayton. Drayton had been in the interior of the province for more than a month at that point on a mission from the Council of Safety to explain to the inhabitants the terms of the conflict between Britain and the colonies and build support for the rebels’ cause. Kirkland was a particular target of the rebels’ ire since he had been one of them until defecting to the Loyalists after being passed over for promotion to major in the provincial ranger regiment. As a result of Drayton’s efforts, Kirkland had seen his Loyalist supporters disappear by the beginning of September. He soon found himself isolated and alone, and “having tried every effort to procure assistance on the south side of Saluda [River] in vain, he is now invisible.” Drayton reported that

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Kirkland was “never two hours in a place, and never sleeps in a house.” He planned to “flee the country as he is clear he cannot find any protection against our proceedings.”

As the rebels from North Carolina to Georgia were overthrowing the last remnants of royal authority in the coastal cities in the summer and autumn of 1775, seizing political power and control of the militias, disarming and confining former government officials, and banishing others from the province, they faced a growing threat in the interior. As Loyalists in those regions saw the rebels coming to power in the capitals, they organized increasing resistance against the new rebel governments on the coast. In each province, some Loyalist militia officers remained at the head of their companies and regiments. Their men were unwilling to fight against the King or push out their officers as the militia had elsewhere in the southern colonies.

The rebels first tried to recruit these officers with appeals to their cause, hoping these influential leaders would sign the Association and by example bring their men and neighbors to sign as well, but the backcountry Loyalists continued to resist. Some did so out of open opposition to the rebels, while others insisted they were sympathetic to the rebels’ grievances, hoped to “live in peace and true friendship with the rest of their countrymen,” and would always be “Ready and Willing...to assist in defending the Province” against Indian attacks, slave insurrection, or any other invading enemy, but could not take up arms against the

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King. Still others, like Kirkland, would join the Loyalists out of spite or for opportunistic reasons. Either way, even as they were consolidating political power on the coast after causing the collapse of the previous government, the rebels faced a potentially destabilizing threat in the interior. The rebels were now the ones who had to pacify disaffected regions of the province.

They accomplished this through a combination of persuasive and coercive measures aimed at both the Loyalist leadership in the backcountry and their supporters. Many of these measures were based on the same concepts of control and political violence they had used to overthrow the royal governments in the coastal cities, even if the context in which they were employed to suppress an insurgent movement differed from that in which they themselves had acted as the insurgents. Drayton and his colleagues quickly learned that the control the Loyalist leaders in the backcountry held over the people in their respective districts prevented many of those people from signing the Association.

The rebels sought to delegitimize the Loyalist leaders and prevent them from being able to retaliate against those who signed the Association. They formed separate, volunteer regiments of militia to compete against the few remaining militia regiments in the provinces still under Loyalist control. Another way to target the leadership was to remove their base of support. The rebels used military and economic coercion where persuasion did not work to convince the backcountry inhabitants that their interests better aligned with the rebels. By attacking Loyalists both from above and below, the rebels gained an increasing number of signatures to

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the Association while also isolating the Loyalist leadership and making them more vulnerable to capture. The rebels also created divisions among the Loyalist leadership to make it easier to target them piecemeal. By the first month of 1776, however, as the rebels were consolidating their rule and forming new governments, they had succeeded in eliminating one of the greatest threats to their authority for the next three years.

“Undeceive and Open...Eyes” in the Backcountry

The rebels faced early challenges in the backcountry as they sought to persuade Loyalist leaders to join their cause. In June 1775, the Council of Safety ordered Colonel William Thomson of the newly formed provincial ranger regiment to take control of Fort Charlotte, located across the Savannah River from Augusta. He was also to secure the ammunition and other supplies there, which had been stored at Fort Charlotte after the closure of other posts in the region in the preceding years. The Council of Safety told Thomson to invite the men remaining at the fort to join his regiment if they desired, and to offer Captain George Whitefield, the commander of the post, a commission with equal pay to what he was receiving in exchange for signing the Association. Thomson’s men, under the command of Major James Mayson, captured Fort Charlotte on 12 July 1775. Several days later, however, as he was transferring 250 pounds of gunpowder and 500 pounds of lead from the fort to Ninety Six according to the Council of Safety’s orders, some of Mayson’s men defected and led Loyalist militia leaders Robert Cunningham, Patrick

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649 Council of Safety to Thomson, 26 June 1775, PHL, X, 198-199.
Cunningham, and Joseph Robinson to the gunpowder. On 17 July, the Cunninghams and Robinson captured the gunpowder and temporarily imprisoned Mayson.

The Council of Safety also tried to recruit Colonel Thomas Fletchall, who commanded the militia of the Upper Saluda District. Fletchall was one of the few militia colonels who did not join the rebels, and was one of the most influential men in the backcountry. His support would do much to remove any Loyalist threat in the backcountry. Laurens wrote Fletchall on 14 July on behalf of the Council of Safety to explain the origins of the conflict with Britain. Parliamentary actions, Laurens explained, “cannot be supported by Reason or the principles of the Constitution,” and could only mean it was “ignorant of the Rights of British subjects.” In response, the colonies were “Associated & in Arms in order to oppose the Torrent of unjust Power & violence,” particularly at a time when South Carolina was threatened with invasion by British forces, slave insurrections, and Indian attacks. Laurens explained the Council of Safety was trying to enlist support by having people take an oath, and asked Fletchall for “an open & explicit declaration of the part you now take & mean to take in the important dispute between the Ministry & the Colonies.”

By the time Fletchall responded ten days later, he had also received letters from former officers in his militia regiment who joined the new provincial forces and asked Fletchall to have his men sign the Association. On 13 July Fletchall did as requested and had the Association read before every company in the regiment, telling them to sign if they chose. His men refused to sign, and Fletchall argued it “was Out of my Power to Compell Them.” As for himself, Fletchall told Laurens he

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650 Council of Safety to Thomas Fletchall, 14 July 1775, PHL, X, 214-218.
was “Resolved and do utterly Refuse to Take up arms [against] my King.” His men decided to sign their own Counter-Association, and also received signatures from members of the militia in the Forks of the Saluda Regiment and the Ninety Six Regiment.\textsuperscript{651} They denied that the King had “acted inconsistant with & Subversive of the Principles of the Constitutions of the British Empire,” and “Determined not To take up arms against him but to bear true Allegiance.” The Counter-Association claimed the Loyalists wanted to “Live in Peace & true friendship With the rest of Our Country men,” and they promised to defend the province against attacks by slaves, Indians, “Or any Other Enemy which may or Shalle Invade this Province or unlawfully disturb the good People thereof.” Nevertheless, they would only obey the British laws or laws of the Assembly that had passed under the royal government, and would only answer to officials appointed by the King or his advisers.\textsuperscript{652}

The situation in the backcountry at the end of July was, according to William Thomson, characterized by “Confusion.” He informed Laurens that with all the “Many different Accounts that I dayly have from up the Country,” he was “at a loss to Say any thing on that Subject.”\textsuperscript{653} Kirkland had recently defected to the Loyalists, and Fletchall, together with Robert Cunningham and Joseph Robinson, had “led the people astray.”\textsuperscript{654} At the end of July, after learning of Mayson’s capture and the loss of the gunpowder to Cunningham and Robinson, Thomson suggested to the Council

\textsuperscript{651} Thomas Fletchall to Council of Safety, 24 July 1775, PHL, X, 244-246. He took offense to a suggestion Laurens made that he remained loyal to the Crown only to receive “Commissions & Such appointments.” He told Laurens, “a man that is to be bought by a Commission is not worthy of one.”

\textsuperscript{652} Fletchall Association, Enclosure, Thomson to Henry Laurens, 29 July 1775, PHL, X, 255.

\textsuperscript{653} William Thomson to Henry Laurens, 29 July 1775, PHL, X, 253-255.

\textsuperscript{654} William Thomson to Henry Laurens, 22 July 1775, PHL, X, 240-242.
of Safety that one of its members, William Tennent, of the prominent family of Presbyterian ministers who himself preached at the Independent Church in Charleston, travel through the backcountry to speak with the Presbyterian inhabitants of the region. Thomson believed Tennent would be able to “undeceive and Open the Eyes of many of them” using “fair means.”655 The Council of Safety had a similar idea, and on the same day as Thomson’s letter, resolved that it was “expedient to send two gentlemen into the back country, particularly to that part of it where Col. Fletchall resides, to inform and enlighten the people there in regard to the unhappy dispute subsisting between Great Britain and America.” On the 23rd, the Council of Safety commissioned Tennent and William Henry Drayton with this responsibility, and also ordered them “to endeavour to settle all political disputes between the people; to quiet their minds; and to force the necessity of a general union, in order to preserve themselves and their children from slavery.”656 It also encouraged “all the friends of the liberties of America” to “afford them every necessary aid, assistance and protection.”657 Three days later the Council of Safety commissioned Oliver Hart, a Baptist minister, to join Drayton and Tennent.658

**Drayton-Tennent-Hart Mission**

Many historians have characterized the Drayton-Tennent-Hart mission into the backcountry as either a mixed success or a failure. These historians argue that the mission failed because the men were unable to convince the people of Fletchall’s

656 Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 22 July 1775 in *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society* (CSCHS), II (Charleston: The South Carolina Historical Society, 1859), 57.
658 Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 26 July 1775, CSCHS, II, 64.
district and the neighboring districts of Ninety Six and Forks of the Saluda through the use of persuasion alone. Instead, this failure brought out “the worst in Drayton’s character,” including the use of threats, intimidation, and militia violence. This line of argument first appears in the historiography as early as the 1808 history of South Carolina by David Ramsay. Ramsay, a medical doctor and former member of the Continental Congress and State House and Senate, concluded the mission was of little success because “the greater number [of backcountry inhabitants] could not be persuaded that there was any necessity for Congresses, committees, or a military establishment.”

More recent historians make the same argument, particularly that the use of coercive measures made the mission a strategic failure because it led the Loyalists under Fletchall to raise their own military force. These historians base some of their reasoning on an October 1775 letter to Governor William Campbell from Thomas Brown, a Loyalist leader from Augusta who had been tarred and feathered in that town at the beginning of August, losing two toes in the process. Brown claimed Drayton, Tennent, and Hart initially tried to persuade the people they encountered in the backcountry to sign the Association by offering “every temptation their imagination could suggest.” Upon “perceiving their schemes defeated,” however, they tried a different approach “which they conceived...would effectually prevent

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any further opposition to the designs of the Congress by intimidating the non-subscribers.”

Far from being a sign of failure, however, coercive measures were part of the Council of Safety’s strategy from the beginning. Its members were well aware that though persuasion would work in some areas of the backcountry, in many areas persuasion alone would not suffice. Drayton would instead need to use more forceful measures to coerce the inhabitants of the interior into signing the Association. Drayton and the other members of the Council of Safety planned to use a combination of persuasion, intimidation, economic coercion, use of force, movements of the militia, and population control to break Loyalist resistance.

Arthur Middleton, another member of the Council of Safety, told Drayton privately that he did not think persuasive means alone, including appeals to “Politicks and Religion,” would result in much success. He instead argued “the most probable means of succeeding is first to find out the ruling passions of the mind we would reclaim [and]...apply a remedy accordingly.” According to Middleton, “the human mind” responded to “Ambition, Avarice, or fear,” and those were the means by which Drayton “may rule the Beast you have to deal with.”

When the Council of Safety commissioned Drayton and Tennent for the backcountry mission, it authorized them to “call upon all and every Officer of the Militia and Rangers...and they...are hereby ordered to furnish such assistance, support and protection, as you

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660 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/396.
shall deem necessary.”\textsuperscript{662} Furthermore, as the likelihood of battle with the Loyalists increased through August and into September 1775, the Council of Safety voted to give Drayton greater authority to “take every decisive step, and to use every vigorous measure, which he may, or shall, deem proper to promote the public service.”\textsuperscript{663}

Oliver Hart left Charleston on 31 July, and Drayton and Tennent followed three days later. The three men met on 7 August at Congaree Store near the settlement of Granby on the Congaree River, where the residents were predominantly of German origin. When they arrived there, the men agreed on the routes they would each take, and Hart left the next day with Joseph Rees, a fellow Baptist minister. Drayton and Tennent remained at the Congaree Store, where they organized a meeting for that day and notified “particular persons of influence” to have the people attend. They had little success, as the turnout was sparse with “not one German appear[ing] but one or two of our friends.”\textsuperscript{664}

The two men learned that inhabitants believed Thomson’s Rangers, posted nearby, were there to attack them if they did not sign the Association, and that Drayton and Tennent had orders to “let the Rangers loose upon them to destroy their properties.”\textsuperscript{665} To address this concern, the two emissaries decided to pull back the Rangers “for a few days to take off the fears of the People.”\textsuperscript{666} They also convinced local German clergy to hold services, which one of the two emissaries

\textsuperscript{662} Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 23 July 1775, CSCHS, II, 58.
\textsuperscript{663} Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 354n.
\textsuperscript{665} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{666} William Tennent Journal, 5 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
could attend to speak to the congregation. They hoped that an audience of a small segment of the local population would "induce others of their Countrymen to be willing to hear what we have to say."

At the same time, they introduced the first coercive elements of their strategy. They had Thomson order several companies of the local militia to muster on the 9th, and threatened, "if the Officers disobey, they shall be broke." They introduced elements of economic coercion, since "as we know in general...an argument relating to money matte[rs] most readily cacthes a Dutchmans ear." They told the inhabitants "that no Nonsubscriber in this Settlement will be allowed to purchase at, or sell to this Store or Charles Town." These methods resulted in greater success over the next several days. On the 8th, Drayton and Tennent crossed the Congaree River to hold another meeting, at which Tennant noted, "Persons had come a great way to oppose" them. Drayton and Tennent "Harangued the Meeting in turns until Every Man was convinced." Furthermore, "the greatest Opposer" in the crowd, who remained unnamed, "signed the Association & begged Pardon for the words he had spoken to the People." Drayton provided a similar account, noting they were "universally understood," and "those who came with an intent to disturb the meeting, became converts and cheerfully signed the Association." The male

667 William Henry Drayton and William Tennent to Council of Safety, 7 August 1775, PHL, X, 277-285. One loyalist near Rocky Mount in South Carolina took an oath to the rebels because, as he explained, "The Millers and Blacksmiths would not work for any who did not take the oath." Robert McClelland, Loyalist Claim, 24 February 1784, TNA, AO 12/46.
668 William Tennent Journal, 9-13 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
inhabitants also formed Volunteer Companies of militia to weaken the authority of Loyalist militia commanders.669

From Congaree Store, Drayton and Tennent continued in separate directions, with Tennent proceeding north of the Broad River accompanied by Richard Richardson, a militia colonel, while Drayton continued into the “Dutch Fork” between the Broad and Saluda Rivers, accompanied by Thomson. Before they separated, however, they encountered a militia and “harangued them,” eventually convincing them to sign the Association. Tennent would have a number of successful meetings over the next several days, combining persuasive measures with the threat implied by the presence of Richardson’s regiment. On the 9th Tennent moved north, crossing the Saluda and Broad Rivers, and met with “an Old Dutchman who was said to have Influence over many.” He was able to convene a meeting of “disaffected Men,” who “became Converts by proper arguments.” On the 11th, he preached at Jackson Creek Meeting House, about 30 miles north of Congaree Store, where some of those in attendance “were the most refractory I had met with, obstinately fixed against the proceedings of the Colony.” Nevertheless, after speaking with them for more than an hour and “After much pains,” Tennent succeeded in gaining the support of the local leadership and a company of militia, who agreed to “cheerfully...subscribe the Association.” He continued north to Rocky Creek, where on the 13th he “met some hundreds of the Inhabitants” at the Rocky Creek Meeting House and “had the

669 William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 9 August 1775, PHL, X, 286-288. While historians have noted Tennent’s words to demonstrate the intractable opposition the two faced, there is often less emphasis on his account of the results of the meeting. See for example Piecuch, Three Peoples, One King, 50.
pleasure to see all the People early sign the Association, fully convinced of the Necessity of it.” The next day he began organizing four volunteer companies of Rangers in spite of the opposition of Loyalist residents he sarcastically referred to as “Ministerial Heroes.”

Despite this early success, all three emissaries would soon face even more difficult challenges the farther they proceeded into the backcountry, particularly in Fletchall’s district. After leaving Congaree, Drayton proceeded about ten miles up the Saluda River where only one member of a congregation of Germans was willing to sign the Association. He had even less success when he moved north into the Dutch Fork and spoke to another German congregation at a storehouse run by Evan McLaurin. Ten people initially signed the Association, before McLaurin learned of the meeting and “put a stop, only by his presence, to the business.” After McLaurin’s arrival, “not one person added his name.” Drayton canceled another meeting with the German inhabitants scheduled for 13 August, to avoid the “mortification of preaching to a people who were obstinate and would not hear.”

Tennent ran into trouble at about the same time as Drayton. After his success at Rocky Creek on the 13th, he spent the following day in a “desultory talk with a section of the most staunch of Fletchal’s Friends.” Tennent believed “nothing could be done here, as they industriously taught the People that no Man from Charleston can speak the Truth.”

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670 William Tennent Journal, 9-14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
672 William Tennent Journal, 14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
Enoree River where his audience “listened with attention,” Hart crossed the Tyger River where he found the people “so fixed on the Side of the Ministry, that no argument on the contrary Side seemed to have any Weight with them.” Even his hosts, the family of a Baptist preacher in Fairforest, Hart learned, “rather sides with ministerial Measures.” Hart found the people “generally acknowledge that they know but little about the Matter, and yet are fixed,” and so he held a meeting on the 11th with the hopes of changing their allegiance. He had little success though, as rain limited the attendance to only “20 or 30,” all of whom “seem’d but little affected” by his talk. The people remained “extremely obstinate on the Minister’s Side,” and one of them told Joseph Rees after the talk that he “wish’d 1000 Bostonians might be kill’d in Battle.”

Drayton, Hart, and Tennent realized this particularly recalcitrant region of the Fork demanded a more comprehensive approach. Since they continued to travel mostly independently of one another. The fact that they each resorted to these more coercive measures on their own initiative suggests they were part of the original strategy to use all available means of converting Loyalists to their cause. First, they reversed their earlier decision, initially made at Congaree, to temporarily move the militia regiments away from the population centers in a bid to assuage public concerns. Tennent proceeded across the Broad River, accompanied by Colonel Richard Richardson and his militia, where they had success in gathering signatures for the Association. Drayton and Tennent ordered Captain Ezekiel Polk to “raise an

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additional Troop of Rangers immediately to lie on th[e] back of these People.”

Polk’s Rangers accompanied Tennent to a meeting in Fletchall’s district on 19 August, after which Tennent concluded the people “seem Convinced” and “are ready to sign the Association.” He even convinced a captain in Fletchall’s regiment, who was among the many in attendance who “cr[ied] out upon the lies that have been told them” after Tennent finished speaking.

Drayton also ordered “prompt & vigorous measures attend every appearance of insurrection.” On 18 August Tennent learned that some of Fletchall’s men planned to steal a supply of gunpowder from the rebels, and he and Drayton concluded this likely meant a forthcoming attack was planned against Fort Charlotte, likely led by Kirkland, Brown, and Cunningham. The Council of Safety warned William Thomson to “not loose sight of an object of such importance” for both sides.

Drayton ordered three companies in the area to assemble, along with 100 men from Augusta, for the immediate defense of the fort and town. He also ordered Major Andrew Williamson, Thomson, and Richardson to hold positions in the surrounding

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674 William Henry Drayton to the Council of Safety, 21 August 1775, PHL
675 William Tennent Journal, 19 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
676 Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 291n. The Council of Safety had received a report earlier in August that a group of Loyalists led by Thomas Brown intended to attack Augusta in retaliation for the tarring and feathering Brown received there earlier that month. The rumors appeared to be false, as the rebels learned Fletchall and Brown were nowhere near Augusta. Nevertheless, the Council of Safety understood the importance of Augusta and Fort Charlotte for controlling the backcountry, and knew the Loyalist leaders would recognize the same.
area to protect the approaches to Fort Charlotte and Augusta. In all, Drayton ordered the assembly of more than 1,000 men.

These coercive measures would have the desired effect on the inhabitants. By the first week of September, these actions had “so terrified Kirkland’s followers” that the Loyalist leader faced a precipitous drop in active support from the inhabitants. By 6 September the threat had dissipated enough to allow Drayton to leave the area of Augusta for Ninety Six, where he established his headquarters. By this time Hart had started his return trip to Charleston after a successful meeting at Little River. Tennent, however, remained in the region and took advantage of the new position the rebels held in the region surrounding Fort Charlotte. He held a successful meeting on 31 August in the area of Long Cane Creek, above the fort on the Savannah River, where he found the congregation “solemn & Affected.” He was able to convince many members of a local company of Loyalist militia to switch their allegiance, and formed several volunteer companies of militia in the neighborhood. Two days later he spoke before some of Fletchall’s people who had been “mostly Opposers.” Now, however, they were not only “willing to hear” Tennent, but by the end “seemed satisfied & many of those who had signed Fletchall’s Association now

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679 Tennent Journal, 4 September 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
680 Neither Drayton nor Tennent thought very highly of Hart’s effectiveness on the mission, and by temperament Hart was not as well suited for the methods adopted by Drayton, Tennent, and the Council of Safety. See William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 16 August 1775, DHAR, I, 140-143 and William Tennent Journal, 29 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
This would be one of Tennent’s last meetings on the mission, as he returned to Charleston to brief the Council of Safety on the latest developments.

**Population Control and Economic Coercion**

In addition to using the militia and provincial forces to intimidate inhabitants into ending their support for the Loyalists, the rebels also adopted a series of population control measures that had a similar coercive effect and ultimately weakened Loyalist support. These measures combined restrictions on movement with economic coercion and were intended to both prevent Loyalist militia from assembling in significant numbers in the backcountry and isolate backcountry Loyalists from government support in Charleston. First the rebels denied freedom of movement to Loyalists located across the backcountry, which prevented them from assembling in such numbers that would prove a threat to their own authority. When Drayton first encountered resistance in the Dutch Fork, he proposed assigning some of the Ranger regiment to watch the movements of Fletchall’s people. This would allow the rebels to both keep watch for, and react quickly to any attempt by Fletchall to join forces with the other Loyalist leaders and mount a resistance.

When the rebels learned that Brown, Kirkland, and Cunningham intended to attack Augusta and Fort Charlotte, Andrew Williamson also ordered Captain John Caldwell, the commanding officer of the fort, to “watch the motion of the disaffected about Stephen’s Creek” on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. He was to ensure they were unable to combine with the Loyalist force believed at the time to

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681 William Tennent Journal, 2 September 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
be marching toward the fort.\textsuperscript{683} Similarly, after he received the report of the Loyalist intentions and deployed militia and provincial forces to block the approaches to Fort Charlotte, Drayton also ordered Colonel Richard Richardson and three hundred men to “take Post near the mouth of the Ennoree to be a check on Fletchals People in case they should shew any intention of assisting Kirkland.”\textsuperscript{684} 

Drayton also decided to expand on a tactic he first used at Evan McLaurin’s store at Congaree when he threatened that nonsubscribers would not be allowed to trade with Charleston. He recognized the effect economic isolation from Charleston would have on the backcountry inhabitants, as well as the advantage of denying Loyalists the resources they would need to continue their resistance in the interior. He argued if “but a few shall be so successful” in selling their goods or conducting other business in Charleston, “it will be of great detriment in these parts.” The local committee at Granby near Congaree had previously proposed that Germans in the interior be required to carry a certificate of loyalty to do business in Charleston. One local leader noted that this measure would be useless, as “wagons might easily sell their loads in Charles Town without any danger of enquiries of their having signed the Association” and possession of a certificate. The Council of Safety supported the basic concept of controlling access to Charleston from the backcountry, so Drayton proposed adding an enforcement mechanism. This included a system of checkpoints at the entrance to the city to prevent those who had not yet signed the Association from bringing their goods to market. It would include “a constant guard of

\textsuperscript{683} Andrew Williamson, Orders to Capt. Caldwell at Fort Charlotte, 21 August 1775, DHAR, I, 154. 
\textsuperscript{684} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 31 August 1775, PHL, X, 352-353.
regulars...placed at the Town gates,” who would “inspect and enquire of all wagoners from the Congarees, the Fork between Broad and Saluda Rivers and Fair Forest, for certificates of their having associated.” Those who did not have a certificate would be denied entry into town.\textsuperscript{685}

The Council of Safety took Drayton’s advice to “deprive Non associates from enjoying the benefits of a free intercourse with the Inhabitants of this Town.”\textsuperscript{686} On 14 August, the General Committee, on recommendation from the Council of Safety, voted to allow “no Waggoner or other Person...to sell or dispose of Indico, Flour, Hemp, Tobacco, Butter, Deer-Skins, or any other Merchandize or Produce, until he or they shall have given satisfactory Proof of his or their having signed the General Association.”\textsuperscript{687} Drayton recommended going even further, suggesting “the Nonsubscribers [be] debarred all communication with Charles Town & with the Country Stores.” In particular he had in mind McLaurin, as the rebels believed his partner in Charleston had signed the Association so he could continue to supply McLaurin.\textsuperscript{688} Simply preventing McLaurin from entering Charleston would therefore not be sufficient to weaken his position and that of Loyalists in the backcountry. Instead, Drayton argued, all unsanctioned communication and travel between the backcountry and Charleston would have to be severed. In this case, even if Loyalists remained in the city they would be physically isolated from the Loyalists in the interior, and thereby unable to provide them with the material aid necessary for

\textsuperscript{685} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 9 August 1775, PHL, X, 286-288.
\textsuperscript{686} Council of Safety to William Henry Drayton, 13 August 1775, PHL, X, 296-299.
\textsuperscript{687} Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, X, 298n.
\textsuperscript{688} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 21 August 1775, PHL, X, 344.
their survival and continued resistance. The rebels eventually expanded the restrictions on Loyalist movement in accordance with Drayton’s recommendations. The next Provincial Congress, which met in November, ordered that Moultrie post a guard at “the most proper place” to not only “examine strictly all suspected waggons coming into or going out of Charles-Town,” but also maintain tight control over the movement of “every person suspected of proceedings prejudicial to the welfare of the Colony, or of the common cause.”

“Reigns Amongst Them Like a Little King”

Tennent explained to Laurens that he and Drayton were “hemming in the Dissidents on all sides as much as possible.” Nevertheless, since “their Leaders seem determined if possible to bring the People to draw Blood before they have time to be enlightened,” the representatives of the Council of Safety would have to delegitimize the leadership and break their control over the inhabitants and the terrain. This leadership controlled the region to such an extent that made it difficult for the inhabitants to change sides even if they wanted to sign the Association. After his first meetings with the Germans in the Fork, Drayton realized leaders of the non-Associators “had been very active to prevent these people from associating.” The mere presence of Loyalist leaders like McLaurin was enough to keep Loyalists from signing the Association. On the 15th, while speaking at King’s Creek on the Enoree River, Drayton “gave a discourse which was generally satisfactory,” but as the

inhabitants prepared to sign the Association, word spread that the Loyalist leader Robert Cunningham had arrived and planned to speak. According to Drayton, Cunningham’s arrival ended any further signing of the Association and “Immediately all was at a stand.” Likewise, after Drayton organized an election in that area of the Fork for the Provincial Congress, “a letter from Cunningham, Kirkland, and others” arrived and “the election was quashed, and the people departed.”

Hart, meanwhile, found that Fletchal’s control over the inhabitants of Fair Forest made it near impossible to sway their allegiance. According to Hart, Fletchal “has all those people at his beck, and reigns amongst them like a little King.” When the two met on the 12 August, Hart noticed the people “seem’d almost universally, by Words & actions to applaud every Thing” Fletchal said.

The effect of this control was readily apparent to Drayton and his colleagues, as even those who were on their side tried to avoid confrontation with the Loyalist leadership. John Adam Summer, the son of a German immigrant who resided at Crims Creek in the Fork and was a lieutenant in the militia, had signed the Association in Charleston and agreed to assist the rebels by gathering his neighbors to hear Drayton speak. Once back near his own home, however, Drayton noticed Summer “kept at a distance” anytime conflict arose. After the meeting at McLaurin’s Store, Drayton called Summer a “false brother,” and during his meeting with the

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691 Drayton to Council of Safety, 16 August 1775, DHAR, I, 140-143.
692 Oliver Hart Diary, 12 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
Germans at their church on the 13th, he noticed Summer “to avoid being present at the discourse, had gone to another place of worship.”

The efforts by the three representatives of the Council of Safety to divide and weaken the Loyalist leadership worked in concert with targeting the inhabitants themselves. Coercive and persuasive measures were intended to affect the decision-making calculus of the people, but as long as the Loyalist leaders held control over the region and the people it would be difficult for the inhabitants and their families to avoid repercussions signing the Association. This required the rebels to delegitimize and weaken Loyalist leaders, allowing their followers to sign the Association whether by choice or by necessity. The loss of their followers would leave the leadership without the support they relied on to survive and fight the rebels, thereby weakening their position further. As Moses Kirkland experienced by the time he fled to Campbell’s house in Charleston and ultimately the Tamar, this loss of support would leave them isolated and exposed to the rebels.

The Council of Safety and their emissaries also took measures to prevent British propaganda from reaching the interior from Charleston. In part, the rebels on the coast achieved this measure by driving out the last remnants of royal government after Campbell fled to the Tamar. At the same time, however, Drayton, Tennent, and Hart, together with the Council of Safety, maintained a system of observation to quickly learn of any attempt by Loyalist leadership in the backcountry to enter or communicate with Charleston. The rebels understood the importance of this requirement after Loyalist leaders had some initial success in

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694 Drayton to Council of Safety, 16 August 1775, DHAR, I, 140-143.
communicating with Lord William Campbell and procuring pamphlets from England intended to recruit Loyalists to resist the rebels.  

In particular, Drayton, Tennent, and Hart each independently noted the effect on the people of Sir John Dalrymple’s *Address of the People of Great Britain to the Inhabitants of America*, which argued that “the projects of...Congress for war or suspension of trade would recoil on” the colonists since American territory was poorly suited for rebellion. Dalrymple offered instead that the differences between the colonies and Britain “are easily reconcileable,” that the King had been “falsely accused of a system to enslave” the colonists, and that “many of your pretended friends may prove your worst enemies.”  

At a meeting near Fletchall’s in the Fork on 14 August, Major Joseph Robinson read this address to the people, and Hart noted with regret that he “saw Marks of approbation set almost on every Countenance.”  

Tennent encountered the same response to the pamphlet at another meeting in Fletchall’s district on the same day. After talking with “a

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695 For example, in early August Drayton and Tennent learned Kirkland, at the zenith of his authority among Loyalists after recently defecting from the rebels, might be on his way to Charleston to “procure proper authorities from Lord William to counteract & oppose the Provincial proceedings.” After hearing this, they asked the Council of Safety to “shew vigour in government” by watching for Kirkland and arresting him if he entered the city. The Council of Safety responded a week later assuring Drayton that it was following Kirkland’s activities closely. It had intercepted correspondence that showed he was not in fact traveling to Charleston but had been in Cuffey Town, a settlement north of Augusta in the Ninety Six District. The Council of Safety told Drayton that “such a Watch is set as will not suffer him to pass unnoticed if he appears” in Charleston. William Henry Drayton and William Tennent to Council of Safety, 7 August 1775, PHL, X, 277-285; Council of Safety to William Henry Drayton, 13 August 1775, PHL, X, 296-299.
697 Oliver Hart Diary, 14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
collection of the most staunch of Fletchall’s Friends,” Tennent found the pamphlet “has done much Damage here” and that “it is at present their Gospel.”

On the 15th, Robert Cunningham and Thomas Brown arrived at a meeting in the area of King’s Creek on the Enoree River at which Drayton was speaking, and brought a copy of the same pamphlet. Before they arrived, Drayton had been addressing this “pretty large gathering,” and at the end found the people “expressing their pleasure and readiness to sign.” Cunningham and Brown then arrived and Drayton listened as Brown read the pamphlet. Though Drayton believed Dalrymple’s address “is likely to do much mischief,” he told the Council of Safety he was glad that the crowd was able to hear it, as it allowed the people to “hear both sides of the question.” Drayton listened to the address and “took notes as he went along of every material part.” When it was his turn to respond, he responded to each of Dalrymple’s arguments, and even “applied ridicule where I thought it would have effect.” This attempt to dismiss the address proved successful, as “the people laughed heartily and Cunningham and Brown could not but grin – horribly.” Cunningham and Brown had no rebuttal to Drayton’s response, and “highly mortified…[Cunningham] with his companion, Brown, stole away.” The ability of Drayton and his colleagues to respond to the address eventually tempered the effect it had on Loyalist recruiting, and they were able to report to the Council of Safety on

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698 William Tennent Journal, 14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
699 William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 16 August 1775, DHAR, I, 140-143.
24 August that “the address from the people of England to the people of America appears to have lost its credit.”

In addition to attacking the legitimacy of Loyalist leaders like Cunningham and Brown, the three rebels also targeted the unity of the Loyalist leadership, a key strength that allowed them the advantage of mass against the rebels. If they could foster distrust and division among the Loyalist leaders, they would be able to defeat weaker opponents in detail. They focused their sights first on Fletchall, who both commanded the loyalty of the greatest number of inhabitants and was less extreme in his positions than Brown, Kirkland, or Cunningham. Hart was the first one to meet with Fletchall, at a meeting near the Loyalist’s plantation at Fairforest on 12 August. After a meeting, he spoke with Fletchall, who told him while he did not want to fight against his own countrymen he disapproved of the measures taken by the rebels, which included threats against him and other inhabitants. A crowd formed around the two men, supporting everything Fletchall had to say. A defeated Hart had to slip away from the crowd that was acting with “little Reason.” Drayton and Tennent, who thought little of Hart’s suitability for the mission, heard of Hart being “rather ridiculed by Fletchall and his crew,” and set off immediately for Fletchall’s home.

The three men met at Fletchall’s on the 17th, along with Colonel Richard Richardson’s militia regiment, and found the Loyalist leader “surrounded by his Court...Cunningham, Brown, and Robinson.” Tennent noted the way the other

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701 Oliver Hart Diary, 12 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
702 William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 16 August 1775, DHAR, I, 140-143.
Loyalist leaders “watch all [Fletchall’s] motions and have him under great command.” This confirmed his and Drayton’s suspicion that they might be able to divide the enemy leadership. They first informed Fletchall that his recent movements and actions were no secret to the rebels, and they knew that he had corresponded with Governor Campbell, when he had received these communications, and the exact means by which he did so, namely by hiding messages “concealed in a cane.” Fletchall “appeared confounded” that the rebels knew “things which he thought were a profound secret,” and it “surprised him much.” An unsettled Fletchall “swore that there was no harm” in his communication with Campbell, and to mend the situation agreed to assemble his regiment the following week to hear Drayton and Tennent speak. This concession from Fletchall infuriated Cunningham and Brown, who, unlike Fletchall, refused to even have a civil conversation with Drayton or Tennent. Drayton recognized that Brown’s constant insults were intended “to provoke me to violence.” Brown’s “bitterness and violence” only increased when Fletchall told him to leave the group and go to bed.

Despite eliciting Fletchall’s exasperation with Brown and Cunningham, and their similar distrust of Fletchall, Drayton understood “Brown Cunningham, and Robinson will do every thing in their power to bring things to extremities.” Together with Tennent and Hart, Drayton left Fletchall’s, intending to return the next week with Tennent for the muster of Fletchall’s regiment. They expected “some violence

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703 William Tennent to Council of Safety, 20 August 1775, DHAR, I, 145-146.
will then be used against us” by Cunningham, Brown, and Robinson, which influenced their decision to raise the additional troop of rangers under the command of Ezekiel Polk. In the meantime, Drayton and Hart continued to Lawson’s Fork, as deep into the interior as they would go, while Tennent continued north of the Broad River, out of Fletchall’s district, to Bullock Creek, accompanied by Polk and his Rangers. Tennent spoke to “a large body of People,” who “seemed entirely satisfied & Signed the Association almost universally.” He also raised two troops of volunteer horse Rangers, and assured the Council of Safety, “We have greatly weakened and expect to weaken more” their enemies, though he did mention a need for gunpowder to defend against Indian attacks.

As Drayton continued north to Lawson’s Fork, he discovered an opportunity to weaken Fletchall’s position among his own people by appealing to those in his district who did not support him. On the 21st he held a meeting at which those present “gave good attention,” and “upwards of 70 signed” the Association. Drayton learned that the people there were “at present under Fletchall’s command,” meaning they lived in his district, though they requested that Drayton allow them to form “into a regiment independent of him.” Drayton saw an opportunity, and he explained to the Council of Safety that this would provide a “method of weakening Fletchall...consistent with sound policy.” The people were “active and spirited [and] staunch in our favor” and would be able to provide “a severe check upon Fletchall’s

706 William Tennant Journal, 21 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
708 Oliver Hart Diary, 21 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
people.”

To clear up some confusion expressed by the Council of Safety to Drayton’s plan, he further explained that the people of Lawson’s Fork, though in Fletchall’s district, “are dissatisfied with his measures and conduct,” and would be able to counter the influence of “those of...Fletchall’s people who agree with him in opinion and are lower down in a very large district.”

Tennent also witnessed this support from the people in parts of Fletchall’s district when he crossed the Broad River back into the district on the 22nd and held a meeting at Thicketty Creek. Despite the efforts of “the most heated of Majr Robinson’s Friends, his Wife & others,” Tennent was able to convince the people to sign the Association, and they “retired seeming contented.”

Tennent and Drayton arrived at the plantation of James Ford on the Enoree River on 23 August for the assembly of Fletchall’s men. The turnout was disappointing, as only 250 men attended in an area that would normally turn out 1,000 men at muster. Tensions were high throughout the meeting, as “Kirkland and the Cunninghams appeared...with arms, sword and pistol” and Kirkland “was on the point of assaulting Mr. Drayton...which would have brought on bloodshed.”

According to Tennent, Kirkland’s actions “[seem] to have been preconcerted,” with the hopes of instigating a fight, but with “the Disgust against Kirkland appearing so
universal,” he eventually backed down.713 According to Hart, “the fray ended” only after Fletchall stepped in to stop Kirkland.714 Despite the disappointing turnout, Drayton and Tennent witnessed the success of their efforts to counteract Dalrymple’s address. Thomas Brown again read the address, but this time “he had but few hearers.” They also succeeded in convincing a number of captains in Fletchall’s regiment to sign the Association.715 Others present also signed the Association, and “the greater number appeared convinced even though they did not sign.” Tennent spoke to a number of those present and concluded they were “of the opinion that the Opposition will weaken fast.”716 Some who had previously signed did so again “to give a good example.”717

The rebels continued to recruit inhabitants from Fletchall’s district to form volunteer companies of militia to counter his influence. On 25 August, the day after the meeting at Ford’s Plantation, William Thomson informed the Council of Safety that he was forming another volunteer company of 60 men from Fletchall’s district. He also provided an optimistic view of the state of the backcountry, telling Henry

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713 William Tennent Journal, 24 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library. Tennent’s journal claims this meeting occurred on the 24th, but his letter with Drayton to the Council of Safety, previous letters to the Council of Safety, and Oliver Hart’s journal all place this meeting on the 23rd.  
714 Oliver Hart Diary, 23 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.  
716 William Tennent Journal, 24 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.  
717 William Henry Drayton and William Tennent to Council of Safety, 24 August 1775, DHAR, I, 156-157. Brown later referenced these repeated entries to Campbell as evidence of fraud in the process of collecting signatures on the Association, which fed Brown’s contention in his letter that the rebels had failed at converting Loyalists in the backcountry. His letter in turn has influenced historians in the years since to draw a similar conclusion.717 According to Drayton and Tennent, however, it was merely an attempt to show inhabitants who came to hear them speak at each stop the extent and strength of the rebels’ support in the region. Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
Laurens he had “reason to believe that the Non-Subscribers will be but few in a short time.” Meanwhile, after leaving Ford’s Plantation, Hart traveled southeast to Duncan’s Creek and Little River, though he only held a few public meetings there, while Drayton and Tennent moved south towards Ninety Six and the region of Robert Cunningham’s company. They saw evidence that their efforts against both Loyalist inhabitants and their leadership were beginning to yield success. Speaking on the 25th, Tennent found “C[unningham]’s Lieutenant & Ensign [to be] worthy Men” who “appeared moved” by their discussion. Two days later, on the 27th, he and Drayton spoke to another meeting that included a number of individuals who had previously declined to sign the Association. This time, however, “The Audience appeared fully convinced” and “there remained not one who had not subscribed before that did not subscribe now.”

At Ninety Six

For the next week Drayton and Tennent were occupied by their preparations to defend Augusta and Fort Charlotte respectively against the rumored attacks led by Brown, Cunningham, and Kirkland. After the threat dissipated, Tennent returned to Charleston, and Drayton established his headquarters at Ninety Six. The Council of Safety suggested to Drayton that after the threat posed by Kirkland against Fort Charlotte, “it will be absolutely necessary to Subdue him, or drive him out of the Country.” Drayton, however, expressed concern that simply capturing one Loyalist leader would do little to address the insurrection in the backcountry, as “a

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719 William Tennent Journal, 27 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
number of leaders would be left to excite” a commotion. Only if the rebels captured or weakened all of the Loyalist leaders would they avoid such a commotion, as “the heads of the party would be in our custody.”721

According to Thomas Brown, on their march to Ninety Six, the rebels arrested several local Loyalist leaders, and Drayton also had his men “rifle houses, break locks, and seize the papers of those who had opposed the designs of Congress.” They also destroyed crops, particularly corn, with the objective of denying inhabitants the ability to support Loyalist forces.722 These coercive measures, including the demonstration of force, as well as the continued dismantling of the leadership structure had the desired effect, as the inhabitants were “terrified by the march and the cannon,” and Loyalists “now daily come in from those quarters to make their peace.”723 On 13 September Drayton also issued a declaration with a final ultimatum that the people of the interior choose sides. He declared that, “any person who will not associate with, and aid and comfort us, in this arduous struggle for our liberties, cannot, by us, be considered as friendly to us.” Having “declared the terms upon which peace and safety may be had and enjoyed,” Drayton threatened to “march and attack, as public enemies, all and every person in arms, or to be in arms, in this part of the Colony, in opposition to the measures of Congress.” He had “with the utmost patience and industry, gently endeavored to persuade men to a

722 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
peaceable conduct,” and from that point would “with equal patience and industry, prosecute military measures with the utmost rigor.”

It was after he issued this declaration that Drayton learned many of Kirkland’s followers had abandoned him, leaving him exposed to the rebels and forcing him to flee to Charleston. By this time Kirkland was forced to keep a bodyguard of four men around him at all times “to prevent his being butchered by Drayton’s orders.” Furthermore, according to Thomas Brown’s own testimony, Drayton dispatched a company of men to hunt Brown and Cunningham and capture them “dead or alive.” The company, which according to Brown was “composed of the most notorious horsethieves in this province,” tenaciously pursued the two Loyalist leaders, “lurking about [their] plantations” and forcing Cunningham and Brown “continually on the wing” and “averse to embodying...men until forced by absolute necessity.” On 10 September Drayton learned of “a party of men...forming about twenty miles off” under Fletchall’s command on the other side of the Saluda in the Fork. Drayton’s men kept close watch on this group of Loyalists, and their movements.

Drayton and his officers considered three options, including retreating from Ninety Six, defending their current position, or mounting an offensive against the Loyalists to catch them off-guard. Concerned that a retreat would hurt morale and encourage the enemy, and skeptical of the suitability of Ninety Six for a defense, the rebels chose to launch their own offensive to achieve surprise. Drayton had the

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724 William Henry Drayton, A Declaration, 13 September 1775, DHAR, I, 180-183.
725 Thomas Brown to Governor Lord William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
prison at Ninety Six fortified and stored their supply of gunpowder there, and sent Major James Mayson to the Saluda to establish an ambush while placing 100 men several miles behind Mayson's position. Drayton believed "If the enemy should defeat our forces at the river, they could not do it without a considerable loss." When they then reached "another ambush the same night and sustain[ed] at least as heavy a loss as before, they must fly on all sides."

Drayton kept his forces in position until past two the following morning on the 11th, but the Loyalist attack never materialized. Drayton explained to the Council of Safety that this was because Fletchall, Brown, and Cunningham were having trouble mustering a respectable force since "it is plain their influence is declining, and that their people are terrified." According to Drayton, the inhabitants followed the Loyalist leaders because they believed them to be the stronger side with greater control over the people and the region, and the potential to muster several thousand men in arms. Conversely, they "never dreamed [the rebels] would take the field", and believed they had security in numbers. The other development affecting Loyalist decision-making was the dismantling of the last vestiges of royal government in Charleston by the General Committee and Council of Safety at the beginning of September. Governor Campbell was only days away from fleeing the city for refuge on the Tamar. While the rebels had previously made it difficult for Campbell and backcountry Loyalists to coordinate efforts, that possibility was becoming even more remote with Campbell unable to remain much longer in Charleston, and Fort Johnson about to fall into rebel hands. Drayton received intelligence that the Loyalists leadership was by that point only trying to assemble
enough men to make a respectable showing "with a view to make terms of accommodation, so as they may be quiet...and trade to Charles Town."\textsuperscript{726}

Some historians have argued that Drayton realized how close he had come to "an undesireable bloody conflict" and therefore changed his approach and "decided to ease tensions" through concessions to avoid conflict.\textsuperscript{727} Drayton realized, however, that the Loyalists were wavering and leadership was increasingly divided. It was at this moment that he realized he could press his advantage, split the opposition, and still avoid bloodshed. Based on the intelligence he had of his weakened opponent, Drayton made the decision to "march into the heart of Fletchall's quarters with about 800 men and 6 pieces of cannon."\textsuperscript{728} Colonel William Thomson joined Drayton at Ninety Six on 12 September with his Ranger regiment, and Major Andrew Williamson joined them with his militia regiment by the 14\textsuperscript{th}. By then Drayton had 1,100 men under his command, all of whom "obey punctually, keep good order in Camp, are cheerful & content."\textsuperscript{729}

Drayton received reports that Fletchall had somewhere between 1,200 and 1,400 men.\textsuperscript{730} Brown explained to Campbell that he and Cunningham placed themselves under Fletchall's command as it was his district, but divisions arose immediately among the leadership. Brown and Cunningham found Fletchall exceedingly timid, and accused him of "interested views and treachery." They

\textsuperscript{726} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 11 September 1775, PHL, X, 374-379.
\textsuperscript{728} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 11 September 1775, PHL, X, 374-379.
\textsuperscript{729} William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 17 September 1775, PHL, X, 390-395.
\textsuperscript{730} \textit{Ibid.}
resented a perceived lack of support and resources from Fletchall for their planned attack on Fort Charlotte in August, and feared that he intended to betray them as he kept a “constant literary intercourse” with Henry Laurens. The Loyalist leadership was therefore in such disarray, and their men “badly armed & under no order or command” with “no regular supplies of provision.” Recent inclement weather led Drayton to wager that “they could not keep long together,” and their numbers would eventually decline before the rebels would even have to meet them in the field.

To further demoralize the enemy, Drayton dispatched a letter outlining a supposed plan to attack the enemy, which was ostensibly intended for Colonel Richard Richardson but actually meant for the Loyalists to intercept. The letter “informed” Richardson that Drayton had men coming in “from every part of the province” in preparation for the attack on the Loyalist camp, and that the houses and plantations of those who had not signed the Association were to be burned. Drayton’s declaration announcing his intention to use military power against anyone found to be in arms against Congress was also read in the Loyalist camp. Drayton included a promise that if Fletchall, Cunningham, and Brown surrendered, “the non-subscribers would meet with no molestation or disturbance in future.” After taking these measures, Drayton sent representatives to the Loyalist camp to see whether they were interested in negotiations. Brown and Cunningham opposed doing so, but Fletchall overruled them and sent one of his men who “was almost as

731 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
timid as himself.” Before he arrived, Drayton had his men form a hollow square to give the impression they had more men than they did, and Fletchall’s representative, “unacquainted with military evolutions,” bought into the ruse and believed the rebels to be “innumerable”. He was “struck with terror” and intimated to Drayton that the Loyalists would “submit to any terms.”

After Fletchall’s emissary returned to his own camp, Drayton sent Andrew Williamson with two other officers to stay in the Loyalist camp as security while Fletchall, Cunningham, and Brown went to the rebel camp. Cunningham and Brown refused to enter Drayton’s camp, but Fletchall and several of his officers, who Brown called “as ignorant and illiterate as himself,” met with Drayton. Brown and Cunningham sent instructions with the delegation that they insist on the release of Loyalist prisoners, that the Rangers and other forces be disbanded, that the Loyalists in the province face no further intimidation and non-subscribers be once again allowed to trade “without...molestation or hindrance.” Governor Campbell was also to face no further harassment, and the Provincial Congress was to deliver all “artillery, arms, ammunition, and stores” in their possession to the governor. In short, they demanded Fletchall and the other officers insist on complete surrender and an end to the entire rebellion.

Even under the best of circumstances, these conditions were wishful thinking on the part of Brown and Cunningham. According to Brown, the timid Fletchall

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734 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
735 Krawczynski, William Henry Drayton, 188.
began drinking “to revive his spirits,” and became so drunk he never even
“mention[ed] a syllable of the instructions.” Drayton drew up several articles of a
treaty, and read them to Fletchall, but the Loyalist commander, according to Brown,
was too inebriated to understand what he was agreeing to when he signed
Drayton’s treaty.736 The provisions of the treaty claimed that the Loyalists “never
did mean to aid, assist or join the British troops,” and any actions to the contrary
were the result of misunderstanding and “did not proceed from any ill or even
unfriendly principle or design...against the principles or designs of the Congress of
this Colony.”737

The Loyalists promised to adhere to a policy of strict neutrality, and in the
event that any British troops arrived in the province, they would not “give, yield, or
afford...to, or for the use, advantage, or comfort of the said British troops...any aid or
assistance whatsoever” or in any way correspond or communicate with them. They
also promised not to oppose the proceedings of the Provincial Congress. In return,
the treaty stipulated that if anyone who had signed the Association “shall, without
authority of Congress, molest any person or persons” who had not signed,
“application shall be made to the...Congress, of Council of Safety, or General
Committee, in order that” the perpetrators be punished and ordered to leave the
nonsubscribers alone. The key provision of this clause that made the treaty
substantially more favorable to the rebels than the Loyalists was that it only
protected nonsubscribers from harassment by individuals who did not have

736 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
737 Treaty of Ninety-Six, 16 September 1775, DHAR, I, 184-186.
authority from the Provincial Congress. Since the Congress and its subordinate bodies, including the Council of Safety, jealously guarded their prerogative to control the intimidation of Loyalists and to force their signing of the Association, they would be just as opposed as the Loyalists to anyone harassing Loyalists without their permission.\footnote{738}

Brown may have been right about Fletchall’s “recourse to the bottle,” but he was unable to provide a convincing explanation for how an allegedly extremely intoxicated Fletchall was able to convince his fellow officers, Captains Benjamin Wofford, Evan McLaurin, John Ford, and Thomas Greer to also sign the document. Brown said that these men later claimed Fletchall had betrayed and deceived them, and that they “never would abide by [the terms],” but at least some of the men who signed the treaty with Fletchall did in the end abide by the terms of neutrality.\footnote{739} In his own defense, Fletchall later claimed that he agreed to the terms because doing so would avoid a conflict and each side would return home and “remain peaceable.”\footnote{740}

When he and his officers returned to camp and informed Cunningham, Brown, and the other men of the terms of the treaty, however, Brown claims the people were “seized with rage and indignation.” According to Brown, even Fletchall’s men offered “their services to Captain Cunningham and myself” and “were ready and willing then to sacrifice their fortunes and lives in our behalf.” On the other hand, Drayton claimed “All the people in a manner approve of Fletchall’s conduct, and they

\footnote{738}{\textit{Ibid.}}
\footnote{739}{Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396}
are...all gone off with him.” Furthermore, he insisted that as a result of the treaty, “the spirit of discord is gone forth among them” and “the affair is now crushed,” and he assured the Council of Safety that “Fletchall and his people will be true.”

William Thomson provided a similar account, claiming Fletchall’s men “seemed to be dissatisfied at first...but after a little expostulation they appeared very ready” to abide by the treaty.

While Drayton no doubt attempted to put an optimistic spin on the favorable outcome, the truth probably lies closer to his account than Brown’s. Despite Brown’s claim of overwhelming support pouring in for Cunningham and himself, they quickly decided to disband their men. Brown claimed they did this only because they needed to wait for instructions from Campbell, who just days before had fled Charleston. At the same time, however, he admitted that it was also because they did not have enough men under their command after reports came in of troops from North Carolina marching to supplement Drayton’s forces. Without British forces to assist them, Brown resignedly admitted any effort to attack the rebels in South Carolina or Georgia would “be an experiment rather too hazardous.”

A week after the treaty was signed, John Prince, a delegate to the Provincial Congress from the District between the Broad and Saluda, wrote Drayton that although there were some remnants of Fletchall’s men who “pretend to talk high of the concessions” their leaders made at Ninety Six, “from the silence of their chiefs we pay little credit

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743 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396.
to them.” According to Prince, the Loyalists were “impotent wretches” and from that point the rebels could “depend on a good many friends” in the district.744

**After the First Treaty**

With the signing of the treaty on 16 September, the Loyalist cause in the backcountry suffered a significant setback. Drayton received promises from Fletchall and his men, a large number of Loyalists, that they would no longer oppose the rebels. Meanwhile, the remaining Loyalist leaders were increasingly isolated and their men dispersed. Before returning to Charleston at the end of September, Drayton recommended to the Council of Safety that the restrictions imposed on trade and travel between the backcountry and Charleston be removed, as it would “give infinite satisfaction” and “convince every person of the rectitude of our designs.”745 He also made preparations for rebel efforts to capture or neutralize the remaining Loyalist leadership. He wrote to Cunningham on the 21st expressing his “concern” that Cunningham did not consider himself bound by the terms of the treaty. He asked Cunningham specifically whether he intended to abide by the treaty. Drayton knew what response he would get, but intended to use Cunningham’s own words to justify continued rebel pursuit of the Loyalist leader with a warrant for his

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745 William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 17 September 1775, PHL, X, 390-395. In the same paragraph Drayton recommended taking Campbell hostage so he would have no hope of communicating with the Loyalists. Campbell had already fled Charleston, but his isolation on the Tamar was perhaps the next best outcome. However, at least one historian critical of Drayton’s actions in the backcountry erroneously claims that Drayton intended Campbell’s capture to convince the people of the “rectitude of our designs.” In fact, Drayton was referring to the concession of reopening free movement between the capital and interior of the colony as the measure that would convince the people of the rebels’ benevolent intentions. See Edward J. Cashin, *The King’s Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 34.
arrest. As expected, in an unambiguous reply on 5 October, Cunningham informed Drayton that he did not hold himself to the treaty, which he claimed brought a peace that was “false and disgraceful from beginning to ending” since it only came as the result of men “half scared out of their senses at the sight of liberty caps and sound of cannon.” According to Cunningham, this “seeing and hearing [had] generally more influence on some men than reason.” Drayton forwarded a copy of this letter to the Council of Safety, which issued the warrant for Cunningham’s arrest.

Despite returning to Charleston in triumph, not everyone in the town fully understood the importance of what Drayton had achieved. Much of Drayton’s official communication went through Henry Laurens, sitting as President of the Council of Safety. Laurens had long distrusted Drayton’s loyalty to the rebel cause due to his previous service for the Crown as a member of the Governor’s Council and a justice on the provincial court. He believed Drayton might be attempting to discredit the rebel movement with his newly discovered radicalism. Laurens informed his brother James in late October of the events in the backcountry that concluded with Drayton’s treaty. He claimed this “Treaty of Neutrality with Colo. Fletchall [was established] at a great expence to the Treasury, amounting to the Colonels

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747 Robert Cunningham to William Henry Drayton, 5 October 1775 in Drayton, Memoirs, I, 418.
748 Krawczynski, William Henry Drayton, 190.
749 Drayton began turning against the Crown by late 1774, when he presented charges to grand juries that included opposition to Parliament. Laurens could not believe Drayton had changed his position, as he had until that point been a “violent Creature of Administration” and was now acting “violent & Crafty in the Same Interest under the Guise of patriotism.” Laurens remained skeptical of Drayton’s intentions even after Drayton was suspended from the Governor’s Council in late February 1775. This animosity persisted between Laurens and Drayton even throughout the backcountry mission. Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, 4 January 1775, PHL, X, 21-23; Henry Laurens to George Appleby, 10 April 1775, PHL, X, 97-99.
declarations made to me in answer to a Letter I wrote him a Month before...General [Drayton] began his March.” According to Laurens, after all of Drayton’s exploits in the backcountry, he received from Fletchall the same promise Laurens had received from him in July. Governor Campbell shared the same view as Laurens, telling Patrick Tonyn, the governor of East Florida, that “all [Drayton] could accomplish was a kind of...Neutrality.”

What Laurens and Campbell did not fully appreciate was that Fletchall and his men failed to abide by the claims of neutrality professed in his July letter to Laurens and in the Counter-Association his men signed at the same time. Both Fletchall’s letter and the counter-Association claimed he and his men could not take up arms against the King but that they wished to avoid having to fight against their neighbors. In the Counter-Association Fletchall’s men promised to assist in the defense of the province against slave insurrection and Indian attacks, and against any enemy who would “unlawfully disturb the good people” of the province, particularly when “Called upon by a Lawfull Officer of Said province.” The latter clause presented the more obvious threat Fletchall and his men posed to the rebels, as they fully expected to receive orders from Campbell to gather forces to resist the rebels, who could reasonably be accused of unlawfully disturbing the people of the province. Far from a promise of neutrality, this was an attempt to trade space for time until they received orders from Campbell.

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750 William Campbell to Patrick Tonyn, 15 October 1775, Kendall-Simms Collection, South Caroliniana Library.
751 Fletchall Association, included in Thomson to HL, 29 July 1775, PHL, X, 255.
The promise to help defend the province against slave and Indian attacks offered more comfort to the rebels, but backcountry commissioner Oliver Hart recognized the emptiness of this promise when he met with Fletchall at Fairforest on 12 August. Fletchall told Hart his men intended to abide by their counter-Association and “had no Intention of fighting against his Country Men.” Two days later, however, Hart heard from Fletchall that the rebel leadership in Charleston “wanted [Fletchall and his men] to go down and assist them against the Negroes, but that he would be a Fool that would go.” His men who were present agreed with him, and “answered they will not get a man from here.” Hart, the mild-mannered Baptist preacher, was in many ways ill-suited for the political violence that characterized the backcountry mission. Nevertheless, he recognized that the statements of Fletchall and his men “contradict the Col’s association, in which it is declared that one part of their purpose is to suppress insurrections of Negroes.” With rumors circulating throughout the province of British intentions to arm slaves and Indians to attack the white inhabitants, Fletchall’s refusal to abide by one promise in his counter-Association made the other promises, including that of his own peaceable intentions, ring hollow.

Those historians who have been most favorable to Drayton’s backcountry tour suggest his greatest accomplishment was “giving the provincial government nearly three months of valuable peace, allowing them to augment their forces, train and supply their new recruits, and develop a successful plan to eventually crush the

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752 Oliver Hart Diary, 12-14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.
remaining elements of resistance in the backcountry.”753 Others have suggested Drayton failed because he did not fully eliminate Loyalist resistance in the backcountry.754 What Drayton actually accomplished was to remove a significant part of the enemy’s forces in the backcountry and neutralize the two most popular Loyalist leaders there in Fletchall and Kirkland. As Drayton had made clear to the Council of Safety when he advocated neutralizing as much of the Loyalist leadership as they could in as short a period of time as possible, he was fully cognizant of the fact that the rebels needed to quickly arrest the remaining Loyalist leaders or risk losing the gains they had made among the backcountry population. Nevertheless, removing Fletchall and his militia as a threat was particularly important as he was the most recognizable leader in a region inhabited by a large, intractable Loyalist population.

Drayton recognized the disunity and distrust that existed between Loyalist leaders as a vulnerability that could hinder the effectiveness of the backcountry Loyalists. Edward Musgrove, a lawyer and plantation owner on the Enoree River told Drayton that Fletchall’s men had “marched by my house in a promiscuous manner,” only to return “confusedly back again” after Drayton’s actions at Ninety Six. Musgrove told him “the scales seems turned very much now.” The people knew “how much [Drayton] would have had it in [his] power to have used those people at pleasure” as his forces were “well disciplined and the other so confused.” As news of the treaty spread through the backcountry, Musgrove reported the prevailing

753 Krawczynski, William Henry Drayton, 192.
754 Cashin, The King’s Ranger, 35; Piecuch, Three Peoples, One King, 54.
sentiment among Fletchall’s people was that “to rise in the manner they did” was now seen by the people as “a thing inadvertently done,” and “they will not attempt such a thing again.” Most importantly, Drayton achieved all of this without forcing his fellow rebels to make any real concessions since they already opposed harassment of Loyalists and other non-subscribers without the authorization of the Provincial Congress or the Council of Safety.

Drayton also took full advantage of the propaganda value of the treaty. He recommended to the Council of Safety that the terms of the treaty be printed in the newspapers as well as “in sheets to be immediately, by the Committee of Intelligence, circulated throughout the Colony.” He did this to prevent Campbell or any of the Loyalist leadership from spreading “erroneous copies,” but also to ensure publication in England of the terms of the treaty. This would demonstrate unity within the province against Parliament, and “show that no part of the people of this Colony are even unfriendly to the designs of Congress.” Furthermore, it would demonstrate “that none of the people will encourage any person, even by word to condemn our proceedings” and “that all offenders shall be delivered up to punishment.” It was also meant to convince British officials “that no part of the people will even hold any communication with the King’s troops,” and to counter any message to the contrary provided by Campbell. This was meant to discourage any British plans to send troops to invade the province, and therefore further demoralized the remaining Loyalists in the backcountry. The most important point, and the one that would give legitimacy to the perception of provincial unity and the

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755 Edward Musgrove to William Henry Drayton, 14 October 1775, DHAR, I, 201-203.
absence of Loyalist sentiment, was that there had been no need to “put a part of
those people to the sword” and draw blood to convince the Loyalists to sign the
treaty.\footnote{William Henry Drayton to Council of Safety, 17 September 1775, DHAR I, 187-191.}

After Drayton’s return to Charleston, the Council of Safety maintained its communication with militia and regular officers remaining in the backcountry to suppress signs of renewed Loyalist opposition. Major Andrew Williamson established patrols of the south side of the Saluda, from the Savannah River to Ninety Six. He reported to the Council of Safety on October that “every thing seems in perfect tranquility, both here and on the other side of the river,” as the rebels went about forming volunteer companies of militia.\footnote{Andrew Williamson to Council of Safety, 16 October 1775, DHAR I, 206-207.} Williamson also led the pursuit of Robert Cunningham, who had a warrant out for his arrest based on his letter earlier that month to Drayton refusing to abide by the treaty.

On Williamson’s orders, Robert Cunningham was arrested at the end of October and taken to Charleston on the same day the Second Provincial Congress opened with Drayton sitting as president. Cunningham’s brother, Patrick, tried to organize a party to rescue Robert Cunningham before he and his captors reached Charleston, but failed to organize sufficient numbers to overtake the escorting rebel party. Robert Cunningham told the Congress that he did say the things he was accused of saying, but that “although he had opinions, he had not expressed them but when asked.” Though he insisted he had behaved peaceably in the month since the treaty was signed, he insisted he was not bound by the terms of the treaty.
Hearing this, the Congress ordered that Cunningham be charged with “high crimes and misdemeanours against the Liberties of this colony,” and sent to the city’s common jail. He was not allowed to have any communication or correspondence “with any person whatever.” Nor was he allowed the use of “pen, ink, or paper unless by express leave from the Congress” or another official body like the Council of Safety. The Congress did grant this permission the following day when Cunningham asked to be able to write a letter, but it also stipulated that John Lewis Gervais, a planter who served both in the Provincial Congress and on the Council of Safety, and Captain Benjamin Tutt were to both remain present while Cunningham wrote the letter, and then bring it to Drayton for approval.758

Meanwhile, Thomas Brown traveled to Charleston to attempt to make contact with Governor Campbell and receive any orders for Loyalists remaining in the backcountry. Before he could make contact with Campbell, however, the Council of Safety ordered his arrest and questioning regarding his communication with Campbell. Brown was uncooperative, and warned that the Council of Safety could not take any action against him without violating the treaty.759 Nevertheless, Brown threatened that any harm that came to him “wou’d be attended with the most fatal consequences in the back country.” The Council of Safety was not impressed, and

758 Proceedings of the Second Provincial Assembly, 1 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses*, 82-84.

759 Thomas Brown to William Campbell, 18 October 1775, TNA, CO 5/396. Brown was incorrect, since the Provincial Congress still had authority to target Loyalists according to the terms of the treaty, and the Council of Safety was a body appointed by and with the same authorities as the Congress.
ordered Brown to leave the province immediately. \(^\text{760}\) He left South Carolina soon after for Savannah and, in January 1776, fled to East Florida.

**Temporary Setback**

Although Patrick Cunningham failed to rescue his brother en route to Charleston, by 3 November he had been able to muster 150 men from the Fork. They captured a wagon of ammunition near Ninety Six, and took prisoner the twenty Rangers and officers of the escorting party. This presented a serious problem for the rebels, since the ammunition was intended for the Cherokee Indians as part of the diplomatic effort to secure their neutrality. William Tennent had informed the Council of Safety at the beginning of September while he was still in the backcountry at Long Canes between Fort Charlotte and Ninety Six, that the inhabitants were in a “great Terror” that Campbell intended to have the Cherokee join the Loyalist forces. Even those who had signed the Association, therefore, would “be forced to join them, to save their Families from a Massacre.” Tennent immediately began to form volunteer companies to defend the inhabitants in the region, but noted the “great Difficulty is the want of Ammunition.” Drayton gave a talk to the Cherokee headmen at Congaree on his way back to Charleston in which he argued the Cherokee and rebels needed to “support and assist each other, against our common enemies.” He promised “all the friendly aid, assistance, and supplies in our power,” including ammunition. \(^\text{761}\)

\(^{760}\) Cashin, *The King’s Ranger*, 35.

Losing the supply of ammunition on 3 November, therefore, threatened rebel efforts to achieve Cherokee neutrality, and risked the support of many backcountry inhabitants who feared impending Indian attacks as a consequence. To prevent “some young inconsiderate man of the Cherokees...think[ing] or revenging this on the people of that side of the Saluda,” Williamson immediately reinforced Fort Charlotte and marched from Long Cane to Ninety Six to arrest Patrick Cunningham and retrieve the ammunition.\textsuperscript{762} Williamson took action even before he received instructions from the Provincial Congress to “act against the insurgents with the utmost vigour, and...be attentive to the security of Fort Charlotte.”\textsuperscript{763} Likewise, the Provincial Congress ordered Richard Richardson to “march, and to act in such a manner as you shall deem expedient, to seize and to apprehend...Patrick Cunningham” and his “aiders and abettors.” They were to then “under a strong guard, [be] conveyed to Charles-Town.” The Congress made clear to Richardson that he had full authority to do what he thought necessary to “effectually...suppress the present insurrection, and to intimidate all persons from attempting any insurrection in future.”\textsuperscript{764}

At the same time, however, Drayton had to respond to rumors that the rebels were in fact sending the ammunition to the Cherokee to use in attacks against those who had not signed the Association. Drayton asked Richard Pearis, an Indian trader

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who had brought the Cherokee leaders to Congaree in September and acted as interpreter, to assure the Cherokee that the ammunition would be recovered and delivered to them.\textsuperscript{765} Pearis, however, had only days before switched his allegiance to the Loyalists. He did this in part because the rebels would not recognize his ownership of a tract of land purchased from the Indians, but also out of spite for being passed over by the Council of Safety for the official role of Indian commissioner, which instead went to another Indian trader and Pearis’s rival, George Galphin. Pearis gave testimony before Patrick Cunningham and several of his followers that “from what Mr Drayton Did say to the Indians that he Intended to Employ the Indians to fight against the white man for the Committee,” and that the ammunition was intended for this purpose. When the local committee at Congaree stopped the ammunition shipment after hearing these rumors, they received a reply from the Council of Safety “Reprimanding them severely for stopping the ammunition.”\textsuperscript{766}

These concerns among the inhabitants that it was now the Council of Safety, rather than the British, that intended to unleash the Indians on the white settlers in the backcountry immediately resulted in recruits for Patrick Cunningham and caused a significant crisis for the rebels. On 8 November, Drayton and the Provincial Congress responded by first writing to the signatories of the Treaty of Ninety Six, including Fletchall, John Ford, Thomas Green, Evan McLaurin, and Benjamin

\textsuperscript{765} William Henry Drayton to Richard Pearis, 8 November 1775, Kendall-Simms Collection, South Caroliniana Library.
\textsuperscript{766} Affidavit of Richard Pearis, 11 November 1775, Kendall-Simms Collection, South Caroliniana Library.
Wofford to order them in accordance with the terms of the treaty to arrange "the surrender and delivery of Patrick Cunningham, his associates, aiders, and abettors." Drayton and the Provincial Congress also had to get ahead of the rumors propagated by Pearis, which threatened to ruin their carefully crafted narrative that it was the British who conspired to use Indians to attack white inhabitants of the province. They first ordered that Drayton's earlier correspondence with Robert Cunningham be published to convince the public that it was Cunningham's refusal to abide by the Treaty of Ninety Six that warranted his arrest, and that there was subsequently no justification for the actions taken by Patrick Cunningham.

The Provincial Congress also issued a declaration, printed for mass consumption, explaining its policy with the Indians was to “cultivate a good correspondence...from a view of preserving, at the cheapest rate, our borders from savage inroads...or Indian avidity or ferocity.”

767 The same day the Congress learned that two individuals, both brothers of two of Patrick Cunningham's followers involved in the capture of the gunpowder, were in Charleston. Drayton ordered a manhunt for these two men, O'Neal and Bochman, to be brought before the Congress. Captain Thomas Sumter and two other men reported that after making diligent inquiry after O'Neal [and] Bochman...from place to place," they nevertheless "could not meet with either of them." They learned the men had purchased goods and had stopped at the store owned by Henry Rugeley, though "they were said to be gone from town." The Congress ordered Henry Laurens and Captain Cattell to question Rugeley, and "desire he will permit them to see the entries on his books of yesterday and this day." Rugeley allowed the two men to examine his ledgers, and they learned that O'Neal and Bochman had been there to pick up a parcel, but Rugeley did not know their current whereabouts. William Henry Drayton to Fletchall, et al., 9 November 1775, Proceedings of the Second Provincial Congress, 8-9 November 1775 in Hemphill, ed., Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses, 104-107


769 William Henry Drayton, Declaration by the Authority of Congress, 19 November 1775, DHAR, I, 210-214.
the beginning of the war with England, the Congress had tried to “oppose
and...frustrate the design of the British administration, by the hands of the Indians,
to deluge our frontiers with the blood of our fellow-citizens.” The most effective way
of achieving both of these objectives was by providing the Indians with various
goods as presents. The Provincial Congress ensured the inhabitants that this had
been done with the approval of the Continental Congress, which had allotted money
“to preserve the friendship if the Indians on the back of our settlements.” These gifts
included “some small supplies of ammunition, to enable them to procure deer skins
for their support and maintenance,” but not enough to allow them to commence
hostilities against the backcountry settlers. The alternative would be “an Indian war”
caused by “an ill-timed frugality in withholding ammunition,” at the same time “they
almost daily expected that the British arms would attack the Colony in front of the
sea coast.”770

The declaration explained that the accusation that the ammunition was
intended for the Indians to use against Loyalists “is absurd in its very nature,”
particularly since “if the Indians were let loose upon the frontiers, they must
indiscriminately massacre associators and non-associators,” since there would be
no way for them to tell the difference. Such a policy would be entirely self-defeating
for the Council of Safety, as it would “equally ruin friend and foe.” To answer the
concerns that they were giving ammunition to the Indians when individual white
inhabitants lacked their own supplies, the Council of Safety, as always interested in
maintaining tight control over the rebel movement both in the backcountry and in

770 Ibid.
and around Charleston, explained that it was better for the limited supplies in the colony to be controlled by the Council of Safety and held in public magazines. As with the policy of supplying small amounts of gunpowder to the Indians, this was for the general security of all the inhabitants of the colony, since “while the public magazines are well stored, supplies can be instantly, plentifully, and regularly poured upon those parts where the public service may require them.”

**Back to Ninety Six**

Andrew Williamson learned as he neared Ninety Six that Patrick Cunningham, Robinson, and the other Loyalists were on the other side of the Saluda and had assembled approximately 2,000 men, which Williamson later said was “chiefly owing to an affidavit made by Captain Richard Pearis.” Williamson had “at most, not more than 500 men.” When he received word on 18 November that the Loyalist force was crossing the Saluda in the direction of Ninety Six, Williamson and his officers initially agreed to “march and meet the opposite party,” but upon further consideration decided to march from Ninety Six to the fields of a plantation just outside the town owned by Colonel John Savage. Williamson and Mayson believed Savage’s fields would better allow them to “use our Artillery with Advantage and...fortify our Camp” until they had a better idea of the enemy’s position and numbers. He also hoped to buy time until Thomson’s Rangers and other men from the region could reinforce them.

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771 Ibid.
In three hours after reaching Savage’s fields on the morning of the 19
November Williamson’s men built “a kind of Fortification of old Fence Rails Join’d to
a Barn and Some out-Houses.” As they were finishing construction of the
fortifications, Cunningham and Robinson arrived with their men and surrounded
the rebels. They insisted Williamson’s men surrender their arms and disperse,
“which was the only terms they were determined to grant,” but Williamson refused.
The Loyalists seized two rebels who were outside the fort, and Williamson ordered
their rescue, thus initiating the firefight between the two sides at approximately
3:00 on the afternoon of the 19th. The fighting continued until sunset on the 21st,
when Cunningham’s men displayed a white flag and asked to send someone to speak
to Williamson and his officers. The messenger carried a letter from Robinson with
the same demands to surrender their arms and disperse, and this time giving
Williamson only an hour to give his response. Williamson and Mayson “Jointly
Answered that we were determined never to Resign our Arms.”774 The messenger
took the response back to the Loyalist lines, and soon returned with the same
demands, but this time accompanied by Cunningham.

They agreed to a meeting the following morning, on the 22 November, at
which Williamson, Mayson, and Captains Andrew Pickens and John Bowie met with
Robinson, Cunningham, Evan McLaurin, and Richard Pearis.775 The two sides agreed
to a cease-fire, with the terms that Williamson and Mayson would abandon and
destroy the fort, and surrender their swivel guns, while Robinson would fall back to

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775 Drayton, Memoirs, II, 120
the other side of the Saluda and, if he chose or received orders from Campbell, disperse his men. The two sides agreed that “no person of either party shall in the meantime be molested by the other part either in going home or otherwise,” and “any reinforcements [that] arrive to Major Williamson or Major Mayson...shall be bound by” the cease-fire. They further agreed “That the differences between the people of this District and others disagreeing about the present public measures” be submitted to Campbell and the Council of Safety for mutual consideration. To promote mutual trust and openness between the two sides, they agreed that any communication between each side and their respective superiors in Charleston were to “be sent unsealed” and “the messenger of each party shall pass unmolested.” The cease-fire was to remain in place for twenty days to allow for the return of messengers with orders from Charleston.776

At least one historian has argued that the cease-fire “was a triumph for the Nonassociators,” since it required Williamson’s men to acquiesce to some of the earlier demands made by Cunningham and Robinson, namely that the rebels surrender some of their guns and abandon the fort.777 However, the Loyalists had a significant numerical advantage to the rebels, and as another historian has noted, the Loyalists were lacking in capable leaders, while the leadership that was present was divided.778 This was a direct result of Drayton’s September treaty that removed

776 Agreement for a Cessation of Arms at Ninety Six, 22 November 1775, DHAR, I, 214-215.
a number of Loyalist leaders as threats, and the Provincial Congress’s subsequent efforts to arrest Robert Cunningham and drive Thomas Brown and Moses Kirkland out of the province. The Loyalist request for negotiations that led to the November cease-fire also could not have come at a more opportune time for the rebels.

Casualties were not heavy on either side, with one man killed and about a dozen wounded among Williamson’s men. The Loyalists claimed they had one man killed and also eleven or twelve wounded, though Mayson claimed “by the best information they have buried at least twenty-seven men, and have as many wounded.” He told William Thomson that he himself “saw three [of the enemy] fall at the first fire from our side.” Regardless, Mayson informed Thomson, the real threat was that by the third day of the siege, “our men began to be outrageous for want of bread and water, and we had not above sixteen pounds of gunpowder left.” According to Williamson, they dug a well on the third day, and finally “got very good water,” but he agreed that the cease-fire “was lucky for us” due to the severe lack of gunpowder. Williamson ensured that the scarcity of powder remained a secret, and “no person knew our stock by one Gentleman & mySelf.” The rebels would not have been able to hold out much longer beyond the third day, but they were able to cause the enemy to break first by keeping up a steady fire night and day to prevent the Loyalists from advancing on the fort at night.

The end of the siege at Savage’s fields marked the end of the nearly three-week “crisis” for the rebels that began with Patrick Cunningham’s seizure of the

780 Drayton, Memoirs, II, 119.
gunpowder on 3 November. The cease-fire ended the most significant challenge to rebel control in the backcountry and marked a successful balance in policy and strategy for the Congress and Council of Safety that had to overthrow the last vestiges of British authority in Charleston while simultaneously pacifying resistance to their own authority in the backcountry. At the time, however, the Provincial Congress only learned about events at Savage’s fields on the 25th, four days after the cease-fire was signed, from William Moore, a delegate to the Congress from Ninety Six District. He “gave some information of a skirmish said to have happened.” With no additional details, and dealing at the same time with a threat from British ships off the coast at Charleston, the Congress immediately ordered that “all the public gun-powder still outlying in private hands” be collected and “deposited in the public magazine” for security purposes.781

The Provincial Congress also declared the province to be “in a state of actual alarm.” It ordered that 600 men from Colonel Job Rothmaler’s Craven County militia and an equal number of men from Colonel George Gabriel Powell’s Cheraw District militia march to Congaree, while Colonel Stephen Bull of Beaufort District was to send 150 men, all of whom were to put themselves under the command of Richard Richardson, who together with William Thomson had intended to relieve Williamson’s forces at Ninety Six but could not arrive before the cease-fire was signed. Drayton told Richardson that though they had little information on events near Ninety Six, “We think there is reason to apprehend, that the event is

unfavourable to us.” He ordered Richardson to not take any risks with the force he already had until reinforcements arrived, at which point he was to “crush” any enemy force.782

**The Treaty “Violated”**

Richardson and Thomson had already arrived at Congaree on the 26 November with approximately a thousand men even before any of the reinforcements reached them. As they received more information from Ninety Six regarding the terms of the cease-fire, Richardson and Thomson consulted with one another and with the Provincial Congress, which was about to adjourn at the end of the month. The question they considered was whether the cease-fire applied to them and other forces that had not been a party to its signing. They decided it did not apply to any forces other than the ones under the command of Williamson and Mayson at the fort in Savage’s fields.783 While historians have claimed this was a violation of “the clear terms of the treaty,” and accused Richardson and Thomson of “sophistry,” the rebel commanders argued the article applying the terms of the cease-fire to any reinforcements did not apply to them.784 One interpretation could focus on the name given the cease-fire agreement, which made it clear that it was between the Loyalist forces under Robinson, and Williamson and Mayson, “commanders of the fort at Ninety-Six,” as well as “the troops therein under the

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direction, of the Provincial Congress.” By emphasizing the word “therein,” the cease-
fire could be interpreted as applying not to all forces under the command of the
Provincial Congress, but only the ones that had been at Ninety Six.785

The Council of Safety, sitting with Laurens again as president from the
beginning of December after the adjournment of the Provincial Congress, had the
same interpretation of the cease-fire, even before hearing from Thomson on the
subject, and did not need to resort to parsing words in the title of the cease-fire to
justify this interpretation. Writing on 2 December, Laurens informed Williamson,
“the proposition for a suspension of hostilities” resulting from the cease-fire “was extremenly fortunate” given the scarcity of ammunition and other hardships faced by
the men in the fort.” Nevertheless, as Laurens explained to Richardson two days
later, he was “not ordered or destined as a reinforcement to Major Williamson’s
fortified camp,” but instead had orders to “seize and apprehend persons who had
committed an atrocious robbery, to suppress effectually an insurrection, and to
deter all persons from attempting insurrections in future.”786

The Council of Safety therefore did not consider it a violation of the cease-fire
if “by virtue of orders received from Congress,” Richardson “should act offensively
against the Insurgent party even before the expiration of the twenty days.”787
Laurens told Thomson the same thing two days later, claiming Thomson’s

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786 Council of Safety to Richard Richardson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 533-535; Council of Safety to
Andrew Williamson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 536-537.
787 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 2 December 1775, PHL, X, 524-528.
interpretation “is certainly right.” Laurens also supported the arrest of Loyalist leaders, particularly Pearis who he considered an “infamous Traitor” and the primary instigator of the recent Loyalist uprising as a result of his affidavit against Drayton. While Laurens suggested the pursuit of the specific individuals who had agreed to the cease-fire only commence after the 20-day period had elapsed, he argued the detention of other Loyalist leaders was justified. Thomson and Richardson therefore decided to await reinforcements coming in from all around the province, and then “vanquish all the disaffected People in So[uth] Carolina.” Thomson claimed the men were spirited and sought “to subdue the Enemies of America, as they observe that those who are not for America, are undoubtedly against it.”

While Williamson remained bound to the terms of the cease-fire, Laurens encouraged him to maintain “watchfulness & perseverance,” as the “wicked Ministry...are resolved to attack us in Front & Rear” and “by secret Emissaries stir up Enemies in our very bosom &...leave no stone unturned no means unessayd to work our utter ruin.” He told Williamson not to “stand an Idle spectator if attempts should be made to injure our Cause, contrary to the Letter or Spirit of the Treaty either by our old or by upstart Enemies.” One article of the treaty in particular that Laurens and the Council of Safety expected the Loyalists to break was the requirement that any of their correspondence with Campbell remain unsealed. The

788 Council of Safety to William Thomson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 535.
789 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 2 December 1775, PHL, X, 524-528.; Council of Safety to Richard Richardson, 4 December 1775, PHL, 533-535.
rebels interpreted this to mean that “each Party is to be fully acquainted with the correspondence of the other,” including even verbal communication. The Council of Safety therefore insisted on the right “to accompany Major Robinson’s Messenger [to Campbell] whenever he appears.” Anything less, according to Laurens, would be a violation of the terms of the cease-fire, as the Loyalist messenger could show a decoy letter to the Council of Safety and then deliver the real message verbally when he was alone with Campbell.791

Despite the claim by one historian that “The Loyalists upheld their part of the agreement,” Laurens’ expectations soon came to pass.792 On 4 December, a Loyalist militia captain, Matthew Floyd, attended a meeting of the Council of Safety in Charleston where he claimed to be a messenger from Joseph Robinson and had messages to deliver to Governor Campbell. Under the terms of the cease-fire, the Council of Safety claimed the right to read these messages, but Floyd said that he had gotten drunk and lost the messages in Orangeburgh on the road from Ninety Six, and asked to “inform his Lordship verbally all that he can recollect of the Contents of the Treaty & relative circumstances.” Floyd also did not have any evidence that he had been sent by Robinson, presumably having also lost any credentials he may have had. Without these the Council of Safety believed it could have “without violation of Treaty, not only have refused to grant his request but also might have Imprisoned him as a Spy.” Nevertheless, the Council of Safety allowed Floyd to visit with Campbell on board the Cherokee, though it did require Floyd, in accordance

791 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 2 December 1775, PHL, X, 524-528.
792 Piecuch, Three Peoples, One King, 55
with the rebels’ interpretation of the cease-fire, agree to the “express condition that his whole conversation with His Lordship Shall be in the presence & hearing of a Witness whom we Shall Send for that purpose.” 793

The Council of Safety selected Benjamin Marchant, a local merchant, to accompany Floyd on board the Cherokee, where Campbell had moved from the Tamar. Marchant was to deliver a message to Campbell “fully & explicitly Setting forth the terms & conditions upon which Capt Floyd had been permitted” to meet with him. Campbell “nevertheless...violate[d] all Rules of propriety...by throwing Slights and affronts upon” Marchant. 794 On 6 December Marchant told the Council of Safety that the previous day he had accompanied Floyd on board the Cherokee and attempted to stay with him throughout the visit, but Campbell and Alexander Innes had managed to separate him from Floyd. While Floyd and Campbell found a moment alone to converse, Innes distracted Marchant with a barrage of questions about who he was, parsing the legal authority of Marchant to represent the Council of Safety. He also asked Marchant’s opinion on the intentions of the Council of Safety regarding Robert Cunningham and what actions Marchant expected Campbell would take with respect to the Loyalists. Later in the day, the ship’s surgeon distracted Marchant with a drink while Innes spoke alone with Floyd. Eventually Innes forced

793 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 536-537; Proceedings of the Second Council of Safety, 5 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 52.
794 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 9 December 1775, PHL, X, 553-554.

Marchant to leave the ship and return to Charleston, giving him a message for the Council of Safety that Campbell would keep Floyd on board.795

The members of the Council of Safety were furious, convinced that Campbell had both insulted their generosity in allowing Floyd on board the Cherokee without the messages he claimed to have from Robinson, and that he had violated the terms of the cease-fire. They notified Captain Arnoldus Vanderhorst of Christ Church Parish, on the coast north of Charleston, to remain vigilant for Floyd, thinking he might be put back ashore in that parish away from the city. They also ordered the man who was watching Floyd’s horse in Charleston not to allow anyone to take the horse, and to notify the Council of Safety if anyone came asking for the animal.796

Floyd, however, returned ashore to Charleston late in the evening of 7 December, and returned to his lodging before attempting to escape. Unfortunately for Floyd, there was an officer staying in the same house who recognized him and placed him under arrest, bringing him before the Council of Safety the following day.797

The only paper that had been found in Floyd’s possession was a letter from John Fergusson, the captain of the Cherokee, claiming Floyd had only been detained because Campbell “found it highly suspicious that he did not come with any message from His Majesty’s faithful and loyal subjects in the back part of this Province.”798

796 Peter Timothy to Arnoldus Vanderhorst, Proceedings of the Council of Safety, 6 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 59.
797 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 9 December 1775, PHL, X, 553-554.
798 John Fergusson to All Whom it May Concern, 7 December 1775, DHAR, I, 224.
Laurens reported that upon interrogation, Floyd’s “answers had the appearance of Candour.”

He confirmed Marchant’s report of how Campbell and Innes had distracted Marchant to speak to him alone, and admitted Campbell gave him a message for the backcountry Loyalists. They were to “do every thing they can for the best advantage,” and while Campbell wanted to avoid blood spilling, “whatever they should do would meet with his consent.” Floyd also saw Josiah Martin, the royal governor of North Carolina, who had come to Charleston on the Scorpion to consult with Campbell. Martin told Floyd that the rebels in North Carolina “would soon find employment enough at home” from Loyalist resistance there, and the South Carolina Loyalists would therefore not have to worry about them reinforcing the rebels in South Carolina.

The Council of Safety ordered the Sheriff of Charleston District to keep Floyd in the common jail under suspicion “of being a spy, and of other high crimes and misdemeanors against the liberties of the colony.” At the same time, the Council of Safety also used Campbell’s ruse of pretending to have been suspicious of Floyd against him, deciding it “necessary to detain the Said Floyd until we Shall receive a full & proper explanation” regarding his orders from Robinson, which Williamson was instructed to obtain from Robinson. Floyd remained in prison for the next three months, until he was paroled upon taking an oath to the Provincial Congress.

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799 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 9 December 1775, PHL, X, 553-554.
800 Testimony of Matthew Floyd, Proceedings of the Second Council of Safety, 8 December 1775, CSCHS, III, 66.
802 Council of Safety to Andrew Williamson, 9 December 1775, PHL, X, 553-554.
The Snow Campaign

Meanwhile, Colonel Richard Richardson had his men near Evan McLaurin’s storehouse in the Fork between the Saluda and Broad Rivers, watch for any signs of Loyalist resistance, but they met with little opposition. His men had already arrested several Loyalist leaders who had not been party to the cease-fire, including Captains John Mayfield, Benjamin Wofford, William Hunt, Daniel Stagner, and Jacob Stack. He sent them to Charleston with instructions that “they are not to be set at liberty till matters are settled, as they are looked upon as active and pernicious men.” Richardson was regularly gaining reinforcements, and by the second week of December had three thousand men under his command. This number included Thomson’s Rangers as well as a Continental regiment from North Carolina under the command of Ezekiel Polk’s brother, Colonel Thomas Polk of Mecklenburg County. Taking advantage of his growing numbers, Richardson issued a declaration on 8 December accusing Patrick Cunningham and his followers of violating the treaty reached in September with Drayton. He announced that he and his own men had “now come into these parts, in the name and behalf of the Colonies to demand of the inhabitants, the delivery up of...all the principal offenders...together with the...ammunition.” He demanded “full restitution for the ravages committed,” and insisted “all aiders and abettors of those robbers, murderers, and disturbers of the peace and good order” surrender any arms and ammunition in their possession. In the case they did not comply with his orders, Richardson threatened that he would

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803 Richard Richardson to Council of Safety, 2 November 1775, DHAR, I, 209.
804 Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 12 December 1775, DHAR, I, 239-241.
“be under the necessity of taking such steps as will be found disagreeable, but which I shall certainly put into execution for the public good.”

The declaration, together with the continued reinforcements joining Richardson, had the desired effect. Four days later he reported from Duncan’s Creek near the Enoree River that his men had captured a number of Loyalist leaders, including Richard Pearis and Thomas Fletchall. Fletchall, who Thomson’s men found hiding in a cave, did not take part in Patrick Cunningham’s insurrection but was said to have offered verbal support. Furthermore, in violation of the rebels’ interpretation of the September treaty, he willingly opposed the proceedings of the Provincial Congress and Council of Safety by not assisting in the search for Patrick Cunningham or Joseph Robinson. The declaration of 8 December and the capture of a significant number of Loyalist leaders influenced many Loyalists to “come in...and [deliver] up their arms.” For those who were not “capital offenders,” Richardson emphasized reconciliation and reintegration. He “dismiss[ed] with soft words and cheerful countenances, and admonish[ed] them to use their interest with their friends and neighbors,” an effort that was also achieving positive results. He told the Council of Safety it would continue to “take time to settle this disturbed part in peace” as it was at the time “quite disjointed.” Nevertheless, Richardson’s growing army was formidable enough to “[strike] terror” and cause “a great panic” among

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805 Declaration by Col. Richardson to Insurgents under Cunningham, 8 December 1775, DHAR, I, 224-225. On 4 December the Council of Safety had suggested to Richardson that “a proper declaration, inculcated among the lower classes of these misguided people under the influence of the enemies to liberty, may have the good effect of inducing many of them to come in to you, and to lay down their arms; upon which condition, together with a solemn promise of the strictest neutrality, terms of mercy and protection may be granted.” See Council of Safety to Richard Richardson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 538.
the “unhappy people.” The remaining Loyalists “hitherto fled before us, keeping fifteen or twenty miles distant,” unwilling to meet his army in battle.806

Richardson’s army continued its relentless march, driving the remaining Loyalists deeper into the interior of the colony. He was joined along the way by additional forces from North Carolina, including militia from Rowan County under the command of Colonel Griffith Rutherford and militia from Tryon County under the command of Colonel William Graham. He was also joined on the 20th by Williamson and his men, who the rebels now considered to be released from the conditions of the November cease-fire as a result of the subterfuge employed by Campbell, Innes, and Floyd to prevent Benjamin Marchant from hearing everything said between the three men. By the 22nd, Richardson’s army had reached nearly five thousand men. Writing from camp at Raborn’s Creek, Richardson claimed the primary purpose of such a sizeable force was to intimidate local Loyalists with a demonstration of overwhelming numbers, to “[strike] terour, and [show] what Can be Done on [occasion].” With their leadership either captured or on the run, the people continued “coming in with fear and trembling, giving up their arms, with a sensible contrition for the errors they have been guilty of.”807

Richardson argued that capturing the remaining Loyalist leaders would present “no occasion for more than my own regiment.” Upon learning that these men, who were “the principal aggressors,” had fled to Cherokee land, he detached

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806 Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 12 December 1775, PHL, X, 561-563; Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 16 December 1775, PHL, X, 567-568.
807 Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 22 December 1775, PHL, X, 579-582.
1,300 men, only a fraction of his total force, to capture them.\textsuperscript{808} This force surprised Patrick Cunningham’s men on the morning of the 22\textsuperscript{nd} near the Reedy River in Cherokee territory, at a place called Great Cane Brake. They “took about one hundred and thirty prisoners, with baggage, arms, [and] ammunition.” Though Cunningham himself did manage to escape, “telling every man to shift for himself,” Richardson considered this victory to have “completed the conquest” of Cunningham’s party, “which had till then kept out of reach.” With a heavy snow resulting in accumulations of more than fifteen inches, giving Richardson’s “Snow Campaign” its name, he dismissed all of the North Carolina troops as well as many of the South Carolina forces. He then began a long march with his men, resulting in a number of cases of frostbite, before reaching Congaree amidst heavy rain and sleet.

Richardson had many of the Loyalist prisoners “sign an instrument of writing...by which they forfeit their estates, real and personal, if they ever take up arms against, or disquiet the peace and tranquility of the good people of this colony again.” The oath went beyond this neutrality, however, and also required those who signed to provide assistance for the rebels “if they are ever called upon.” They signed “willingly with fear and trembling.” Richardson assured Laurens that these “lenitive measures have had a good effect,” and the people “are now more convinced than ever of their being wrong...the spirit and power is gone from them.” Richardson recognized that balancing intimidation tactics and a show of overwhelming force together with an offer of amnesty would yield the desired outcome with much greater efficiency than had he “burnt, plundered and destroyed

\textsuperscript{808} Ibid.
and laid waste, seizing on private property,” which would have led to “thousands of women and children...left to perish.” Such an outcome would have been “shocking to humanity.” He sent the remainder of the prisoners, more than one hundred men, including officers, to Charleston under the guard of Captain Thomas Sumter.809

Conclusion

By the beginning of 1776, the rebels in Charleston had succeeded in pacifying much of the backcountry and bringing the population and territory of that region under its control. Most of the Loyalist leadership was in prison in Charleston, including the Cunningham brothers, Richard Pearis, and Thomas Fletchall. Thomas Brown and Joseph Robinson had each fled for refuge in East Florida, while Moses Kirkland had fled to the safety of the Tamar. Governor Campbell then sent him to Boston to confer with Gage on a plan for attacking the southern colonies. In December 1775, however, before the British vessel he was on could reach Boston, Kirkland was captured and imprisoned in Philadelphia. He wrote to Henry Laurens in January assuring him he now believed in the “[Strength] of America,” and asked for Laurens’ assistance in securing his release on his assurance of good behavior and promise to return to Charleston.810 Laurens took no action in response to the letter, and Kirkland remained imprisoned in Philadelphia until he escaped several months later and made his way to the safety of British lines in New York.

809 Richard Richardson to Henry Laurens, 2 January 1776, PHL, X, 610-613. Sumter was previously the object of some mistrust as he had been under the command of Moses Kirkland before the latter defected. Richardson reported, however, that Sumter “has behaved very well and has been to me and the cause, of extra service.”
810 Moses Kirkland to Henry Laurens, 11 January 1776, PHL, XI, 21-23.
Many of these men would, later in the war, continue their fight against the rebels. Kirkland and Brown would each play a significant role in the formation of the British strategy for retaking the southern colonies. For the next several years Brown would also lead continued raids from East Florida into Georgia as the commander of a Loyalist battalion called the Kings Rangers, or Florida Scout. Nevertheless, during the critical period of 1775 and the beginning of 1776, when the rebels’ primary objective was dismantling royal governance and consolidating their own authority in the colony, there remained little internal opposition to threaten their success. Similarly, as additional men-of-war appeared off the coast, including the *Cherokee* and the *Scorpion*, the latter of which brought Josiah Martin to Charleston to consult with Campbell, the rebels were able to eliminate most internal threats. This allowed them time to pass a new constitution, form a permanent colonial, and later state government, and secure control over the province and its inhabitants that would endure as they turned their attention to external threats. These external challenges included not just the failed British attack on Charleston in June 1776, but also threats emanating from Florida and Cherokee territory in the years following before the British returned south in December 1778.

The rebels understood that the conflict in the backcountry was no different from that in Charleston and along the coast. It was a competition between two sides for control over the population. For the rebels, this control was necessary for them to achieve their political objectives, and while the militia and provincial forces played an important role in the process of securing this control, the rebels achieved

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811 Council of Safety to Richard Richardson, 4 December 1775, PHL, X, 538.
those political objectives with relatively little need to first militarily defeat the enemy in conventional battle. Instead, they used many of the same measures first applied in Charleston to secure the collapse of the royal government. These included intimidation through threats and a show of force, propaganda, and deft political maneuvering to convince the majority of the Loyalist inhabitants to surrender and seek a general pardon. At the same time, they exploited divisions among the Loyalist leaders before turning their attention to each in detail. These two approaches had a mutually reinforcing effect, in that the loss of support from their followers left the Loyalist leadership exposed and vulnerable. By isolating and weakening the leadership, in turn, more of their followers chose to surrender their arms and take an oath either to the Provincial Congress.

Whereas the Loyalists in the South Carolina backcountry remained isolated from the remaining vestiges of royal power and authority on the coast, as weak as they may have been, Governor Martin was aggressive in his effort to develop Loyalist resistance in North Carolina. Unlike in South Carolina, Martin planned to first send experienced Scottish Highlander officers into the backcountry to assemble the Loyalists and then bring them to Cape Fear to join forces with Martin. Martin sought to use these Loyalist forces in North Carolina to retake control of the government in the coastal cities. His strategy therefore required the rebels adopt measures that would not only weaken the Loyalist forces in the backcountry but also prevent them from corresponding and joining forces with Martin near Cape Fear. Ultimately however, the rebels’ objective remained the same, namely to secure control over key population and terrain while denying the same to the enemy.
Chapter 8: The Little Check the Loyalists Here Have Received

On 8 July 1775, following his June arrival in South Carolina, Lord William Campbell met with a relative, John Simpson, and Simpson’s wife, Elizabeth. In a move that would influence British strategy later in the war, the southern governors, particularly Josiah Martin of North Carolina and Campbell of South Carolina, sought a way to make up for the loss of authority over the militias and the absence of any instrument of force defending the government. They did this by organizing and arming backcountry Loyalists to act in support of the King. With Georgia governor James Wright and Campbell largely confined to Charleston and Martin seeking safety at Fort Johnston and on board the Cruizer as early as June, communicating with the Loyalists proved a challenge. Campbell had, upon arrival, immediately found it difficult to communicate with Loyalists in other parts of the province, and so asked Simpson, “[H]ow...the pulse of the people beat[s] in the Back Country.” John Simpson replied that there were “would be many friends for the King if they could hear from the Governor.”

Campbell replied that he did not know whom he could trust to take a message to the backcountry Loyalists, and that he could only trust a handful of people in Charleston. He asked Simpson, who was “dressed in a poor way” such that he would not be suspected, to travel through the backcountry and report to
Campbell “all that was said.” He also told Simpson that he should tell the people he encountered who signed the rebels’ Association that they would be pardoned if they agreed to remove their names, as Campbell intended to reclaim power from the rebels. He gave Simpson the names of several persons in the backcountry that he had been told he could trust. Simpson was to gauge their loyalty, and let those he trusted know “the [General] Committee were so head-strong that they would not yield to the King, but would ruin the country, and therefore there would be a river of blood spilt.” Campbell instructed Simpson to order those trusted agents to “enlist men privately for the kingdom, to keep them in readiness to come down when [Campbell] sent for them,” as he expected a man-of-war to arrive soon at Charleston.

Campbell’s concern that he could not trust anyone to act as his messenger to the Loyalists would prove true. It was at this meeting with the Simpsons that Elizabeth Simpson learned of Campbell’s plan to use black harbor pilots to bring British men of war into Charleston Harbor. Three days later, she testified about the details of the meeting before the Council of Safety.812 This was also only days after Captain John Tollemache had left Charleston on board the Scorpion with the province’s most skilled black harbor pilot. As Campbell had realized, with the rebels watching their movements closely, he and the other governors would have to rely primarily on written communication relayed by a trusted courier, or by sending an agent into the backcountry to meet with the Loyalists on his behalf. The rebels were able to successfully counter these efforts by monitoring movements in the

812 Affidavit of Elizabeth Simpson, 11 July 1775, Henry Laurens Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.
backcountry, preventing suspected Loyalists from assembling in groups, blocking movements of Loyalists who tried to travel to the coastal cities to meet with the governors or other officials, and intercepting communications, both from the governor attempting to organize Loyalist resistance and from Loyalists seeking to coordinate efforts with the governor.

The intelligence victory Elizabeth Simpson’s testimony provided for the rebels was a serious blow to Campbell’s hopes of establishing a regular communication with Loyalists in the backcountry. Instead, the rebels were able to limit communication between Campbell and the backcountry Loyalists before they could form any real coordinated plan of resistance. As a result, the backcountry Loyalists, though still active in resisting the new revolutionary government in Charleston, were largely isolated from Campbell and the remnants of royal government. There were some exceptions, including Campbell’s correspondence with Thomas Fletchall, as well as Campbell and Alexander Innes securing two days alone with Matthew Floyd, the messenger sent by Joseph Robinson following the November 1775 cease-fire. Nevertheless, the rebels knew about Fletchall’s letters from Campbell and used them to create divisions between Fletchall and the other Loyalist leaders, Brown and Robert Cunningham. Likewise, the Council of Safety was able to immediately apprehend Floyd when he came back ashore from the *Cherokee*, and intercept Campbell’s message of support for backcountry Loyalists.

The government’s worsening position in Charleston throughout the summer of 1775 also left those messengers who did make contact with the backcountry Loyalists with little encouraging news that would convince Loyalists to risk their
lives and property by resisting the rebels. In August, Oliver Hart heard Joseph Robinson read a letter in Fletchall’s district that he claimed to be from Campbell with the latest news of the Ministry’s effort to end the rebellion. Robinson announced that according to Campbell there were fifteen British ships at Charleston, leading the people to think, “that the city might have been reduced to ashes.”

Whether Campbell provided instructions to make this claim, or Robinson simply made it up to increase support for the government, it was almost certainly untrue. The additional man-of-war Campbell claimed to be expecting in July would not appear until later in the autumn, well after the royal government had been entirely dismantled and Campbell had sought refuge on board the Tamar. The Scorpion had stopped at Charleston in June to bring Campbell to the province, and the Cherokee would soon join the Tamar at Charleston, but at the time the Tamar was the only British man-of-war permanently stationed at Charleston.

Even with the success the rebels had in preventing communication between Campbell and the backcountry, part of the responsibility for the failure of the governor and the Loyalists to form any concerted plan rested with Campbell himself. Despite his stated desire of organizing resistance in the backcountry, his actions often suggested a lack of urgency in these efforts. Thomas Brown reported in October that after the treaty Fletchall signed with Drayton in September, he and Robert Cunningham consulted with Campbell and decided to avoid further conflict.

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813 Oliver Hart reported this officer to be a “Major Robertson,” but it is more likely it was Major Joseph Robinson. Oliver Hart Diary, 14 August 1775, South Caroliniana Library.

814 Disposition of H.M.’s Ships and Vessels in North America, 17 August 1775 in K.G. Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution (DAR), XI (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1976), 75-76.
with the rebels for the time being. At the same time, however, after the siege at Savage’s field near Ninety Six that resulted in the November cease-fire, Campbell insulted Patrick Cunningham and Joseph Robinson. He claimed the two were not “leader[s] of either consequence or knowledge enough to direct their enterprises” because they had agreed to a cease-fire when they enjoyed advantages of numbers, position, and supplies over the rebels.\(^{815}\) Likewise, Matthew Floyd reported to the Council of Safety that Campbell gave his support to whatever the Loyalists chose to do in the backcountry, but offered no plan and provided no real leadership himself.

In North Carolina, however, the governor, Josiah Martin was significantly more involved in efforts to coordinate resistance among the backcountry Loyalists, and these plans developed much further than any had in South Carolina. In South Carolina, plans for resistance involved Loyalists mounting an insurrection while isolated in the interior far from all vestiges of British power and authority, even as weak as they were at the time. In North Carolina, however, Scottish Highlander officers raised Loyalist forces under the governor’s authority, and together they marched towards the coast to join Martin and British forces expected to arrive at Cape Fear. The rebel strategy in North Carolina included many of the same persuasive and coercive measures used in South Carolina to reduce Loyalist numbers. The rebels in North Carolina had to place greater emphasis than their South Carolina counterparts on preventing communication between the coast and the interior, as well as physically preventing Loyalists from assembling and moving

\(^{815}\) William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth (Lord Germain), 1 January 1776, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), 1 January 1776.
toward the coast. They did this by intercepting communications between Martin and the Loyalists to ascertain their strategy, maintaining a close watch on suspicious movements by Loyalists, denying Loyalists the freedom of movement they needed to connect with Martin, turning Martin’s emissaries to the Loyalists against him, and intimidating Loyalists. By disrupting communications and movements between the backcountry and the coast, the rebels left Martin uncertain about the details and progress of the Loyalists while soundly defeating a significantly weakened and disorganized Loyalist force at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in February 1776. The result of this decisive victory was to remove much of the internal threat to the new rebel government in North Carolina.

**High Hopes Meet Early Skepticism**

Josiah Martin was the most active of the southern governors in organizing Loyalist resistance. According to Martin, until the beginning of 1775 “the growth and progress of sedition and revolt” in North Carolina seemed to be following that of South Carolina, leaving Martin with little hope that he could hold off the rise of rebellion. In the first months of 1775, however, Martin believed the situation was changing. He told Gage in March that residents in several parts of the province “begin to open their eyes and...see through the artifices and delusions by which they have been misled.” Martin believed this was the result of “the arbitrary and intolerable exertions of power” by the rebel committees. Writing at the same time to Dartmouth, he noted the residents of the interior of the province in particular were

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loyal to the King, and provided “the fullest assurances of their devotion to His Majesty and of their readiness to support me in maintaining the constitution and Laws of their Country upon all occasions.”

Martin, however, worried about “how long these People may resist the unremitted labours of the seditious to alienate them.”

Though Dartmouth would eventually grow more skeptical of Martin’s claims of large numbers of Loyalists as the governor was unable to successfully leverage their support, he initially demonstrated significant enthusiasm about the reports of potentially thousands of loyal North Carolinians. In May 1775 he told Martin this was “a matter of so much importance that I cannot too earnestly recommend it to your attention.” He suggested Martin “consider in time whether it may not be practicable in such an event to embody and lead forth in support of Government such of the Men in those counties as are able to bear Arms.” He also offered to write Gage “to apprise him of this favorable circumstance and to instruct him that he...send some able and discreet Officer to you in order to” organize these loyal populations into an effective resistance and, “lead the people forth against any rebellious attempts to disturb the public peace.”

Martin, however, wanted more than a single officer to lead the effort to organize resistance against the rebels. This was in part because he did not want to relinquish military control in the province. Instead, he wanted the lieutenant colonel’s commission in the British Army that he had resigned in 1769 to be...

817 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 20 April 1775, CRNC, IX, 1228.
818 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 18 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1256.
819 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 3 May 1775, CRNC, IX, 1241.
restored to him so he could lead the Loyalists himself. The March letter to Gage that had been intercepted by the South Carolina Committee of Intelligence asked for “two or three thousand stand of arms and a good store of ammunition.” The Charleston rebels, however, sent copies of this letter to the Wilmington committee, and also warned its counterpart in New York to watch for any individuals seeking to obtain arms and ammunition for Loyalists in North Carolina.820 In late May, Martin, who had yet to receive word from Gage, heard from “a certain old soldier” that there were arms and ammunition in New York “intended to be sent to me by the first opportunity that offered.” This was the only information Martin had on this matter, as the “old soldier” was uncertain when the arms would arrive and whether they would be sent by man-of-war or merchant vessel.821

Concerned it would be the latter because of “mistaken opinion the people held in the northern provinces of the universal loyalty and good disposition of the inhabitants of this colony,” Martin went to great lengths to ensure safe delivery of the shipment. Worried that news of a shipment of arms would “furnish reason for insult to me and my family,” he sent a letter to New York warning against sending the arms and ammunition by merchant vessel. He ordered the Cruizer into service to protect the shipment if it arrived. He sent his secretary to the inlet at Ocracoke Island, the entrance to the New Bern port, to prevent the vessel from proceeding to New Bern. He was to instead direct the vessel to Cape Fear where the Cruizer could

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821 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 42-43.
provide protection. Finally, Martin ordered the captain of the *Cruizer* to send “a sufficient force” of men to Ocracoke to compel the vessel with the stores, “if necessary,” to proceed to Cape Fear. More than a month after he first learned of the shipment and took these measures with his limited resources, however, Martin had still “heard nothing to be depended on relative to the arms and ammunition.” Two weeks after that he was, “still waiting...with eager expectation of those Supplies from General Gage which are indispensible to my availing myself for His Majesty's Service.” He suggested to Dartmouth that he instead be supplied directly from London, this time requesting “that the supplies of arms and ammunition I have requested of General Gage should be sent in a fourfold proportion to me.” This included ten thousand stand of arms as well as “six light brass field pieces, six Pounders...and good store of Ammunition.”

In July, he sent further communication to Gage by way of the *Scorpion*, the sloop-of-war commanded by Captain Tollemache which was sailing from Charleston to Boston. This was the means of communication by sea Martin had “long wished for in vain, no mode of communication by sea having been yet Established by the Admiral or General.” Martin thought it was necessary since “all intercourse with them by land...[had been] entirely cut off, by the vigilance of the Committees...which no Messenger or letter can escape.” Before he had even received Martin’s request for a significant increase in resources, however, Dartmouth was already tempering his enthusiasm for Martin's plan. In early July, he told Martin the state of the other colonies required the attention of Gage and Graves, and “[I]t is His Majesty's express

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822 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 30 June 1775, CRNC, X, 46.
Command,” that Martin “exert every Endeavour, and employ every means in your power to aid and support [Gage] and Admiral Graves.” A week later, the Earl of Dunmore, the governor of Virginia, returned to North America following a stay in England, sailing from London with 3,000 stand of arms. According to Dartmouth, only “a part of which arms” was intended for Martin to make up for the arms Gage would not be able to send. In September 1775, Dartmouth received Martin’s request for significantly more resources, and learned that Martin had been forced to take refuge on the Cruizer while the rebels took and burned Fort Johnston. Dartmouth now suggested Martin was “too sanguine in your expectations of being able, if properly supported in the manner you suggest to induce a large party of the Inhabitants of North Carolina, to take up arms in support of Government.” He attempted a compromise by sending the ten thousand stand of arms and six light field pieces to Gage. If Gage, “upon later and consequently better intelligence of the State of North Carolina...shall judge it practicable to effect what you suggest,” he would send “not less than one complete Battalion to Cape Fear under the Command of an able and Intelligent Officer, and with the Arms and Artillery I have mentioned.”

A Plan Takes Shape and the Rebels Respond

In the meantime, and with the resources he had available, Martin tried to establish communications with the Loyalists in the interior of the province. It did not take long for the rebels to identify, track, and shut down his channels to

823 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 5 July 1775, CRNC, X, 66-68.
824 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 12 July 1775, CRNC, X, 89-91.
825 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 15 September 1775, CRNC, X, 247-248.
backcountry Loyalists, particularly after Martin’s initial effort in June to reach out to them. He issued a proclamation condemning the “sundry ill disposed persons” who were “industriously propagating false, seditious and scandalous reports, derogatory to the honor and justice of the King and his Government.” According to Martin, these reports “excite[d] the most unnatural jealousies and suspicions to create discord among the People, and to alienate their affections from His Majesty.” He urged “all His Majesty’s liege Subjects within this Province” to “withstand and resist all attempts of the seditious to seduce them from the duty and allegiance they owe to His Majesty, and the Laws, and Constitution of their Country.” He demanded they refuse to submit to the committees, “or any other such illegal, usurped, unconstitutional authorities whatsoever.” He promised “His Majesty's most gracious protection of all his dutiful and faithful Subjects” and called on justices of the peace, sheriffs, and all other government officials “to be aiding and assisting to the utmost of their power, in counteracting and opposing all Promoters of Sedition, and Disturbers of the Peace and tranquility of this Colony.”

The rebels almost immediately learned of efforts by Loyalists to communicate with Martin and their agreement to raise troops. These Loyalists included John Dunn and Benjamin Boote, as well as many others. Two weeks after Martin issued the proclamation, the Wilmington committee wrote to Allan MacDonald, a British army officer who had emigrated the previous year to North Carolina with his wife Flora, a Jacobite who had helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape to the Isle of Skye following the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The committee

826 Proclamation by Josiah Martin Concerning Loyalty to Great Britain, 16 June 1775, CRNC, X, 16-19.
demanded to know from Allan MacDonald the truth of reports that he had been in
contact with the governor offering his services in raising men in support of
Martin. 827 Several days later, the Wilmington committee learned of James Hepburn,
the Cumberland County lawyer who had been disparaging the committees and who
had applied to the Cumberland committee to raise men to defend Martin and the
government. The Wilmington committee learned that Hepburn had also “been with
Governor Martin at Fort Johnston, in company with some gentlemen lately settled in
this Province...to obtain his orders for raising mercenaries to suppress the noblest
struggles of insulted liberty.” The committee labeled Hepburn “a false scandalous,
and seditious incendiary, who...basely and traitorously endeavors to make himself
conspicuous in favor of tyranny and oppression.” 828

Since Martin fled first to Fort Johnston and later to the Cruizer, the
Wilmington committee took the lead beginning in July to cut off his communication
with the Loyalists. After learning of several instances of Loyalists attempting to
communicate with the governor to discuss resistance against the rebels, the
committee decided to act. It learned of “undoubted intelligence...that Governor
Martin hath used his utmost endeavours to erect the King’s standard in this
Province, and to procure experienced Officers to lead the disaffected persons
therein.” On 10 July, the committee ordered “that no person or persons shall, on any
pretence whatsoever, either personally or by letter or message, hold any

827 Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 3 July 1775, State Archives of
North Carolina.
828 Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 7 July 1775, State Archives of
North Carolina.
correspondence or communication with Governor Martin without first applying to this or some other Committee and having a sanction for so doing.”

The committee members justified this order to Samuel Johnston, who was in charge of calling a new Provincial Congress. They noted, “Our situation here is truly alarming, the Governor collecting men, provisions, warlike stores of every kind, [and] spiriting up the back counties.” The New Bern committee followed the Wilmington committee’s lead in early August when it ordered inhabitants to have no contact with Martin, whether written or in person. Anyone found violating this order would be “deemed enemies to the liberties of America,” and anyone who tried to visit Martin at “any...part of the Province where the Governor resides” without the permission of the committee “will not be suffered to return” to New Bern.

When, at the end of July, the committee learned Martin might himself travel to the backcountry in an effort to make contact with Loyalists there, it ruled “That the Governor’s going into the back country may be of great prejudice to this Province, as it is in all probability he intends kindling the flames of a Civil war.” The committee ordered “that the Committees of the different counties should be advised of his intentions and requested to keep a strict lookout, and, if possible, to arrest him in his progress.”

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829 Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 10 July 1775, State Archives of North Carolina.
830 Wilmington Committee of Safety to Samuel Johnston, 13 July 1775, CRNC, X, 91-92.
831 Minutes of the New Bern Committee of Safety, 5 August 1775, CRNC.
832 Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 31 July 1775, State Archives of North Carolina. The committee followed Martin’s movements using information collected by a number of sources. For example, it received one letter in mid-August from a merchant, Richard Quince, “intimating some alarming information made in Brunswick, relative to the Governor’s wicked
By the end of August, Martin had become noticeably frustrated by his inability to establish a secure correspondence with Loyalists in the backcountry. Despite his “every measure...to communicate to proper persons,” he had little success as “the Committee had so effectually possessed themselves of every Avenue into the Country by their Spies and Emissaries, who keep the most strict and Vigilant watch upon every road and communication which leads towards me.” Martin was “defeated in almost every attempt I have made to correspond with the well affected people in the upper Country.” Those who tried to travel to Cape Fear to meet with Martin “have been intercepted coming or going, and searched, detained, abused, and stript of any Papers they have had about them.” Martin had similarly little success with issuing proclamations, one of the last resources available to him for counteracting the rebels’ measures. In mid-August, for example, he tried to disrupt the election of representatives for the Provincial Congress by issuing a proclamation, a measure he believed “might have produced good effects upon the minds of the People.” His efforts instead resulted in “The same ill fortune” as his other attempts to communicate with Loyalists, with “the Messengers employed to circulate it in the Country...all intercepted.” Martin increasingly worried “the difficulty of communication which becomes daily greater and greater, will totally cut me off from all intercourse with the Interior parts of it hereafter” unless he received the resources he had requested to “by force...lay it open.”

intentions.” The committee ordered two of its members to “procure a certain account of that information, that proves satisfactory to this Committee” before considering a response. Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 17 August 1775, State Archives of North Carolina.
As a result of the rebels’ success in disrupting Martin’s communications, he was “reduced to the deplorable and disgraceful state of being a tame Spectator of Rebellion spreading over this Country.” Without the “Arms, Ammunition and money” he had requested Martin did not believe he could “draw the King’s Loyal Subjects together ill armed, or wholly unarmed as they are, destitute of Ammunition, and without both the means of defence and support.” To do so would only “sacrifice the friends of Government and...disgrace myself without a chance of rendring Service to His Majesty.” The rebellion was “increasing and spreading,” and “had actually enlisted half the Country on its side, by terror or persuasion.” Martin told Dartmouth, “The influence of Committees...hath been so extended over the Inhabitants of the Lower part of this Country...and...at this day to the distance of an hundred miles from the Sea Coast.” As a result, he could “consider it no longer possible to avail myself of the power of the friends of Government in the interior parts of it without the aid of two Battalions to force a communication with them.”

Martin’s reports did little to help his case with officials in London and Boston, and no doubt contributed to Dartmouth’s growing skepticism of the governor’s plan. Martin’s continued insistence, however, led Dartmouth to once again change his mind. In late October 1775, he appeared to relent and give Martin everything he had requested. Dartmouth wrote, “The advantages that may attend the sending immediately a Force to the assistance of the Friends of Legal Government” in the southern provinces “are so apparent...that the King has thought fit to order, that a Body of His Majesty’s Forces, consisting of seven Regiments should prepare to

833 Josiah Martin to Earl of Dartmouth, 28 August 1775, CRNC, X, 230-237.
embark at Cork about the 1st of December.” This force would include “two companies of Artillery and a proper number of Battalion Guns, Howitzers, etc to Cape Fear River.”

This would not, however, turn out to be a cause for optimism. Dartmouth took repeated opportunities to remind Martin that “[I]t is necessary I should...state to you that this enterprize is entirely formed upon the assurances given by yourself and the rest of His Majesty's Governors in the Southern Provinces, that even upon the appearance of a Force, much inferior to what is now sent, the Friends of Government would show themselves, and the Rebellion be crushed and subdued.” With no one wanting to take responsibility for the expedition, planning also turned out to be a disaster, even when taking into account the need for flexibility in making plans in London for a war in North America. When British officials finally studied the region, they found “the Entrance and Navigation of Cape Fear River are at least very hazardous if not impracticable to Vessels of a large Draught of water, and consequently that Troops disembarked within that River could receive no protection in their landing from Ships of War.” Nevertheless, they decided to go ahead with their original plans in the hope they would be able to land at least some men. There was a vague notion that the men who came ashore during this haphazard landing would find a way to “be joined by any considerable number of well disposed persons, so as to accomplish the restoration of Government.” If the commander of the expedition ultimately decided “no possible advantage could attend any Effort in North Carolina,” he was to then proceed to Charleston “in order

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834 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 27 October 1775, CRNC, X, 299-300.
to try what may be effected there towards restoring Government in South Carolina.”

Since the British were uncertain of how many men they would be able to land in North Carolina, or indeed whether they would be able to land there at all, they decided that the Loyalists and Highlanders would have to meet the British Army at the coast, rather than have the Army make its way to the Loyalists. Dartmouth told Martin he “should loose no time in sending Emissaries amongst the Inhabitants of the well-disposed Counties” to raise as many men as possible with promises “of His Majesties Intentions of supplying them with Arms and giving them the same pay as the Regular Troops.” They were to hold themselves in readiness to move towards Cape Fear “as soon as they hear of the arrival of the Troops upon the Coast.” While this strategy was perhaps unavoidable due to available resources and uncertainty in planning, it required that Loyalists expose themselves to rebel retaliation before they could even be certain of the feasibility of the British plan. The planning also did not consider Martin’s already demonstrated inability to break through rebel control to communicate with Loyalists in the interior. Despite these problems, Dartmouth instructed that if the Loyalists were not already “collected in Arms,” the expedition would be a failure and the force would simply sail north to join General Howe, Gage’s successor. Dartmouth and other British officials were operating under the erroneous assumption that the only reason the Loyalists had not yet gathered was because Martin had yet to issue the instruction to do so. They did not seem to

835 Earl of Dartmouth to Josiah Martin, 7 November 1775, CRNC, X, 306-308.
836 Ibid.
consider the possibility that the Loyalists could not gather as a result of the rebel ability to prevent and otherwise control their movements and ability to communicate with each other.

**First Steps**

With his instructions from Dartmouth and with the expectations of British troops having sailed from Cork for Cape Fear at the beginning of December, Martin took the first formal steps towards organizing Loyalist forces on 10 January 1776. He issued a proclamation informing inhabitants of his intention to “erect His Majesty’s Royal standard and...collect and unite the force of His Majesty’s people under the same.” These Loyalists would resist and end “the...impious and unnatural Rebellion, and...restore the just rights of His Majesty’s Crown and Government, and the liberties of his people.” He ordered “all His Majesty’s faithful subjects...forthwith to repair to the Royal Standard” with promises of “every aid, encouragement, and support to all.” Those who joined him would be pardoned for any previous support for the rebels, even if that support had involved taking up arms. Anyone who did not join him would be labeled “Rebels and Traitors” with “their lives and properties to be forfeited.”

On the same day, Martin issued commissions to several Loyalist officers to lead the Loyalists. Martin gave overall command to General Donald McDonald, a Highlander who fought at the Battle of Culloden. In exchange for an oath of loyalty to the King, McDonald and other Highlanders had received a pardon and permission to

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837 Proclamation by Josiah Martin Concerning Recruitment of Loyalist Troops in North Carolina, 10 January 1776, CRNC, X, 396-397.

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emigrate to North America. MacDonald, along with other former Jacobites like Allan MacDonald, received permission to recruit former Scottish soldiers living in North Carolina. Martin also issued orders to these officers “to raise, levy, muster, and array in arms, all His Majesty’s loyal and faithful subjects within your respective Counties, or in any part or parts of this Province, who are willing and ready to repair to the Royal banner.” The officers were to raise companies of fifty men, and commission a captain, lieutenant, and ensign in each company.838

Once they gathered a sufficient number of men, they were to proceed to the coast to rendezvous with the governor at Brunswick prior to 15 February. Martin ordered them to “immediately and with all possible secrecy...concert a place of general rendezvous for your forces, thence to march in a body, by such route as you shall judge proper, to Brunswick.” While en route, they were given permission to “resist and oppose all Rebels and traitors against His Majesty and his Government by force and arms, and to apprehend, seize and detain them, their accomplices and abettors.” Martin did, however, order the officers to take “all possible care that women and children are unmolested; that no cruelty whatever be committed to sully the arms and honour of Britons and freemen.” He also insisted “that no violence be done against the laws of humanity but what resistance shall make necessary.” Where possible he hoped that those “who have been deluded into rebellion may be made sensible” that the King and governor both wished they would

838 Orders from Governor Martin and General McDonald, Commission to Appoint Allan MacDonald et al. as Officers of Loyalist Militias, 10 January 1776, CRNC, X, 441-443.
be brought “to a proper sense of their duty and obedience to lawful Government, without involving the country in the horrors of war.”

What Martin could not know, however, was that the expedition scheduled to depart Cork for Cape Fear on or about 1 December had been delayed nearly a month, and was only ready to sail at Christmas. While Martin was going about gathering Loyalist forces with the promise of British reinforcements, timing his actions as best he could to correspond with the anticipated arrival of the expedition from Cork, chaos in the Colonial Office in London had thrown the planning process into disarray. The cause of this delay was the replacement of the Earl of Dartmouth as Secretary for the Colonies with Lord George Germain in early November 1775. Germain succeeded Dartmouth only two weeks after Dartmouth’s first letter to Martin proposing a major expedition to North Carolina, and only three days after his successive letters expressing doubts about the ability of the ships to land men at Cape Fear River. In Germain’s first letter to Martin on 23 December, he only notes the force was just then ready to depart, with no acknowledgment of the delay. Likewise, in his letter appointing Major General Henry Clinton commander of the southern expedition, Germain showed little understanding or familiarity with the state of affairs in the southern colonies. Through a series of ill-informed assumptions that would foreshadow his direction of the southern strategy after 1779, Germain foresaw a quick conquest of either North Carolina or Charleston, after which the rebellion throughout the south would collapse. Germain expected

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839 Ibid.
840 George Germain to Josiah Martin, 23 December 1775, CRNC, X, 364.
Clinton would then be able to send the bulk of his force to reinforce Howe in New York by early spring.  

Martin also faced opposition to his plans from Gage and Howe, and neither of the commanding generals went out of their way during their time in command to provide the support that Martin had requested and Dartmouth and Germain ordered. This was in part because they had little direct information about the situation in North Carolina as a result of the rebels intercepting correspondence from Martin. On more than one occasion, the two generals only learned about letters Martin had sent by Dartmouth’s references to the letters in his own communications. As with other British officials, however, they also both saw Boston and, eventually, New York to be the rebels’ center of gravity, whereby defeat of the rebellion in those cities would also bring pacification to the other colonies. This belief in concentration of force on a single target as a means of causing the collapse in rebel morale and strength across the continent would be a common theme of British strategy throughout the war. Howe believed the southern expedition to be a “[design] of less importance” than the war in the North, and thought the southern provinces should be left alone “in the fullest persuasion of their security” until the army achieved victory in New York. He blamed Martin and the other southern governors for provoking the rebels without the means of suppressing them and re-establishing governance. He also believed the reputed value of southern Loyalists to be greatly exaggerated. He told Germain that he did “not presume to judge” whether Martin “is not deceived in his expectations” of Loyalist support, writing in a manner that made

841 George Germain to Henry Clinton, 6 December 1775, DAR, XI, 203-207.
it clear he had already made up his mind about the value of the Loyalists.

Furthermore, Howe suspected the rebels were in possession of his correspondence with Martin, and therefore possessed the British plans for the southern colonies.\textsuperscript{842}

Despite this skepticism from political leaders in London and military commanders in Boston and New York, Martin continued apace in early 1776 with his preparations before the anticipated arrival of the British troops. The rebels, however, followed both Martin's activities and those of his visitors and correspondents, and soon learned that Martin was starting to call Loyalists together. The Wilmington committee intercepted those who visited Martin and required them to pay a bail to ensure their good behavior.\textsuperscript{843} When the committee learned that the members of the Governor's Council were in town to meet with Martin, it told the Council members they could not go on board the \textit{Scorpion}, to which Martin had moved from the \textit{Cruizer} upon the \textit{Scorpion}'s return south.\textsuperscript{844}

By that time, however, Martin and McDonald were finishing the final preparations before issuing orders for the Loyalists to gather and march. McDonald proved to be one of Martin's few valuable assets, as he better understood the nature of the conflict and the threat the Loyalists faced from the rebels. Martin suggested any inhabitants who wished to "return to their duty to their Sovereign" simply had

\textsuperscript{842} William Howe to Earl of Dartmouth (George Germain), 16 January 1776, DAR, XII, 45.
\textsuperscript{843} Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 16 January 1776, State Archives of North Carolina.
\textsuperscript{844} Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 27 January 1776, State Archives of North Carolina. The committee received information from numerous sources about those few who did make it on board to visit Martin. In early February, it received information of a man named Mixon who had traveled to Cape Fear to meet with Martin. The committee responded by declaring Mixon "inimical to the American Cause" and ordered that he be taken into custody. Journal of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committees of Safety, 2 February 1776, State Archives of North Carolina.
to “instantly dissolv[e] all the combinations of rebellion among them.” McDonald, however, understood why this could not easily be done, namely because the people had “been under the unhappy necessity of submitting to the mandates of Congress and Committees—those lawless, usurped, and arbitrary tribunals.” He received reports that Loyalists were fleeing at news of the British army’s imminent arrival out of “apprehensions of danger” from the rebels in response. He assured the people he would make every effort to protect the Loyalists and break the hold of the rebels, and on 5 February 1776 ordered Loyalists to join his troops at Cross Creek to help break the rebels’ control.

The Loyalists Gather and the Rebels Counter

From the start, however, the Loyalist force began losing men as a result of rebel deception. The colonel of the Cumberland County Loyalist militia, Thomas Rutherford, reported that “the idle and false reports spread by wicked and ignorant men” caused “great numbers” of Loyalists to not show up at the muster at Cross Creek, while the men who did attend “have shown themselves influenced by those unjust apprehensions of danger.” Rutherford could do nothing except again call on the inhabitants to muster at Cross Creek or risk being called rebels and “expose themselves to the just resentment of an injured, though gracious Sovereign.” The individualism that characterized the backcountry also made it difficult to recruit a large number of men, because “the people are in a state of independence and none

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845 Josiah Martin to Maurice Moore, 11 January 1776, CRNC, X, 395-396.
846 Manifesto by Donald McDonald Concerning Recruitment of Loyalist Troops in North Carolina, [undated] 1776, CRNC, X, 443-444. Cross Creek was near present day Fayetteville.
847 Thomas Rutherford Manifesto, 13 February, 1775, CRNC, X, 452.
are to be found so much under the influence of individuals here...as to follow the implicit nod of particular men.” The absence of prominent Loyalists required that Martin and McDonald communicate with a large number of individuals, providing all of them with sensitive details of their objectives and plan. This risk to operational security required “the prompt execution of the purpose after it is broached,” which left Martin with little choice but to act before he knew when the reinforcements would arrive or before he even had firm intelligence about the number of Loyalists that would actually muster.848

The Loyalists and Highlanders were initially able to raise more than three thousand men, a significant number even if it was less than the expected five thousand. The numbers fell almost immediately, however, as men deserted. McDonald later admitted they only had 1,500-1,600 men as they marched from Cross Creek, including seven or eight hundred Loyalists and six hundred Highlanders.849 With significantly reduced numbers from what they had expected, the force was faced with “Rebels on every side...making head to oppose them.” The Loyalists had no alternative but to begin moving with the men who were present. The numbers of deserters only increased as they began marching, as the rebels were able to deceive the Loyalists into thinking that many thousands of rebel forces were en route to destroy them. These rumors succeeded in “destroy[ing] all faith and confidence between them and their [Highlander] leaders.” As the force approached the coast, its numbers were “daily diminished by the defection of the [Loyalists] as

848 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 21 March 1776, CRNC, X, 492.
849 Richard Caswell to Cornelius Harnett, 29 February 1776, CRNC, X, 482.
danger and difficulty increased upon them.” Eventually the force was reduced to the six hundred Highlanders and only a hundred backcountry Loyalists.\footnote{Josiah Martin to George Germain, 21 March 1776, CRNC, X, 491.}

The committees throughout the province quickly learned of this reputed mass movement of Loyalists toward Cross Creek, and mobilized quickly in response. They also utilized their own communications network to spread news of the Loyalist force to all counties. Local committees ranging from counties deep in the interior of the province to counties on the coast held emergency sessions and ordered militia to hinder the movement of the Loyalist forces. On 9 February, the Tryon County committee ordered part of its militia “to go and joyn the forces Raised in the other Counties in this Province to suppress all Insurrections that is raised & may be raising in our said Province that are against the cause of American Liberty.” Those who refused to go would be “Deemed Enemies to their Country” and be dealt with accordingly.\footnote{Journal of the Tryon County Committee of Safety, 9 February 1776, State Records of North Carolina.} The same day the Wilmington committee ordered Colonel William Purviance to ready two companies of minutemen “for marching against the insurgents,” while John Ashe also mobilized his company of nearly a hundred volunteers.\footnote{William Purviance to the North Carolina Provincial Council, 23-24 February 1776, CRNC, X, 465-468.}

The next day the New Bern committee received word from Orange and Johnston counties that a “Number of Men...have began Hostilities against the Cause of United Colonies.” Committees in other counties, including Johnston, Dobbs, Duplin, and Wake also ordered their militia into service. This intelligence also
included details of the Loyalist plan, including meeting "at Cross Creek the fifteenth to march from thence to Willmington and Brunswick, and that all the necessary Preperations for War are carrying on, in order to reduce all those who espouse the Cause of American Liberty." It also learned of Martin's orders to seize any rebels, and rumors spread that the governor intended to execute those who did not join the Loyalist force. The committee ordered Richard Caswell to “march immediately with the Minute Men under his Command to join the Forces which may march from different Parts of this Province in Order to suppress said Insurrection.” It provided Caswell with ten barrels of gunpowder and 350 pounds of lead and bullets for his men. The committee acted so quickly that there was no time “to call all the Members of the Committee together upon this Emergency,” and those who were present “proceeded on this necessary Business, in Confidence that the above Resolve will meet the Approbation of the absent Members.”

The rebels also mobilized the First North Carolina Regiment of the Continental Army, newly organized by the Provincial Congress and under the command of Colonel James Moore. Despite the deception used to convince the Loyalists that the rebels had mobilized thousands of men, the number mobilized to counter the Loyalist force at Cross Creek was actually much smaller. Much of the rebel militia had to remain in their towns and counties for home defense. On 9 February, Moore’s regiment moved toward Cross Creek, but even with a diminishing Loyalist force, his “numbers were by no means equal to that of the tories.” He decided to stop seven miles outside of Cross Creek at Rockfish Creek. With Moore

**853** Journal of the New Bern Committee of Safety, 10 February 1776, State Archives of North Carolina.
blocking his route, McDonald crossed the Cape Fear River and the South River, heading for Corbett’s Ferry on the Black River, which would provide a direct route to Wilmington. Moore then ordered Caswell, who was en route to join Moore, to instead get to Corbett’s Ferry and “by every means in his power ... obstruct, harass, and distress them in their march.” He had Ashe and Colonel Alexander Lillington reinforce Caswell at Corbett’s Landing if they could, but otherwise take the bridge at Moore’s Creek, a tributary of the Black River. He also ordered Colonel Alexander Martin and Colonel James Thackston, both under his command at Rockfish Creek, to take Cross Creek to prevent the Loyalists from returning there.\textsuperscript{854}

Caswell and his men were able to successfully block McDonald from crossing at Corbett’s Ferry, but McDonald learned of a nearby crossing from a slave, and was able to circumvent Caswell. Caswell then fell back to Moore’s Creek, and Moore proceeded there as well on the Brunswick River. McDonald decided to attack the defenses at the bridge before Moore and his Continentals could reinforce the rebels. McDonald had fallen ill, so Lieutenant Colonel Donald MacLeod took command, and on 27 February ordered an attack across the bridge when it appeared the rebels had abandoned their position on the east side of the creek.\textsuperscript{855} By this time, persistent rebel harassment and deception operations had significantly reduced the numbers of the combined Loyalist and Highlander force. Caswell had established a series of earthworks just beyond the bridge, and he waited for MacLeod and Captain John Campbell to cross the bridge and come within thirty paces of the earthworks before

\textsuperscript{854} James Moore to Cornelius Harnett, 2 March 1776, CRNC, XI, 283-285.
\textsuperscript{855} Ibid.
opening fire. The battle lasted only three minutes, but the rebels decimated the Loyalist and Highlander forces. MacLeod and Campbell were killed instantly, as were dozens more as they attempted to flee across the creek. The rebels suffered only two casualties, including one killed.\textsuperscript{856}

The rebels also had to prepare the defense of Wilmington against the British war ships sitting at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. On 14 February, shortly after the rebels learned that Loyalists and Highlanders were gathering at Cross Creek, the Wilmington committee received information from Brunswick that the \textit{Cruizer} had entered the Cape Fear River and was moving towards Wilmington. The rebels expected its intention was to await the arrival of the Loyalists and Highlanders “whom they expected in Triumph,” and “to protect the Provision Boats which would Consequently come from Cross Creek for their Army and Ships.” The rebels immediately sent women and children out of town and established “Breastworks on the principal Streets & Wharfs and the hills above & below the Town...so as to prevent the landing of any men from the Ships.” The rebels also had to deal with Loyalists in the city who had provided support for Loyalists in the backcountry. Purviance informed the Provincial Council that the Loyalists and Highlanders “have been treated in a friendly manner in this town, and many of them charitably relieved with the immediate necessities of life.”\textsuperscript{857}

The rebels arrested dozens of known and suspected Loyalists in Wilmington, and forced those who remained neutral “greatly against their inclinations to work at

\textsuperscript{856} James Moore to Cornelius Harnett, 2 March 1776, CRNC, XI, 283-285.
the breastworks.” Governor Martin later described how he initially received offers of support from residents of Wilmington that “encouraged my good expectations.” Almost immediately, however, the inhabitants had a “change of language,” and the offers of support disappeared. The last step the rebels took was to position riflemen on both sides of the Cape Fear River below Wilmington to harass the Cruizer and prevent it from moving further up the river. Purviance believed these men were particularly effective, as the British “too much dread the rifle men to approach” the city. By 24 February, even before the battle at Moore’s Creek Bridge, Purviance reported “the Ships of War, which threatened us for some time” had retreated to Brunswick. It was due to rebel control of Loyalists in Wilmington and key territory that prevented the British from moving towards Wilmington, but according to Purviance it was also because “they lost all hopes of the arrival of their friends.”

Aftermath

Throughout all of the events of January and February 1776, Martin had little knowledge of the progress of the Loyalists and Highlanders in the backcountry. This was largely the result of the rebels’ ability to isolate Martin from his allies in the interior by intercepting messages and messengers. In January he had used “an Agent in the interior Country” to make enquiries and determine the number of Loyalists he might be able to depend on to fight. He heard nothing from this agent for weeks, which was “beyond my expectation.” Martin knew he “was held suspected by the Rebels” and therefore “conjectured the Committees had laid hold” of his agent. With no additional intelligence sources to inform him of developments in the backcountry.

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858 Ibid.
and no one “to carry the necessary powers and instructions to the people of the Interior Counties,” Martin turned to supporters in Brunswick, whose assurances of loyalty had first convinced Martin to raise Loyalist forces. They “recommended to me one of their number as the fittest person I could entrust with that service.”

Martin gave this new agent sensitive information on his plans and objectives, “furnished him with all necessary powers and credentials,” and gave him a large sum of money for his service. He offered him another reward if he successfully completed his job. After assuring Martin of his loyalty “in all the guise of blunt and unaffected honesty,” this person almost immediately “betrayed my secret.” Martin later learned that this agent never completed his mission or actually contacted any of the Loyalist leaders. Martin now believed the rebels were “acquainted with the names of the principal persons on whose influence or rather good acceptance with the people all my hopes of drawing forth the aid of the back Counties depended.” Furthermore, these Loyalist leaders were unaware that they’d been exposed and risked being targeted by the committees.859

Even though he believed the operation to have been compromised, Martin eventually decided he had no option but to continue as planned, as he could not stop some of the events he had already set in motion. He also expected the imminent arrival of the expedition from London with arms, ammunition, and British soldiers. Martin was able to receive initial intelligence that “the Loyalists were in high spirits and very fast collecting,” and that he could expect six thousand men. One thousand of them would remain at Cross Creek while the remainder would take possession of

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859 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 21 March 1776, CRNC, X, 486-493.
Wilmington “by the 20th or 25th of February at farthest.” Whether or not he was being deliberately misled at this point before the march began, Martin only later received “accounts very different from all my former intelligence” and learned of the significant effect rebel deception had on Loyalist turnout.\textsuperscript{860}

The rebels acted swiftly in the days after the battle to capture and disarm the Loyalists and prevent a similar uprising from occurring again. They ordered the bridges that were destroyed to impede the Loyalists’ progress to be quickly rebuilt to allow their own forces to traverse the province to track down those who escaped following the battle.\textsuperscript{861} The rebels arrested McDonald, who was “most shamefully abandoned” by his men during the battle, and imprisoned him in the town jail at Halifax.\textsuperscript{862} On 2 March, the Provincial Council ordered the local committees to “immediately... disarm all suspected Persons within their several jurisdictions.”\textsuperscript{863} Three days later, the Council required those who had been disarmed but who had fought against the rebels to take an oath that they would not take up arms against the Congresses or committees, or troops raised by those bodies. They also promised not to attempt to “prejudice the people or any of them in favour of Parliamentary Measures,” or to give intelligence to any of the royal officials, military commanders, or soldiers in the province. Anyone who broke the oath or refused to take it would

\textsuperscript{860} He received a visit from one such Loyalist, a “Mr Reed,” who failed to meet the others at Cross Creek “owing to the intervention of a party of the Rebels.” Reed still overestimated the number of men coming from Cross Creek, but informed Martin the numbers were lower than expected and they might get caught by “unfordable water” along the routes the rebels had forced them to take. With the exception of Reed’s information, Martin “[had] not the least intercourse with the Loyalists,” and consequently had no knowledge of either the route they were taking from Cross Creek or their progress. \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{861} Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 7 May 1776, CRNC, X, 566.

\textsuperscript{862} James Moore to Cornelius Harnett, 2 March 1776, CRNC, XI, 283-285.

\textsuperscript{863} Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Council, 2 March 1776, CRNC, X, 472.
be immediately imprisoned. In the weeks that followed, the rebels sent “Parties of Men...all over the Colony, apprehending all suspected persons, and disarming all Highlanders and [Loyalists] that were put to the rout in the late battle,” while seizing the estates of others. They imprisoned or disarmed more than eight hundred “common Solders” and seized “350 guns and shot bags; about 150 swords and dirks; [and] 1,500 excellent rifles.” They arrested a number of Loyalist officers and imprisoned them with other Loyalists at Halifax.

The Provincial Council ordered other suspected persons to appear before the Provincial Congress when it met in April 1776, and ordered each militia officer to “summon and force the attendance of such persons...as he shall think to be Material Witnesses” against the suspects. When the Provincial Congress convened, it formed a “committee to enquire into the conduct of the insurgents and other suspected persons,” which provided the details of each prisoner taken during the battle and whether they previously took any oaths or tests. It also granted Donald McDonald and Allan MacDonald parole on the conditions they not leave the town of Halifax, appear every day before a guard, and have no correspondence with “persons who are or may be in opposition to American measures.” To isolate those individuals who could potentially cause further instability in the future, the Congress allowed anyone who influenced “the late insurgents to take arms against

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864 Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Council, 5 March 1776, CRNC, X, 476.
865 Letter from an Inhabitant of North Carolina, 10 March 1776, CRNC, X, 485-486.
866 Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Council, 5 March 1776, CRNC, X, 477.
867 Ibid.
America” to be removed “from their present neighbourhood into such places…judge[d] most safe and convenient.”

To ensure it and the local committees would remain aware of the movements of all inhabitants of the province, the Provincial Congress ordered that no one be allowed to “remove himself or his property out of this Colony” without permission. Anyone who “shall have actually absconded out of this Colony, or so conceals himself, or makes resistance, that he cannot be brought before the committee” would forfeit as much of his property “as shall be sufficient to satisfy the demands of any creditor or creditors who shall apply and make oath of such demands.”

The rebels remained vigilant for any sign of Loyalists. They also watched movements along the seacoast to ensure the British did not make a second attempt against the province. The Provincial Congress also formed a committee to consider the province's coastal defenses, which found that the inhabitants living on the coast were “chiefly persons whose estates consist in live stock, and [were] exposed to the ravages of the small armed vessels and tenders.” The key to neutralizing the threat

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868 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 27 April 1776, CRNC, X, 544.
869 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 13 May 1776, CRNC, X, 583.
870 In March 1776, for example, the Provincial Council learned of a William Bourk who had been heard to say “That we should all be subdued by the month of May by the King’s Troops.” He claimed there were “Forty-seven thousand Troops expected soon to America, and it would be in vain to pretend to defend ourselves against them.” Bourk was called before the Provincial Council and admitted making the statements, after which he was sent to the prison at Halifax where he was to remain “till further orders.” Minutes of the North Carolina Provincial Council, 2 March 1776, CRNC, X, 471.
871 In April 1776 the Provincial Congress considered a request from the committee in Carteret County for protection of the inlets near the town of Beaufort. A committee of the Provincial Congress reported that it was “absolutely necessary that a considerable military force should be stationed at or near said town” to keep the British from “landing there, supplying themselves with provisions, and committing hostilities and depredations in that part of the Province.” In the meantime, the committee recommended that a company of men raised by the Beaufort committee provide that protection as long as deemed necessary “until further provision is made for the defence of that county.” Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 15 April 1776, CRNC, X, 516.
from these armed vessels, according to the committee, was to prevent them from being supplied with provisions from the coast. The sailors and soldiers on these vessels would then “be afflicted with the scurvy and other diseases, arising from the constant use of salt provisions” and would have to withdraw to someplace where they could secure fresh provisions. The committee recommended raising another regiment of regular troops and stationing two companies on the coast from the Virginia border to Ocracoke Inlet, two companies between Ocracoke and Bogue Inlet, and another two between Bogue Inlet and the South Carolina border.872

Governor Martin blamed everyone but himself for the defeat of the Loyalists and Highlanders. He was particularly outraged to learn of the delay in the expedition leaving Cork for Cape Fear. He did not receive Germain’s 23 December letter informing him of the delay until 18 March, nearly a month after the Loyalists’ defeat. Henry Clinton, who was to command the southern expedition, had only arrived from New York a few days prior, on the 12 March. Worse, the convoy coming from Ireland, under the command of Admiral Sir Peter Parker, did not reach Cape Fear until late April. Nevertheless, Martin failed to recognize the significance of his defeat at Moore’s Creek Bridge. He assured Germain, “The little check the loyalists here have received I do not conceive My Lord will have any extensive ill consequences.”873

He also did not seem to learn the lesson of the effect the rebels had on Loyalist turnout. He assured Germain that his “representations of the favorable dispositions of many of the King’s subjects here” were justified, and those numbers

872 Minutes of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina, 19 April 1776, CRNC, X, 526-527.
873 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 21 March 1776, CRNC, X, 486-493.
only failed to materialize as a result of “the idle deception before alluded to (by which they were taught that I was actually at Cross Creek with a thousand regulars).” Furthermore, he argued, the number of Loyalists that would have mustered were it not for the rebels’ deception, together with the Highlanders would “have been sufficient to restore peace and order in this Province without the immediate aid of his Majesty’s Troops.” Whatever the validity of his estimates of the number of Loyalists in the province, he did not understand that the rebels targeted their deception operations against the Loyalists specifically to depress turnout, and would do so again every time Martin tried to organize a Loyalist resistance. Martin was certain he could have succeeded if, in addition to the timely arrival of the expedition, “the zeal and forwardness of the people had not been repressed by the imposition I have mentioned.” He did not, however, give thought to how he could prevent the rebels from disrupting his plans other than by simply wishing them away.874

Within six months following the battle, Martin’s explanations for defeat had become even more self-serving. He told Germain in August 1776 that “the unfortunate check of the loyalists in North Carolina” was the result of “egregious misconduct.” Furthermore, he insisted “they would have made their way good even in the small force they appeared if they had been conducted with a little more prudence.”875 Henry Clinton, however, appeared to have a better understanding than Martin about the chances for success following the February battle. Pursuant to

874 Ibid.
875 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 7 August 1776, CRNC, X, 735.
Dartmouth’s original orders that if a landing could not be made at Cape Fear the 
expedition should continue to Charleston, Parker and Clinton left Cape Fear on 31 
May for South Carolina. Martin explained to Germain that they made this decision 
because “the season was too far advanced for the service of the British Troops in 
this climate...and because the indispensable means of enabling the army to penetrate 
into the Country, were not in our hands.”

According to Martin, Clinton decided, “it was probable the Rebels, having 
already disarmed the friends of Government...would fall back on the country and 
drive before them the well affected, preventing our junction with them and 
rendering the subsistence of the Army difficult by desolating the country behind 
them.” Just as important, Clinton expected “that his Army might probably be 
ordered to join General Howe before the reduction of the country could be 
compleated and order restored, which would turn victory to defeat.” The 
temptation to abandon of Loyalists they had promised to protect as other, more 
tangible military requirements demanded their attention would characterize British 
efforts during the rest of the war. By the end of the southern campaign in 1781, a 
constantly exasperated Clinton, based at the time in New York, would be one of the 
few British officers to understand the devastating effect this had on a strategy that 
required Loyalist support.

Their defeat at Moore’s Creek Bridge proved to be one of the last serious 
threats Loyalists would pose to internal order and rebel control of the southern

876 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 5 July 1776, CRNC, X, 652-654.
877 Ibid.
provinces for several years. When the British threatened Charleston in June 1776, the rebels immediately placed Loyalists and former officials of the royal government still remaining in Charleston under arrest and confined them under the watch of a guard. At the end of its first session in April, the newly formed South Carolina General Assembly passed “An Act to Prevent Sedition and to Punish Insurgents and Disturbers of the Peace,” anticipating an invasion attempt and the need to ensure Loyalists could not destabilize the city from within. The new President of South Carolina, John Rutledge, supported the act and even while the rebels at Fort Sullivan under the command of William Moultrie were fighting the British, the Loyalists never had the opportunity to contribute to the British forces.878

The rebels won the Battle of Sullivan’s Island against the combined British land and naval forces as a result of deft preparations, particularly in constructing the fort with palmetto logs that were able to withstand the British bombardment, a logistical chain that allowed them to quickly move supplies of gunpowder from the mainland, and training discipline that made efficient use of gunpowder. The British also lost because of poor planning and a lack of familiarity with the coastal terrain around Charleston. Three British frigates ran aground on an uncharted shoal as they sought a position of enfilade against the fort, demonstrating the hazards of the harbor that had earlier induced the British to seek the assistance of black harbor pilots. Likewise, Clinton and his forces landed at Long Island, northeast of Sullivan’s

Island, with the intention of attacking the fort from the rear. When they reached Breach Inlet, which separates Long Island from Sullivan’s Island, Clinton found it was deeper than his intelligence had suggested, and consequently too deep to ford. Furthermore, Colonel William Thomson had his regiment of rangers entrenched behind makeshift fortifications across the inlet on Sullivan’s Island, making a crossing even more difficult. With several hundred casualties, one of the three grounded frigates abandoned, and significant damage to two 50-gun ships, including his flagship the Bristol, Admiral Sir Peter Parker, commander of the expedition, gave the order to pull back out of range of Fort Sullivan. Within a matter of weeks the British sailed north to join the British forces at New York. Governor Martin sailed with the convoy to meet his family in New York as he believed “it is utterly out of my power to effect any good purpose in North Carolina.”

North Carolina took similar actions to arrest known Loyalists as the British force threatened Charleston. William Miller, who had told others that “there were a great many of the King’s forces come in” and that “the common People had been led into an Error by some cunning and designing Men who wanted to advance themselves into Places of profit and honour,” was arrested and sent to the jail at Halifax. At the same time the North Carolina Council of Safety sent Loyalist families upriver from their homes in Wilmington, and ordered the arrest of more than a dozen Loyalists in New Bern and Halifax, including Miller. After these men

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879 Long Island was the name for what is now the Isle of Palms.
880 Josiah Martin to George Germain, 5 July 1776, CRNC, X, 653.
were given parole, the Council of Safety separated them, sending Miller to Johnston County, Andrew Wilson to Orange County, William Clarke to Pasquotank County, and John Hunter to Pitt County. These men were required to remain within the confines of their new towns, with Miller residing no more than three miles from the Courthouse in Johnston County and appearing daily before an official of the town on penalty of being returned to jail. The North Carolina Council of Safety learned that these actions, and the British defeat at Charleston, had “caused a very great Commotion among” the Loyalists who were “flocking in to sign the Test & Association.”

**Conclusion**

Crown officials and Loyalists faced a particular challenge amidst the collapse of British authority in the southern provinces in the summer and autumn of 1775. The government officials were in the coastal cities or, beginning in July, on board men-of-war off the coast, while many of the Loyalists were in the interior of the provinces. With the government officials uncertain about if and when British forces would sail for the southern provinces, they had to be sure they could at least rely on the support of the Loyalists to mount an effective resistance against the rebels. The rebels were aware of this strategic requirement for the British, and predicated their own strategy on being able to prevent communication between these two parties. One way they accomplished this was by establishing control over the terrain between the coast and the interior, which allowed them to monitor the movement of

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884 James Davis to Cornelius Harnett, 13 July 1776, CRNC, X, 666.
individual and groups of Loyalists while also preventing any messengers from the governors or other Crown officials to the backcountry residents.

William Campbell made some effort to communicate with Loyalists in the backcountry, sending letters to Robert Cunningham, Thomas Fletchall and others. After many of his efforts were stymied, however, and as the rebels’ control spread steadily over the interior, Campbell showed an inability or reluctance to pursue any further attempts to organize Loyalist resistance. Josiah Martin was markedly different than Campbell in this respect though, as he fought doggedly to organize Loyalists to fight in the backcountry and join him on the coast. He also succeeded in convincing the Earl of Dartmouth that the strength of Loyalist support in North Carolina warranted reinforcement from a separate expedition sent to attempt to bring those colonies back under Crown control. What Martin did not understand was that the Loyalists had not previously failed to rise against the rebels because he had not yet given the word to do so, but because the rebels implemented a successful strategy to prevent them from doing so. This would prove to be a mistake the British would make countless times after 1779, first in Georgia and later in South Carolina and North Carolina, and would eventually convince General Charles, Lord Cornwallis that reports of Loyalist strength had been exaggerated.

The consequences of rebel control over the population and territory are best illustrated in the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in February 1776, when the rebels decimated an army of Scottish Highlanders and Loyalists who were moving to the coast to meet with Martin and join forces with an expected British expedition. Through a cooperative effort of numerous local committees and the Provincial
Council, the rebels stymied Martin’s attempts to communicate with the Highlanders and Loyalists in the interior to finalize planning for the assembling of forces and journey to Cape Fear. Their control of the territory allowed them to intercept letters and their control of the population gave them the opportunity to capture messengers and learn the details of British planning. Their control over the population allowed them to weaken the combined Loyalist-Highlander force through intimidation, to the point where the force that met the rebels at Moore’s Creek Bridge was only a fraction of the original force that gathered at Cross Creek.

As a British man-of-war made a simultaneous movement up the Cape Fear River towards Wilmington, the rebels placed known Loyalists under tight control and established defenses to prevent the ship from being able to target the city. The defeat of what remained of this force led the British to cancel any plans to land British forces from the expedition at Cape Fear. The British ships continued to Charleston, where they launched an attack on that city in June 1776. The rebels already eliminated much of the Loyalist threat in South Carolina, and sent other Loyalists out of the city to protect against internal destabilization. Through a combination of British unfamiliarity with the terrain, which spoke to the threat harbor pilots would actually pose by assisting the British, and skillful preparations of Fort Sullivan, the rebels were able to hold off the British attack. A short while later, the expedition sailed for New York, and the British would not attempt another large-scale effort against the southern provinces for more than two years.
PART TWO: 1776-1778
Chapter 9: Pursue the Traitors to the Walls of St Augustine

Early on the morning of 16 May 1777, Button Gwinnett, the president of the state of Georgia, and Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh, who commanded the Continental forces in Georgia, met in a meadow outside of Savannah to fight a duel. Gwinnett’s militia forces and McIntosh’s Continentals had just returned from an expedition to the British province of East Florida. The operation was a response to continuing raids across the border into Georgia by British and Loyalist forces, in particular the King’s Rangers, also known as the Florida Scout, a mounted unit commanded by exiled Loyalist Thomas Brown. The expedition had been a disaster, with Gwinnett and McIntosh feuding over command of the expedition and refusing to work together. The two men, who were also political enemies, could not even agree on the objective of the expedition before its start. Gwinnett, the leader of the radical faction in the state, continually stressed the need to conquer East Florida and its capital Saint Augustine. The conservative McIntosh was more wary of this lofty objective and supported a more defensive strategy that utilized a system of fortifications and mounted troops to protect settlements in southern Georgia from the cross-border raids.

The relationship between the commanding officers of the militia and Continental forces in Georgia was so irreparably broken that they were both forced
to turn over command of the expedition to Samuel Elbert, a colonel in the Continental Army. This combined force was undermanned, poorly provisioned, and became mired in the swamps of southern Georgia amidst heavy rains and flooded rivers. The militia, which marched overland, was defeated before it could meet the Continentals coming by ship along the coast, which ended the expedition before it reached the St. John’s River. In the immediate aftermath of the expedition the Georgia Assembly held an inquiry, during which McIntosh claimed Gwinnett had overstepped his authority by trying to assume command of the Continental forces, and called Gwinnett “a Scoundrell & lying Rascal.” This prompted Gwinnett to challenge McIntosh to a duel, during which both men were shot the other in the thigh, though only Gwinnett’s wound proved fatal.

The Gwinnett-McIntosh affair characterized much of the period between 1776 and 1778 for the rebels, as new external threats tested the rebels’ internal control over the population. The rebels required additional oaths to new constitutions or new governments, and meted out additional punishments to Loyalists, including imprisonment, seizure of property, and exile. As threats emerged along the frontier, however, the radical-conservative divide within and among the states, present to a much lesser degree during 1775 and early 1776, widened significantly as the factions disagreed on the best course of action. With the war primarily occurring in the northern states, many of the southern Continental battalions were not available. Furthermore, the northern states required most of the

Continental Congress’s attention, and as a result there were often few provisions available for southern forces, including firearms and ammunition.

Conservatives and moderates like Lachlan McIntosh and Major General Robert Howe, the overall commander of Continental forces in the Southern Department, preferred a defensive strategy, due to a perceived mismatch between the means available to the southern forces and the radicals’ preferred military objective of conquering Saint Augustine. Most political leaders in South Carolina and North Carolina saw the possibility of an attack on their coasts by the British Army as a greater threat than the primarily Loyalist forces in East Florida, and therefore agreed with the Georgia conservatives that taking Saint Augustine was ill-advised. The Georgia radicals, argued, understandably, that the East Florida threat was greater for Georgia than it was for its neighbors to the north. Much of the Georgia population agreed, and this faction dominated Georgia politics during these years. This set the stage for ongoing civil-military conflict between radical governments and the generally conservative Continental commanders.

The 1777 expedition to Florida was not the first attempt against Saint Augustine, nor would it be the last. Between 1776 and 1778 there were three attempts against the province, each plagued by the same problems of poor planning, disagreement on objectives, a mismatch between ends and means, and civil-military discord. Ultimately this did not have significant consequences with respect to the outcome of the war, as the Southern Department was at the time a distant second to the northern theater in terms of importance for the rebels. Furthermore, even with the discord between political factions on certain issues, particularly in Georgia and 430
to a lesser extent in South Carolina, the new state governments had continued
success in suppressing most activity by Loyalists who sought to oppose the
governments. Some radical elements, most notably Gwinnett, used accusations of
Toryism to weaken political opponents, but the states' policies on Loyalists
remained overwhelmingly similar to those of the revolutionary governments of
1774-1776.

The importance of the period between 1776-1778 instead lies in the lessons
the rebel campaigns should have provided for British forces for their ensuing
southern expedition that would begin with the capture of Savannah in December
1778, and unfold over very similar terrain only slightly further north in Georgia and
South Carolina. These lessons included the proper balance between the defensive
and offensive in a war that was about population control and protection more than
it was about conquest in conventional battle. Likewise, these intervening years
showed the importance of clearly determining supporters and enemies when
attempting a strategy focused on population control. They also showed the
importance of civil-military cooperation in a conflict that was both fundamentally
political and violent. This period demonstrated the difficulties that would follow
when a force overextended itself in the Georgia or Carolina frontier, and the
importance of cavalry in covering vast territories. Finally, it showed the difficulty of
campaigning in the southern states at different times of the year, with disease and
floods hindering the progress of any prolonged expedition during certain seasons.
The failure of each successive Florida expedition also demonstrated what did not
work in the terrain where they would be campaigning and among the population
whose support they needed. Nevertheless, from 1779-1781 the British would make nearly all of the same mistakes as they sought to build Loyalist support, by operating according to the same mistaken assumptions about war and warfare as the rebels had in the preceding years.

“Internal Enemies are the Worst We Have”

On 29 June 1776, the day after the victory over the British at Sullivan’s Island, John Champneys was arrested “as a common malefactor” for refusing to join the militia, and was taken to the State House in Charleston. He was imprisoned along with several other Loyalists, including Henry Laurens’ neighbor and sometimes correspondent, James Brisbane, in case the British attempted another attack on the city. After they asked to be allowed to take an oath of neutrality instead of an oath of loyalty, someone fired a bullet during the night through one of the windows where they were being held.886 The bullet “went over the bodies of three men asleep, and lodged about a foot above the head of another.” The meaning of this “leaden messenger”, as Champneys called it, was obvious to the prisoners, six of whom took the oath of loyalty the next day. Ten days later the remaining prisoners were ordered to take the oath of loyalty or be sent to prisons in Georgetown and Cheraw.

886 In asking for an oath of neutrality, the men insisted that since they were so few in number, “there can be no apprehension of our doing any injury, were we ever so inclined,” and “having been so long held up to the notice of the Publick by our confinement…we shall be objects of observation and attention in our most secret conduct and behaviour by all about us.” John Champneys, An Account of the Suffering and Persecution of John Champneys (London, 1778).
Four of the prisoners agreed and were discharged, while the remaining six, including Champneys and Brisbane, were taken to the jail in Georgetown.\footnote{887 Champneys remained in Georgetown until December, when he was allowed to return to Charleston following the death of his son. He was placed on house arrest for several weeks before being taken to the Charleston jail. Champneys, An Account of the Suffering and Persecution of John Champneys.}

Despite the cross-border raids from Florida into Georgia, there was general agreement in all the southern states that a large-scale British attack against one or more of them from the coast remained the greatest long-term threat. Ordeals like Champneys’ remained common for Loyalists even as the imminent threat eased somewhat by the summer of 1776, and the new governments settled into a steady state of governing and defending against longer-term threats. Nevertheless, based on the continued belief that any British attack on the southern states would require active support from Loyalists, the rebels maintained the same position of vigilance against Loyalists as they had since the beginning of the conflict. Subsequent oaths accordingly applied to greater numbers of people, required allegiance to the new state governments and constitutions, and often brought greater hardships for those who would not take the oath.

In September 1776, the committee of St. Andrew’s Parish in Georgia decided the Parish had been too lenient towards Loyalists based on “a natural reluctance of going to extremities with those we once called our Friends, Neighbours, & nearest Connections,” as well as “a desire that they might become sensible of their Error,” and “join heartily in the cause of their Country.” Instead, according to the committee the Loyalists “persist obstinately & determinately in their opinions” and maintained
“an Inveterate hatred, & malice against the cause of America.” From a belief that Loyalists posed a fundamental threat to the safety of the province, the committee ordered the arrest of those who refused to take the oath. Lachlan McIntosh issued orders the same day to his Continental officers “to give every assistance in your Power to any party of the Militia, in taking up the people called Tories, in this Parish.”

This mindset, that “Internal Enemies are the worst we have,” continued to guide policy in the southern states throughout 1777 and 1778. In February 1777, South Carolina passed an Oath of Abjuration and Allegiance that went into effect the following month. It was required of “all the late Officers of the King of Great Britain, and all other persons...who now are, or hereafter may come into this State " who are “suspect[ed] of holding principles injurious to the rights of this State.” The assembly passed another oath in March 1778, which required every free male above the age of sixteen to sign, and those who refused to sign would be forced to leave the state for Europe or the West Indies within sixty days. North Carolina passed a similar act in May 1777, though this one only applied to former royal officers and, with the exception of Quakers, those who had conducted business with anyone in Britain or

888 Resolve of the St. Andrews Parochial Committee...with List of Tories, 10 September 1776 in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., Papers of Lachlan McIntosh, 1774-1799 (PLM), Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), XII, 56-57.
889 Lachlan McIntosh to any Military Officer Commanding in St. Andrews Parish, 10 September 1776, in Hawes, ed., PLM, 57.
891 “An Ordinance for Establishing an Oath of Abjuration and Allegiance,” The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, I, 135-136; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, XI, 328n.
Ireland in the previous ten years.\footnote{892} Georgia passed its own act several months later, and associates of former royal governor of Georgia James Wright informed him, “Advertisements are put up throughout Georgia requiring...all persons to take the new state oaths within [six months], and those who refuse it are to depart the province and America, and in default in either case their property to be confiscated.”\footnote{893} Many people subject to the oath, particularly the former royal officers, refused to swear their allegiance to the new states, and departed from the state.\footnote{894}

\footnote{892} Act of the North Carolina General Assembly Concerning Treason Against the State, 9 May 1777, CRNC, XI, 769-773.
\footnote{893} James Wright to Germain, 8 October 1777, CO 5/665. See also Minutes of the Executive Council, 9 March 1778 in Allen D. Candler, ed., Revolutionary Records of Georgia (RRG), II (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 48.
\footnote{894} There was some controversy in June 1778 in South Carolina when the President, Rawlins Lowndes, acted on an April 1778 recommendation from the Continental Congress to extend the time in which Loyalists could take the oath that had passed the month before, and grant pardons to those who did. Lowndes extended the deadline from 5 June to 10 June 1778. According to the Charleston printer John Wells, Jr., this extension gave “unspeakable Uneasiness to the People.” Opponents of Lowndes’ action claimed it was unconstitutional as it was “considered as a suspension of a statute law.” Several leading citizens, claiming to be a deputation of the people, called on Lowndes and Vice President Christopher Gadsden to inform them “that the people were in such a ferment that fatal Consequences were to be apprehended if I did not recall the Proclamation” extending the deadline to take the oath. According to Gadsden, one member of the deputation told them “the people were right and [they] would lose the last Drop of Blood to support them.” Gadsden likely made matters worse by mocking one member of the deputation, “sarcastically applaud[ing] his Heroism and great exertions for the publick Good...[and] laugh[ing] in his face.” The “Bells of St Michael’s were set ringing” to call a meeting where the townspeople “reprehended [Lowndes’] conduct in the severest terms,” and declared “the Law ought and should be strictly carried into Execution” without the extension to 10 June. John Wells, Jr. and other printers “were prohibited to print the proclamation,” while Magistrates were told not to administer the oath to anyone. Lowndes and Gadsden, refusing to rescind their proclamation, insisted they would, despite “all personal danger, administer the Oaths to all who would apply to [them] within the Limited time.” As was often the case with protests and other popular action in South Carolina during the war, the opponents of Lowndes’ proclamation were actually controlled behind the scenes by the revolutionary elite, in this instance John and Edward Rutledge and their political allies. The Rutledges controlled South Carolina politics to such an extent that they their opponents referred to them as “The Family Compact.” In addition to his own role as President, John Rutledge’s brother Hugh was speaker of the upper house of the legislature, the Legislative Council, and a member of the privy council, while his other brothers, Edward and Thomas, were members of the General Assembly. The Rutledges opposed Lowndes because he had accepted the Presidency after John Rutledge had resigned that position earlier in 1778. Rutledge had opposed the draft of a new constitution being considered to replace the one passed in 1776. The proposed
The rebels knew they were not a guarantee that an individual would not try to support the British if given the chance, but they allowed the rebels to quickly identify friend and foe, track the movements and actions of the Loyalist population, and continue to thwart Loyalist efforts to assist the British in an attack against the southern states. John Lewis Gervais recognized that oaths would not guarantee that an individual would not return to the British if given a chance. He told Henry Laurens “experience teaches us, they will never be our Friend longer than we are Successful, in adversity they will remain our Ennemies” regardless of what oaths they had taken.\(^{895}\) Nevertheless, the rebels decided that the benefits they could obtain from controlling the Loyalists exceeded the potential risks. To maintain vigilance over the population, the states established organizations that in many ways functioned like the old Councils of Safety in enforcing measures intended to

\(^{895}\) John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 26 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 520.

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constitution weakened the state executive by depriving it of a veto. It also eliminated the privy council that had been dominated by Rutledge's family members and political allies. It shifted the balance of power in the upper house away from Charleston by replacing the legislative council, whose members had been chosen by the Assembly from among its own members, with a Senate, whose members were chosen by popular vote. The political alignment on this issue was somewhat ironic, as the more conservative Rutledges were the ones advocating for harsher treatment of Loyalists in this situation. Meanwhile, radicals like Gadsden, who had been the strongest advocates for harsh measures against Loyalists in the first years of the war, now found themselves, along with moderates like Lowndes, defending a modicum of leniency for the Loyalists. The issue faded away almost as quickly as it had arisen when the Assembly referred it to a committee in the Assembly for further inquiry into Lowndes' actions. Though delegates from Charleston who opposed Lowndes, like Edward Rutledge, dominated the committee, the Assembly postponed debate on the committee’s report and voted to approve the proclamation extending time for Loyalists to take the oath. Lowndes completed his term in February 1779, after which John Rutledge was again elected. John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 10 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 435-440; Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 17 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 479-480; Christopher Gadsden to William Henry Drayton, 15 June 1778 in Richard Walsh, ed., *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden (WCG)* 1746-1805 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 131-134; James Haw, *John & Edward Rutledge of South Carolina* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 105-107; John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 6 September 1778, PHL, XIV, 279-280; Chesnutt, et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, XII, 528n; John Rutledge to Henry Laurens, 8 March 1778, PHL, XII, 527-529; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 16 March 1778, PHL, 3-5; Christopher Gadsden to William Henry Drayton, 7 March 1778 in Walsh, ed. *Writings of Christopher Gadsden*, 122.
neutralize the potential threat posed by Loyalists. The Georgia Executive Council, established by the 1777 Constitution, was one such organization. This Council ensured Loyalists who had been ordered to leave the state for not taking the oath actually did so. When the committee responsible for “the expulsion of the internal Enemies of the State” in Chatham County, which included Savannah, informed the Executive Council that a number of Loyalists had yet to leave the state in the mandated time period, the Executive Council ordered the committee to “without delay...apprehend and imprison such offenders & them detain without Bail...in the [jail] of this County.”

The rebels also maintained their existing infrastructure for internal policing, including patrols and night watches, particularly in the cities. The Executive Council established protocols to prevent “Emissaries of our Enemies...[from] frequently pass[ing] thro’ the State.” It ordered “all strangers who come to Town from any other State” to “immediately wait on the Governor or other Commander in Chief for the time being” and “give an account of themselves.” A junior officer and three enlisted men were required to “patrol the streets every two hours after tattoo is beat, and apprehend all disorderly persons they meet with, and every person who cannot give a good account of himself.” After tattoo, which was beat at nine every evening, until daylight, the guards would give a sign to anyone they found on the

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896 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 9 February 1778, RRG, II, 27.
street, who in turn would need to know the countersign. Anyone who was unable to give the countersign was to be detained.897

The Council also ordered “all Constables and other...Well affected Inhabitants of this State” to “in [the] future apprehend and Secure all persons being Strangers in the Same whose Character and business are not well known and approved of.” Such individuals were required to “have a pass from the Governor or other sufficient Voucher from the State from which [they] come.” Any persons with a pass had to have it approved by two Magistrates from the county in which they were apprehended. Those without a pass were to be taken to the town Major in charge in Savannah, who was appointed by the Council. The Council also organized a board of “twenty respectable inhabitants,” of which two were required to “sit by rotation in some convenient house in Town every night from nine O Clock until day break,” who would identify and discharge known inhabitants and order those who they did not recognize to be confined.898

The rebels’ efforts at population control through from 1776-1778 allowed them to continue tracking the movements of Loyalists and quickly identify anyone who did not belong in their respective states. Henry Laurens explained to Rawlins Lowndes, “the Enemy cannot be ignorant of the value of So Carolina & Georgia [& will assuredly call upon them at a] leisure day.” This reality would require the state governments to implement “such measures for defence & safe retreat as will render

898 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 23 February 1778, 13 March 1778, RRG, II, 41-42, 52-53. This board of twenty inhabitants included many of the usual revolutionary leaders such as John Wereat, Joseph Clay, George Walton, Samuel Stirk, James Jackson, and John McCluer, among others.
the work more arduous” for the British. In particular, Laurens argued, “it is absolutely necessary to be jealous of every stranger & of every doubtful Character in the state, particularly so, in the Capital & other Sea Ports.” Laurens thought the British might take advantage of the population in the cities and the activity at the ports to allow spies and other agents to move about anonymously while collecting information for a potential British invasion. He expected this because it was how the rebels had operated in 1775, when the states were still under control of the royal provincial governments. For example, Tunes Tebout had come secretly into Charleston for the raid to steal gunpowder from the Betsey, and landed at Gadsden’s Wharf precisely so he could move about without anyone noticing. To protect against enemies in urban centers and sea ports, Laurens suggested “procuring a person, or more than one person whose business should be unknown to each other, to discover the errand of every Master of Vessel & of every Stranger coming in to our Country.” He argued, “much discovery [may] be made by incessant watchfulness day & night upon external movements.”

The ability to quickly identify members of the population, including those passing through the state, allowed the rebels to successfully respond to any Loyalist effort to build support or raise recruits in the southern states. In early 1777, rebel traders in the Indian Territory recognized Evan McLaurin, one of the leaders of the Loyalist uprising in the South Carolina backcountry in 1775, as he attempted to cross into South Carolina with the aid of John Stuart. The traders “gave the rebel

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899 Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, 17 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 315.
900 See Chapter 3.
901 Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, 17 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 315.
governor immediate information of his going into Georgia and Carolina.” When he learned that he had been recognized, McLaurin was “obliged...to fly and take shelter in Saint Augustine.” Stuart told General Howe that McLaurin “effected his escape with great difficulty.”

Later that summer, Richard Pearis, another Loyalist leader who had been forced to escape to the Cherokee Nation after the Loyalists’ defeat in late 1775, tried to raise men to join the British in West Florida. He was betrayed by one of his men and many of the Loyalists were captured and imprisoned at Ninety Six. Pearis managed to again escape and flee to Mobile in West Florida.

The rebels also focused on preventing Loyalists from crossing into East Florida and joining Thomas Brown’s Florida Scout. The rebels had informants who let them know when inhabitants of the states, and Georgia in particular, attempted to cross into East Florida. In February 1778, John Nevin of Georgia informed the Executive Council of an acquaintance who told him he had been riding with the Florida Scout, and had “committed the Several robberies on Ogeechee” River. The Executive Council ordered Nevin’s acquaintance, Benjamin Jones, to appear before the Chief Justice of the state, who was to “take such steps in this matter as may appear to him necessary.” The Council ordered the property of several other Georgia inhabitants who joined the enemy in East Florida be seized, including their cattle, which were to be taken “into Some interiour and more safe place.”

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902 John Stuart to General Sir William Howe, 13 April 1777, DAR, XIV, 69.
904 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 17 February 1778, RRG, II, 37.
905 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 19 February 1778, RRG, II, 39.
The Executive Council also learned that many members of the Florida Scout had “wives and families [living] on Ogechee [River] in small huts or settlements,” and used this as a “secure Asylum” when they returned to Georgia, and to gain intelligence for their cross-border raids. The Council noted that these inhabitants “depend too much on the tenderness which is due to women and children” that would prevent the state from taking action against their river safe havens. It decided, “that even humanity itself must yield to Necessity and the public good,” and ordered the families “to be removed, from the places on Ogechee which they now occupy, and from which they have so easy a communication with their husbands and afford them so great assistance and help in their plundering schemes.” The Council also ordered militia “to break up the settlements...and bring the women and children further in among the inhabitants.” They were to “settle them on some of the forfeited estates...where they cannot hold any intercourse with their husbands, or others the enemies of this State.” The families also had the option of being taken to Sunbury and put “on board the Flag of Truce now going to St. Augustine.”

During these years the rebels were also much less tolerant of neutrality among inhabitants, demanding active support to avoid being labeled an enemy. Even a supposed moderate like Henry Laurens expressed his frustration with what he called “property men,” or those who “were the most vigorous in opposing the measures of the British Ministry until they perceived that opposition, proceeding to a serious War, then fear of the Loss of Life & Estate shocked their faith, [and] they wished to remain” neutral. Laurens described these men as “our most rooted

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906 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 31 August 1778, RRG, II, 97.
Enemies blazing in the guise of enthusiastic patriotism.” He told John Lewis Gervais, "our greatest Enemies are within ourselves & not among those Men who oppose us by Arms or who honestly & openly profess themselves averse from our measures." Laurens described these individuals as “cunning Men,” whose “cunning is exceedingly baneful to a cause which in their hearts they wish well.” They “Still acknowledged that America had been greatly aggrieved,” but “withdrew from the Councils & Society of their former Colleagues under pretences, some that Independence had been declared too soon, others that it had never been their design to be Independent.”907

In addition to requiring more active demonstrations of support from the “property men,” the rebels demanded more active demonstrations of support from those Loyalists who had taken an oath of loyalty to their respective state, to minimize the possibility that they would abandon their oath when the British gained the advantage in the South. He argued that the rebels should “know no Man as a friend or a Brother who in the Strictest Sense of the term, falls short of the Duty of friend & Brother.” Those who did not show enthusiastic support for the governments with their action should be treated with suspicion, and “to Newtrals let our Love be neutral our eyes & Ears attentive.” Laurens explained that the more demanding policy was the product of a position of strength, as “we are Stronger &

the Enemy much weaker than the parties respectively were nine or even two
Months ago...Our finances are Stretched theirs are broken to pieces.”

Laurens followed this policy himself in his dealings with a former neighbor,
James Brisbane, one of the Loyalists who had been imprisoned with John
Champneys following the defeat of the British at Sullivan’s Island in June 1776.
Though Brisbane secured his release by taking the oath of loyalty, he failed to
demonstrate his support for the American cause by joining the militia, opting
instead to pay a fine as stipulated by South Carolina’s militia law. Laurens noted in a
letter to Brisbane that his actions were technically legal, but that the legal
exemption was from a 1747 militia law, not one passed by the provincial congress
or the new state legislatures. Instead, Laurens argued, “in these times Paying Fines
instead of actual service, marks at best, a lukewarm friend.”

He informed Brisbane that while the militia officers technically could not
punish him for paying his fine to exempt himself from service, his actions did not go
unnoticed by the government. According to Laurens, “it is become part of the Duty
of the President & Privy Council to take notice of every such Man [who would not
take up arms against the British].” He told Brisbane his sincerity in taking the oath
would be questioned, and he would be branded an enemy if he was not willing to
“hazard your Life & Fortune in the just Cause of America.” Laurens had at one time
advocated for leniency for Brisbane, but now questioned whether Brisbane really
endorsed independence and wanted to see American victory in the war. He argued,

908 Henry Laurens to John Wereat, 30 August 1777, PHL, XI, 473-477.
909 Henry Laurens to James Brisbane, 24 April 1777, PHL, XI, 333-335.
“A Man who is not a friend to the American Cause certainly holds principles, if he
holds any, which are injurious to America...that Man may, without any torture of
construction of expression, be deem’d an Enemy to the American Cause.” He told
Brisbane, “I wish to have no further correspondence with you on this Subject.”

“Mounting a Body of Mermaids on Alligators”: The First Florida Expedition

As the rebels continued consolidating internal control in their respective
states, they also had to defend Georgia from the continued attacks of the Florida
Scout and other Loyalist and British forces along the border with East Florida. The
best way of achieving this security against this early British threat would be a major
source of contention between 1776 and 1778. On 1 January 1776, Congress
recommended that South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia coordinate an attack
on East Florida to conquer Saint Augustine. This would make it difficult for the
British to supply the Indians, as it would cut off access via Saint Augustine to West
Florida, where John Stuart ran the Indian Department. British ships carrying goods
intended for maintaining alliances with the Indians would have to access West
Florida.

910 Henry Laurens to James Brisbane, 24 April 1777, PHL, XI, 333-335; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The
Papers of Henry Laurens, XI, 333n. The case of John Joachim Zubly further illustrates this increasingly
strict determination of friend and enemy. Zubly was an early supporter of colonists’ rights from
Georgia, and had been a member of the Georgia Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety, and
represented Georgia at the Second Continental Congress. He did not support independence, however,
and in the days after the Battle of Sullivan’s Island the Council of Safety on which he once sat
determined that his “going at large will...endanger the public safety.” Before he could be arrested he
fled Georgia for South Carolina, and eventually had his property seized. Zubly expressed his
bewilderment to Henry Laurens as to how he could have been one of the “true friends to America”
when he was made a delegate to the Continental Congress and now be “declared a traitor sentence[d]
to Suffer Death as such in Case of my Return” to Georgia. See John Joachim Zubly to Henry Laurens,
27 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 522-524.
Florida through the Gulf of Mexico. Congress, however, provided little in the way of material support, and there was a significant gap between the recommended objective and the resources available to the southern states.

Many in North and South Carolina recognized the importance of the defense of Georgia for their own states, but doubted the feasibility of the plan and, together with some of the rebels in Georgia, were not sure it was commensurate with the threat. They believed limited British manpower and resources in East Florida limited their ability to threaten Georgia. The British in Saint Augustine lacked the resources to adequately care for the many Loyalists who had fled there from other colonies, and was a “poor starved colony...much pinched for provision.” Many of the raids into Georgia undertaken by the Florida Scout and others were for primarily for the purpose of cattle rustling to feed the people of Saint Augustine. With this in mind, Lachlan McIntosh instead advocated a plan that included breaking up Loyalist settlements in the area between the Altamaha and St. Mary’s Rivers, a sparsely populated and heavily contested buffer area between Georgia and Florida. This would send the inhabitants of those settlements fleeing for Saint Augustine, and would obligate the British in Saint Augustine to support even more people with their already limited provisions. At the time, however, Georgia defenses at the border were largely limited to mounted troops ranging along the frontier,

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912 Lachlan McIntosh to George Washington, 28 April 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 4-5.
which proved insufficient and left the troop of horse “Jaded & tired out.” McIntosh recommended building a system of fortifications to provide a defensive barrier along the Altamaha River, a recommendation shared by the commanding general of the Southern Department, Charles Lee.

In early August 1776, McIntosh crossed the Altamaha and sent part of his force to the St. Mary’s River to capture Wright’s Fort, a stockade built on that river by former royal governor James Wright’s brother, Jemyn, and used by the Florida Scout as a base for their raids into Georgia. McIntosh led the rest of his force in a series of raids against settlements south of the Altamaha. One inhabitant of Saint Augustine reported, “Every settlement to the northward of St. John’s River is broken up...and the planters thrown in the greatest distress.” The rebels also captured Wright’s Fort, and took several prisoners, including Jemyn Wright and another of James Wright’s brothers, Charles. McIntosh and Lee believed these successes, together with new defenses, would be sufficient to protect Georgia. Lee informed the Council of Safety that he did not have the necessary cannon, ammunition, provisions, or even men to besiege Saint Augustine. The Council of Safety informed Lee that it still “conceive[d] the reduction of St. Augustine to be a very considerable object with the Continent in general, but to this Province in particular.”

The radical members of the Georgia government, including those on the Council of Safety, agreed that the British position in Saint Augustine was weak, but whereas McIntosh and Lee believed this to mean the province did not pose a

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913 Lachlan McIntosh to Charles Lee, 29 July 1776, in Hawes, ed., PLM, 10.
significant threat to Georgia, many of the radicals believed this weakness meant it would be easy to conquer Saint Augustine. McIntosh’s successful campaign to clear the area north of the St. John’s River of Loyalists meant the “inhabitants [were] obliged to evacuate their plantations and fly into the Castle [at Saint Augustine].” The tenuous position of Saint Augustine, and “the scarcity of provisions and the want of fresh supplies of many articles from the country will of itself oblige the Garrison to submit to our arms.” When Lee asked the Georgia government how it intended to transport troops and supplies, it provided a vague response, with little in the way of specifics, about using boats procured in Savannah or the town of Sunbury. Lee was frustrated with the Georgians, who he said would “propose anything, and after they have propos’d it, discover that they are incapable of performing the least” for lack of the supplies required for the proposed measures. He quipped sarcastically, “Upon the whole I should not be surpris’d if they were to propose mounting a body of Mermaids on Alligators.”

Nevertheless, the radicals on the Council of Safety prevailed and Lee ordered the first expedition to conquer Saint Augustine. It was a disaster almost from the start. The heat and swampy conditions combined to cause widespread sickness among the troops, to the point that “14 or 15 were buried every day” at Sunbury alone. The expedition quickly came to a halt, and only a small portion of the force made it even as far as the St. Mary’s River. The Council of Safety’s optimistic assumptions about provisioning the men proved to be off the mark, and a lack of

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916 Jackson, Lachlan McIntosh, 44.
917 William Moultrie, Memoirs of the American Revolution, I (New York: David Longworth, 1802), 186
provisions meant the soldiers, most of whom had barely crossed the Altamaha, had to plunder the same local inhabitants they were trying to protect. Not long after the expedition started, Lee was recalled to the North, and Robert Howe eventually took command of the Southern Department.918

The rebels did not just fail to take Saint Augustine in the 1776 expedition. Given the disorder of the campaign and the lack of provisions, the rebels also had to abandon much of the land between the Altamaha and St. Mary’s that McIntosh had cleared of Loyalist settlements in early August. By the end of September, William McIntosh’s mounted militia troop was again the only rebel force operating south of the Altamaha, and even they were tired and only had “Miserable worn out Horse.”919 McIntosh decided against any further offensive action and proceeded with his plan to build a system of fortifications to defend Georgia. McIntosh argued only “people of [w]ild extravagant imaginations may talk of conq[ues]ts and exten[d]ing our Terrorys, but every person [of] sober solid reason who are true Lovers of [t]hear Country, must still see” the value of the defensive. He recommended a step first proposed by Lee of evacuating the coastal islands of people and cattle, as they were indefensible from a naval attack. He proposed placing at least “one Galley & a small Boat” in each inlet to prevent anyone deserting to the British and to protect against British or Loyalist plunderers coming from the sea. They were to “give timely notice” to headquarters in Savannah “on any alarm.”920

918; William Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 186; Jackson, Lachlan McIntosh, 45.
919 Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 1 October 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 11-12.
920 Lachlan McIntosh to William McIntosh, 22 October 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 15-16.
Additionally, McIntosh argued the Altamaha was Georgia’s “natural frontier” and should be garrisoned to both protect Georgia from the enemy as well as provide a base from which to “make In[roads] against the Enemys [country] upon every proper Occasion.”921 This system of fortification allowed the rebels to maintain “a Constant [co]mmunication & Intelligence” throughout the state and secure the settlements north of the Altamaha. McIntosh ordered his brother William to Fort Barrington on the Altamaha, while Major Leonard Marbury was to send one troop to Hovendens Fort on Broad River, and another to Marbury’s Fort on the Ogechee River. Many of the fortifications in this system would have to be built, however, and McIntosh ordered a stockade constructed at Beard’s Bluff, further up the Altamaha from Fort Barrington. The system was to be fully integrated, with “small parties continually Ranging from one [fort] to the other for Intelligence.” These parties were to “assist each other as there may be occasion,” and report to a central command at Fort Barrington and, ultimately, headquarters in Savannah.922

McIntosh emphasized the importance of centralized command and control within this defensive system, as communication with headquarters had previously been “greatly neglected” and would “often leave me in the dark.” Likewise, a small party was to patrol the Altamaha between Fort Barrington and the coast to prevent the enemy crossing the river. At all fortifications, the men were “to suffer no one to pass out of [the] province on [any] pretence without a pass from the President of the State.” Similarly, “no suspected person or persons [were to] come into the State

921 Ibid.
922 Lachlan McIntosh to William McIntosh, 22 October 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 15-16
without sending them with a Guard to Headquarters.”\(^{923}\) With this level of integration between forts, and with headquarters, the rebels could cover large amounts of territory and eliminate gaps in the defensive barrier.

In supporting this defensive system, McIntosh, as well as Lee and Howe, understood that the ultimate objective was to protect their own settlements from the Florida raiders, and “Secure the Inhabitants from future Insults,” not destroy Loyalists and conquer new territory.\(^{924}\) McIntosh wanted to be able to control population movements in and out of the Georgia settlements, and “secure the whole [population], as well as Stocks of Cattle.”\(^{925}\) He ordered forces stationed on the Altamaha “to prevent the Ennemy from...plundering any of the Inhabitants, any of whom you are to assist to the utmost of y[ou]r power if attack’d.” They were to detach men to settlements “to protect the Inhabitants there, to visit them at times & see they are in their duty & keep a Constant Correspondence with them.” He told them to “allow no persons to go to Augustine without a pass from the president,” and “suffer no rice or provision to be carried out of y[ou]r district which you suspect may be carred to the Ennemy’s, or without proper authority.”\(^{926}\) Each outpost was to “keep the Ennemy always at a distance from the Settlement that [the people] may rest easy & unmolested,” and “be very careful...[none of] the Inhabitants under

\(^{923}\) Orders to Lieut. Col. William McIntosh, 24 October 1776, in Hawes, ed., PLM, 16-17; Lachlan McIntosh to William McIntosh, 22 October 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 15-16; Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 29 October 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 17-18; Lachlan McIntosh to Samuel Elbert, 8 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 24-25.

\(^{924}\) Lachlan McIntosh to Lyman Hall, George Walton, and Nathan Brownson, 23 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 37-38.

\(^{925}\) Lachlan McIntosh to Samuel Elbert, 8 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 24-25.

\(^{926}\) Lachlan McIntosh to the Officer Commanding the Detachment at the First Landing North Side of Altamaha, Undated, December 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 28-29.
[you]r care [are] molested or Insulted either by the Ennemy or any of your own people."\textsuperscript{927} When British or Loyalist forces attacked a settlement, the nearest garrison was to “with all Speed...get as many men as you think necessary to protect the different plantations of that Settlement & annoy the Ennemy as much as possible untill assistance arrive[s] from Savannah.”\textsuperscript{928}

McIntosh was given very limited resources to implement his plan, and many of the stockades remained un-built for some time. Many of the troops also went without pay, and the militia and Continentals were both short on manpower. The garrison at Beard’s Bluff, under the command of Major Marbury, deserted their post after they had not been paid for an extended period of time. Marbury went to Savannah, and refused to leave until he was able to get his men paid. When this failed, he resigned his commission.\textsuperscript{929} Georgia was allowed, with certain restrictions, to recruit for their Continental battalions as far north as Virginia. By early 1777, however, they were having trouble recruiting even in these states, and the distance from Georgia made recruiting “tedious & liable to many Interruptions.”\textsuperscript{930} McIntosh received only a “trifling sum” for improving Fort Barrington, which had been renamed Fort Howe, and received no funds for another post he wanted to build on the Altamaha, both of which he called “the...most Important posts in this State.”\textsuperscript{931}

The rebel forces lacked provisions, and were often forced to confiscate goods from

\textsuperscript{927} Lachlan McIntosh to Samuel Elbert, 8 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 24-25; Lachlan McIntosh to Captain John McIntosh, 28 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 40.
\textsuperscript{928} Lachlan McIntosh to Unknown, 26 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{929} Searcy, \textit{The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution}, 79-80.
\textsuperscript{930} Lachlan McIntosh to Lyman Hall, George Walton, and Nathan Brownson, 23 January 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{931} Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 27 December 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 27-28.
their own supporters. McIntosh lamented this “necessity we are often under of tak[ing] peoples property” as “Grievous & Intolerab[le],” and pleaded that the government “put [these] matters on a better footing in future an[d as] soon as possible.”

“Our Late Don Quixot Expedition”: The Second Florida Expedition

Despite these significant resource constraints, the radical faction in Savannah successfully advocated for another expedition to conquer Saint Augustine. In February 1777, a force of 300 Loyalists, British regulars, and Indians attacked Fort McIntosh on the Satilla River, which the rebels under the command of William McIntosh had built and used as an advanced outpost south of the Altamaha. Parts of the British force reached the Altamaha, but the defensive perimeter held. The radicals saw the attack as an opportunity to once again push for an invasion of East Florida, though they were no better prepared than they had been the year before.

Howe had written to the Georgia President, Archibald Bulloch, in late 1776 with the “methods I thought best calculated to place [Georgia] in a proper State of defence,” but later found they had taken no action on his recommendations. Instead they “Suffer’d a fortnight to Elapse without having taken one Step towards effecting this essential purpose.” He was horrified to find that Georgia was ill prepared even for a defensive, let alone an offensive strategy. The state was “so destitute of almost every

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932 Lachlan McIntosh to William Kennon, 26 January 1776 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 39.
933 Lachlan McIntosh to George Washington, 13 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 45-47; Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 19 February 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 41; Lachlan McIntosh to James Screven, 19 February 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 41; Lachlan McIntosh to Chesley Bostick, 20 February 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 42; Lachlan McIntosh to Captain Habersham, 20 February 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 42.
military requisite, and so deficient in every necessary provision for the Soldiery."

There were “no public stores furnished with goods...no arms purchas’d nor Commissioners appointed to purchase them, Very little powder or lead and no effectual measures taken to increase the quantity.” There was “not Cannon Sufficient and no steps taken to procure more.” They had no stores of clothes, blankets, or tents, nor did they have salt, wood, or even a “public Hospital established for the Sick.” He urged Button Gwinnett, at the time the speaker of the Assembly, to address this “dreadfull Catalogue of wants” and “for god sake Set about making instant provision.”\footnote{Robert Howe to the Chairman of the Georgia Convention, 3 December 1776 in Naval Documents of the American Revolution, VII pt. 3, 360-362.}

Bulloch died in February 1777, and shortly thereafter Gwinnett succeeded him as President of Georgia.\footnote{Soon after becoming governor, Gwinnett arrested McIntosh’s brother, George, for treason after it was discovered some of George McIntosh’s business partners had been trading with the British in East Florida. Even Laurens, a friend and mentor of Lachlan McIntosh, told him his brother “to say the least, acted very indiscreetly” and was a “property man,” who “wished the American Cause very well, but not so well, as to make any sacrifice of his Interest in order to promote its welfare.”\footnote{Lyman Hall, While Led by Gwinnett, the radicals in the Council of Safety were coming governor, Gwinnett arrested McIntosh’s brother, George, for treason after it was discovered some of George McIntosh’s business partners had been trading with the British in East Florida. Even Laurens, a friend and mentor of Lachlan McIntosh, told him his brother “to say the least, acted very indiscreetly” and was a “property man,” who “wished the American Cause very well, but not so well, as to make any sacrifice of his Interest in order to promote its welfare.” While Gwinnett was ostensibly acting on a recommendation from the Continental Congress in arresting George McIntosh, he acted on his own, without consulting the Council of Safety, which he claimed “could not be convened that day.” He ordered an officer of the militia to arrest McIntosh and, “as his crime was no less than treason against the united States,” to place him in irons in the jail. As expected, the conservatives on the Council of Safety opposed the arrest while Gwinnett was out of town trying to raise men for the expedition to Saint Augustine, and many of the radicals could not attend. George Walton, a delegate at the Continental Congress, told McIntosh “the Laws are taken out of the Judges hands and exercised by your dictator who I presume has suspended the Habeus Corpus Act as I find no writ was brought upon a certain occasion,” referring to George McIntosh’s arrest. George McIntosh later escaped from his parole, and was “hunted through the woods and swamps like a partridge in Liberty County.” Gwinnett and the other radicals saw the Council of Safety’s actions, and presumed assistance in helping McIntosh escape, as one of many signs that the McIntosh faction represented a Loyalist threat within Georgia. Gwinnett and the radicals saw the raids from East Florida and the McIntosh faction as two parts of the same threat. Gwinnett insisted “that long before now the Garrison of Augustine would have been evacuated, & the people of East Florida accepted of our mercy & protection, if they had not been supplied by their Tory Friends in this state.” Lyman Hall, a close Gwinnett ally, made similar accusations that “we are much plagued with Toryism under a Whig Mask, & I apprehend the salvation of this State almost Depends on the Remov[al] of Brigadier G[eneral] McKintosh to some other part of the Continent.” John Adam Treutlen, who would succeed}
again argued that the attacks on Georgia showed that East Florida lacked provisions and was therefore vulnerable, and the inhabitants likely to join any invading American force. They passed a motion ordering the President, with “all such Persons, as are voluntarily inclined to follow him,” to attack Saint Augustine, and “issue a Proclamation to the Inhabitants signifying that all who take an Oath of Allegiance to the united States & join with us, shall receive our protection, & be secured in their persons & property.”

Gwinnett did what he could to raise men for the militia, but had limited success. He blamed this, and the state's lack of provisions, on Howe, who was incredulous that Gwinnett planned another expedition against East Florida, and refused to provide support from any Continental battalions from the Carolinas. Howe justified his decision by arguing that the Floridians had retreated, that Georgia was not at the time under threat of invasion, and that his forces were needed for the defense of their home states.

Gwinnett in the position, with the new title of governor, told John Hancock, “True it is that we are surrounded with Enemies on every side, & our small friends, the Tories, within our Bowels, are so very numerous. For Truetlen, this was the reason “all our Efforts against these Enemies of American Freedom have hitherto been languid and ineffective.” He claimed, “There is not the least doubt, but the Province of East Florida would have been evacuated long before now, if they had not received Supplies of Rice & Cattle from this State.” Furthermore, it was “very obvious from what Persons they have received them.” Despite no evidence of wrongdoing against Lachlan McIntosh, Gwinnett asked Howe if he could remove the Georgia general from the state and send him to a command elsewhere, a request Howe refused. Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, 1 September 1777, PHL, XI, 480; George Walton to Lachlan McIntosh, 18 April 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 226; Button Gwinnett to John Hancock, 28 March 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 215-221; John Adam Treutlen to John Hancock, 19 June 1777, John Adam Treutlen Papers, Georgia Historical Society; Lachlan McIntosh to George Walton, 14 July 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 257; Lyman Hall to Roger Sherman, 16 May 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 227; Ann Gwinnett to John Hancock, 1 August 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 237.

Whereas Howe claimed Bulloch, Gwinnett, and the Georgia government had ignored him, Gwinnett claimed the opposite, that Howe had ignored their request for assistance. He claimed Howe never responded to their request for support during the February attack from East Florida against Fort McIntosh. When Howe refused to support the planned expedition against Saint Augustine, Gwinnett suggested the general was guilty of treason. He sarcastically quipped of Howe, “He came, he
Despite his limited success in recruiting militia, Gwinnett wanted to avoid requesting assistance from McIntosh's Georgia Continentals. Likewise, McIntosh wanted nothing to do with the expedition, which he later referred to as “Our late Don quixot Expedition.” He preferred instead to maintain his defensive system on the Altamaha with “[scou]ts continually south of that river toward [Sa]tilla.”

Nevertheless, McIntosh knew Gwinnett would ultimately need his support, since, as he told Howe, “I dont hear that he has [recrui]ted any Militia yet.” He worried that if the expedition was successful, his lack of contribution would permanently sideline both the Georgia conservatives and his Continentals. He told Gwinnett, “the Continental Troops under my Command are always ready to march at the Shortest notice, & Ass[is]t & Co-operate with y[ou].” He told his officers to be responsive to any request by Gwinnett for assistance, and ordered that, in addition to their defensive preparations, they take offensive action against any enemy posts that might be vulnerable. McIntosh reported to Howe in early April that, Gwinnett “at last wrote to me from Sunbury for as[sistanc]e from the Military which I promised saw, and left us in our low Estate.” He also suggested Howe was “affect[ing] to render the military independent of, and superiour to the civil power,” a complaint made against the King in the Declaration of Independence. Button Gwinnett to John Hancock, 28 March 1777 in Jenkins, *Button Gwinnett*, 219-220. In her petition to John Hancock after her husband’s death, Ann Gwinnett echoed his accusations against Howe. She said Howe said Howe was complicit in the February attack on Georgia by the East Florida force, and that Howe “did not heartily join the Liberty side,” and “feasted with the Tories...was at their dances several Evenings & spent His time mostly with them.” See Ann Gwinnett to John Hancock, 1 August 1777 in Jenkins, *Button Gwinnett*, 239-240.

938 Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 2 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 44-45; Lachlan McIntosh to Button Gwinnett, 13 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 47; Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh*, 60-61.

939 Lachlan McIntosh to Button Gwinnett, 28 March 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 44.

940 Lachlan McIntosh to Lt Col Harris, 23 March 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 42-43; Lachlan McIntosh to Thomas Sumpter, Undated, March 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 43; Lachlan McIntosh to George Walton, 14 July 1777 in Jenkins, *Button Gwinnett*, 259.
to the utmost of [my pow]er,” but that Gwinnett was using the Continentals as “a
to creep out of, & throw the blame upon...if nothing was done.”

The primary source of contention for both Gwinnett and McIntosh was the
unwillingness of the latter to recognize the President’s ability to call councils of war.
He refused to attend Gwinnett’s councils of war, holding his own council of officers
instead. They determined “the presidents calling a Council of Warr, Courts Martial,
or any other Detail of the Duty was out of his Line, quite Improper for the President
of the State, & interfering with the particular province of the Officers of the Military.”
McIntosh was also upset that Gwinnett gave orders to the Continentals without his
knowledge. It was at this point that political allies of the two men, “Advised Both
to Return to [Savannah] & Leave the Command of the Expedition to the Next Officer,”
which was Samuel Elbert. With the defeat of the outmanned militia before it could
rendezvous with Elbert’s Continentals, however, the expedition quickly came to a
close.

McIntosh blamed Gwinnett for allowing their conflict to hinder operations,
giving the enemy warning of the Georgians’ advance and allowing them “so much
time to prepare & be upon [their] Guard.” He claimed Gwinnett was upset about

941 Lachlan McIntosh to Robert Howe, 2 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 44-45
942 Lachlan McIntosh Account to the Assembly Inquiry, Papers Respecting the Augustine Expedition,
14 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 61-63.
943 Lyman Hall to Roger Sherman, 1 June 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 229. Joseph Clay
explained that McIntosh’s enemies “raise Elbert’s merit in Order to depress the Gen[e]ral’s, & as it
were to play off one against the other,” but he “never beleived they had any real regard for him.” Clay
argued that Elbert likewise had little regard for the radicals. His “Sentiments are too liberal for them
&...he will do his Duty as a Soldier...[and] he will not be impos’d uon, nor Sacrifice the Service to their
Caprice, by suffering any improper interferences of an ignorant Executive Body.” See Joseph Clay to
Henry Laurens, 21 October 1777, PHL, XI, 579-580.
944 Lachlan McIntosh to Samuel Elbert, 26 April 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 47-48.
losing a brigadier general’s commission to McIntosh, and was intent on taking over command of the Continental forces to “render the Army obnoxious, & create the Utmost Confusion & disorder in it.” He told George Walton that his troops were “often admired” and “the boast of Georgia,” that “General Lee & other good judges declare [them] to be the best on the contenant.” They had “suffered more fatigue and done more duty perhaps than any other in a state; kept almost in perpetual alarm in all Quarters of it.” Now, however, McIntosh sarcastically commented to Walton, “for a soldier (if at the same time a fellow citizen) to give his opinion or censure the conduct of any man in the civil lines might be deemed no less a crime than Treason.”

He insisted that the Congress “[fix] some Line between the Government of their Army, and the interference of the Civil government of this restless & unsettled State.” For the radicals, Gwinnett’s death at the hand of McIntosh made the governor a martyr for “endeavouring to maintain the civil Power in opposition to the cunning & subterfuges of a designing man.” Aware of how poisonous the situation had become in Georgia, and how tenuous McIntosh’s position was after Gwinnett’s death, his friends in Congress, Henry Laurens and George Walton, found him a position as a brigade commander under Washington in the North.

The conservatives who remained in Georgia hoped that the second failed expedition to Florida would put an end to such schemes, which were

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945 Lachlan McIntosh to George Walton, 14 July 1777 in Jenkins, Button Gwinnett, 256-260.  
946 Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 30 May 1777, PHL, XI, 340-342.  
947 John Adam Treutlen to John Hancock, 19 June 1777, John Adam Treutlen Papers, Georgia Historical Society.  
948 Jackson, Lachlan McIntosh, 69.
“undertaken...w[i]th more Zeal than Prudence.” They argued, “our Situation...[does not] enable us to do more than Defend ourselves, & hardly that, much less to undertake to Act offensively.”\textsuperscript{949} For a time, they believed talk of conquering Florida had passed, that “a Dawn of Hope [was] arising...[as] the Fever abates, the Delirium decreases, & Men seem to be coming to their Senses.”\textsuperscript{950} For the radicals, however, internal and external threats remained intertwined, as taking Saint Augustine was no longer just about defending the Georgian frontier from cross-border raids. They had to “rout the Nest of Thieves in East Florida, who have numerous connections here, & thro’ whose means the Tories in every part of America communicate their Intelligence to Great Britain.”\textsuperscript{951} Conservatives reported “Nockurnal Societ[ies]” of radicals who circulated petitions casting opponents of the government, particularly the McIntosh brothers, as enemies. These petitions argued that “If any Man...however high in office or exalted in Station, shall attempt to weaken or oppose the civil power, he must be considered by his Country as a dangerous person, whose going at large may be highly prejudicial to the publick Welfare.”\textsuperscript{952}

“A Hare Brained, Sudden Impulse”: The Third Florida Expedition

The issue of Florida came again to the forefront of Georgia politics in April 1778.\textsuperscript{953} In one of the few failures of the rebels’ strategy of population control, a

\textsuperscript{949} Joseph Clay to Henry Laurens, 19 May 1777, PHL, XI, 338-339.
\textsuperscript{950} Joseph Clay to Henry Laurens, 21 October 1777, PHL, XI, 578.
\textsuperscript{951} John Adam Treutlen to John Hancock, 19 June 1777, John Adam Treutlen Papers, Georgia Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{952} Liberty Society Circular, Undated; George Walton to John Wereat, 30 August 1777 in Hawes, ed., PLM, 66-74.
\textsuperscript{953} Congress did not help matters when it proposed in July 1777 that Georgia undertake an expedition to conquer West Florida. Henry Laurens was able to talk enough members of Congress out
large group of Loyalists joined forces in South Carolina and “Crossed Savannah River, below Augusta, well armed, and Mounted on good Horses, with the Avowed Intention of joining the people of East Florida.” Along the way, they “were Joined by some of the Inhabitants of [Georgia], tho’...not by many.” Robert Howe ordered “all the Continental Troops, Wherever Stationed, to Endeavour by forced Marches to get before them, and prevent if Possible their Crossing into Florida.” Howe’s forces, marching on foot, were unable to catch up to the Loyalists, who were on horseback. Howe used this incident to stress the continued necessity of a large number of mounted troops to operate in the vast backcountry of Georgia and South Carolina.

This “Well formed Body of Horse” would operate “for the protection of this Country, without which, the property and persons of its Inhabitants are so insecure, that they will absolutely Evacuate it.”

954 of this measure, arguing that the few troops Georgia had were better used operating in defense of Georgia, and that an expedition would have resulted in failure. The plan was for 1000-1200 men to proceed towards New Orleans, and “rely for assistance in the friendly disposition of the Inhabitants on the Banks of Mississippi...[and] upon the Governor of New Orleans for Supplies of Money Cannon & Artillery Stores” without any advance notice given to him. The benefits of this plan would purportedly include “an acquisition of vast stores of Merchandize & other valuables...[and] destruction of a rising trade from W. Florida to Great Britain & the English West Indies.” It would also result in “a 14th State...[and] Lustre reflected upon the Arms of the united states.” Laurens successfully argued that such an expedition would actually bring sickness and “disgrace on our Arms,” would embarrass the colonists in the eyes of their Spanish allies, and would give the British “strong arguments for moving the Creek & other Indians to act offensively against So[uth] Carolina & Georgia.” To convince enough delegates to oppose the expedition to West Florida, however, Laurens had to allow for the possibility of an “enterprise nearer home,” which in practice meant to Saint Augustine. Henry Laurens to John Rutledge, 12 August 1777, PHL, XI, 443-446; Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, 11 August 1777, PHL, XI, 440-442; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, XI, 440n; Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, 11 August 1777, PHL, XI, 440-443; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, XI, 440n, 443n.

459 Howe to Unknown, 13 April 1778, Robert Howe Letters, Georgia Historical Society; For other accounts see Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Pinckney, 7 April 1778 in “Letters of Thomas Pinckney, 1775-1780,” The South Carolina Historical Magazine 58 (July 1957): 148-149; Robert Howe to Unknown, 6 April 1778, Robert Howe Letters, Georgia Historical Society; Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 7 April 1778, RRG, II, 72-73; Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 13 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 113-117; John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 16 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 121-124; Samuel...
The Georgians feared this march of Loyalists portended “a concerted Plan of invading this State from St Augustine...and that their Object was to be the total Reduction of this State.” Others, including Samuel Elbert and many in South Carolina, were not as convinced of this threat, arguing instead that the Loyalists were desperately short of provisions and not nearly the formidable threat that some believed. Howe, who did believe the Loyalists were a threat, advocated a continued defensive strategy with posts south of the Altamaha that were in continuous communication with one another to avoid being taken by surprise and defeated in detail. This force would “by Scouting Parties continually [Scour] the woods Penetrating East Florida as far as St. Johns River, and always Ranging between that and St Mary's.” This would “Certainly Prevent the Predatory war, they carry on against the Inhabitants of this State.” Howe argued that when the Florida Scout “Know that a well Mounted Body of Cavalry, is always upon the Watch for them, and ever Ready to pursue them, and Cut off their retreat, they never would attempt Inroads of this kind, or would most certainly be Chastized if they did.”

In January 1778, John Houstoun succeeded Treutlen as governor of Georgia, and many in South Carolina believed this gave “some Reason to expect Good Order & Harmony will succeed the Anarchy & Tyranny which has so long distracted that

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955 John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 16 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 121-124; James Whitefield to Henry Laurens, 6 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 261-264.
956 Samuel Elbert to Robert Howe, 14 April 1778, Order Book of Samuel Elbert, 125-126; Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 13 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 113-117.
957 Robert Howe to Unknown, 13 April 1778, Robert Howe Letters, Georgia Historical Society.
unhappy State.” These hopes proved to be unfounded as Howe continued in vain to convince the government to focus on Georgia’s defenses. He described to Henry Laurens how, “deplorably weak as they are,” in Georgia, “they are render’d more so by the unhappy Divisions among themselves.” They had “an Exhausted Treasury,” and soldiers remained unpaid with little provision, and “were almost in a state of mutiny, most of the men so naked that it was indecent to Parade them.” Howe expressed his disbelief that, “tho’ destitute of almost every military Requisite, they were for impelling the Army to undertake an Expedition into and against East Florida.”

Even before the Loyalist rising in South Carolina, Houstoun believed the Florida Scout were “almost at our very Town-Gates” and “threaten us with certain Ruin unless some Remedy is applied.” Like Gwinnett and other radicals, he stressed the ease of capturing Saint Augustine given the weakness of the British position there. In the days following the Loyalist rising, he argued “The situation of this State at the present Moment is truly alarming and nothing but the most vigorous Exertions promise to save it.” The Executive Council decided “in such times of danger” the Governor could not wait for the Council to meet, and “therefore executive power ought to be lodged in a Single person with respect to Military matters.” Houstoun ordered the militia embodied, appealed to South Carolina for

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958 John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 23 January 1778, PHL, XII, 336.
961 John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 16 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 121-124.
962 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 16 April 1778, RRG, II, 75-77.
assistance, and “[set] off...to meet a considerable Body of Militia who say they are determined to pursue the Traitors to the walls of St Augustine.”

Houstoun claimed “the Continental troops seem to second [the] Ardour” of the militia, but he had also been concerned immediately before the Loyalist rising that the Continentals were pursuing their “total independence [from] State Authority,” which he believed to be “rather inconsistent with the Genius of good Government.” This would set the stage for yet another civil-military conflict in the coming campaign. In the meantime, on 19 April 1778, Samuel Elbert, along with three hundred Continentals and three galleys, under the command of Commodore Oliver Bowen, attacked four British ships lying near Frederica, off of Saint Simon’s Sound. The British ships had been positioned there following the two previous expeditions from Georgia to Florida, had been capturing American merchant ships, and were making preparations to attack Sunbury and Fort Morris at the mouth of the Medway River, north of the Altamaha. The rebels succeeded in taking three of the ships while sustaining no casualties or losses themselves. These ships were the primary naval support for East Florida, and after the battle the one ship that escaped, the Galatea, was, according to Governor Tonyn of East Florida, “the only King’s ship which remains on this station.” Many in Georgia used this success to galvanize support for continuing to Saint Augustine.

963 John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 16 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 121-124.
965 Samuel Elbert to Robert Howe, 19 April 1778, Keith M. Read Collection, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia Special Collections.
967 George Walton to Henry Laurens, 26 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 195-196.
Howe appealed to South Carolina for assistance, and they provided 600 Continentals under the command of Colonel Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and 800 militia under the command of Colonel Andrew Williamson. Nevertheless, few in South Carolina supported yet another expedition to Florida. Lowndes suggested to Henry Laurens shortly after the rising of Loyalists in early April that while “appearances indeed indicate some preconcerted plan of Operation,” to assemble and march to Saint Augustine, he was less convinced that the plan was “so well digested and matured as to Justify the panic.” He was also concerned that this expedition was another “hare brained, sudden impulse,” and that it would distract South Carolina from the expected British attack on their coast. The “Scheme” against East Florida would “cut out work in our rear, while a meditated attack may be made in Front.” If they were able to protect against a British attack on the coast, Lowndes was not terribly worried about the Loyalists and British in East Florida.968

Lowndes understood how any military action in Florida would unfold, because it was precisely the same approach the rebels had adopted in the North, and the way the southern states would fight after the British captured Savannah and Charleston. The enemy “[would] not make a stand, which would give us an advantage; but quit post after post at a reasonable distance so as to secure a safe retreat and by that means lead us on perhaps to the Castle,” at which time the rebels would be risking the summer heat and sickness to continue the fight.969 Gadsden echoed this important point about the weather, namely that “[O]ur Summer Months

968 Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 13 April 1778, PHL, XIII, 113-117.
969 Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 28 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 358-360.
are dreadful indeed. The sickness of the Troops is 10 Times more to be apprehended than the Opposition of the Enemy.” He told William Henry Drayton, “This is the 3d Summer we have against our judgment been lugged in in this manner; indeed, this year, We have begun a little earlier, but still nothing like early enough and I am afraid it will end like all the rest.” Lowndes expressed his hope that by “the time [the combined rebel force] reach St. Mary’s they will have a more Adequate judgment of the Scheme, and perhaps be convinced of the imbecility of it.” Others, like John Lewis Gervais, believed with a show of force at the St. Mary’s, Loyalists and British coming from Saint Augustine “would be glad to Stay at home.” John Rutledge expressed the same hopes, that “it will terminate in Nothing more than obtaining a Post at St Mary’s, which, from the Superiority of our Force, I imagine will be evacuated, on the Approach of our Troops.”

Howe left Savannah at the end of April to rendezvous with Elbert, but he had a different objective in mind than Houstoun, one limited to clearing the British from their post on the St. Mary’s River and pushing them back beyond the St. John’s River. Houstoun, meanwhile, was in pursuit of “the only End which can save us – the Conquest of East Florida.” He claimed the Loyalists who had fled to Saint Augustine would welcome their approach, as they “already find their Mistake and

970 Christopher Gadsden to William Henry Drayton, 1 June 1778 in Walsh, ed. The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 126-129.
971 Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 28 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 358-360.
973 John Rutledge to Henry Laurens, 15 June 1778, PHL, 464-466.
begin to cry out for Mercy.” Some of them had already “boldly ventured back, and thrown themselves upon the Country, alledging they might as well be hanged as starved.”

As with the previous two Florida expeditions, the Continental commander again had difficulty obtaining provisions and other necessary supplies from the state governments. Howe arrived in early May at Fort Howe on the Altamaha where he met with Elbert and his brigade. They remained there until the end of May, as their movement was delayed by a severe lack of provisions. Of the “ten thousand disappointments” that arose, most were “from the operations of this state, [which] happened to prevent and detain me.” The biggest impediment was Houstoun himself, who reassigned significant amounts of provisions from the army to the militia. While the army was still at Fort Howe, Houstoun ordered that several barrels of rice belonging to Howe’s troops be assigned instead for the militia, which had yet to move from Sunbury where Houstoun was still recruiting men. For reasons that were unknown to the Continental commanders, Houstoun also ordered galleys that had been escorting provision boats for the Continentals to leave those boats exposed to the enemy and sail north.

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977 Robert Howe to William Moultrie, 12 June 1778 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 223.
The militia also used “every Obstruction & impediment” to refuse wagons, horses, and boats for the Continentals. Houstoun took other provisions from the army as well, including “a much larger quantity [of cattle], than they can possible use this Campaign,” which at one point left the army without meat for three days. He also took horses that were bringing wagons with clothing and other provisions to the army, which meant those wagons were delayed.979 When Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of the South Carolina brigade reported these details to William Moultrie in Charleston, Moultrie exclaimed, “The governor seems to be taking the bread out of your mouths.”980 Amidst all of this, Howe was still receiving criticism from the Georgia government for his delays. As Pinckney sarcastically stated, “the reasonable and candid gentry of this state are throwing a thousand reflections on the general and the army for not marching to attack the enemy, and storm lines, without Provisions and without ammunition.”981

When the Continentals finally crossed the Altamaha on 27 May, they could only move as far as Reid’s Bluff on the other side of the river. They did not proceed to the Satilla until 14 June, and even then they only made slow progress. They handily defeated a small party of Florida Scout in a skirmish, but the biggest impediments to progress were the terrain and the weather.982 Howe had requested three hundred slaves from the Georgia government to clear a road through the thick terrain, which was often impassable for wagons, but the government only granted

980 William Moultrie to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, 5 June 1778 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 220-222.
981 Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to William Moultrie, 24 May 1778 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 212.
two hundred, and of those only 56 arrived on time. The combination of weather and the loss of a significant amount of provisions to the militia also left many in the army sick. The army stopped at the Satilla to wait for Houstoun, who was just leaving Sunbury, and Colonel Andrew Williamson who had only just crossed into Georgia with the South Carolina militia. Houstoun finally arrived on 28 June with the militia, though with only a portion of the men he’d hoped to recruit. As during previous Florida expeditions, the governor and Continental general were unable to reach any agreement on a unified command. Consistent with their conflicting objectives, Houstoun chose to march against the British force of regulars and Loyalists under the command of Major James Mark Prevost, which blocked the road to Saint Augustine, while Howe chose to attack Fort Tonyon on the St. Mary’s River. This would push the East Floridians back to the St. John’s and out of Georgia, thereby making it more difficult for them to stage an invasion of Georgia.

As Rawlins Lowndes predicted, the British and Loyalists did not give Howe’s forces an opportunity to defeat them in battle. By the time Howe reached Fort

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983 Minutes of the Georgia Executive Council, 26 June 1778, RRG, II, 77.
984 John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 17 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 483; Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Pinckney, 1 July 1778, “Letters of Thomas Pinckney,” 156; Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to William Moultrie, 6 July 1778, in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 229. By this time, the army had advanced to Fort Tonyon on the St. Mary’s River, but the force was barely one half of what it was when the army first reached Fort Howe on the Altamaha.
986 John Fauchereau Grimke, “Journal of the Campaign to the Southward,” South Carolina Historical & Genealogical Magazine 12 (July 1911): 133; Robert Howe to William Moultrie, 12 June 1778 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 223. Howe claimed Houstoun “has, I believe, exerted himself to spirit up the people; and I fancy has been greatly perplexed.”
Tonyn, the enemy had already retreated, burning the fort as they left. Thomas Brown, who had been at Fort Tonyn, left with his Florida Scout to join Prevost. As he approached the main Florida force, he closed on the flank of Houstoun’s militia, forcing the rebels to retreat. Houstoun and Howe could not reach agreement on a combined attack against the enemy, and the newly arrived Williamson contributed to the disorder by insisting he alone could give his men orders. Amidst this command climate, Howe held a council of war for his officers, and they agreed they had achieved their objective of pushing the British back from the St. Mary’s River to the St. John’s River. Houstoun believed they should continue to Saint Augustine, and Williamson tried to split the difference with an idea that was acceptable to no one by recommending a march as far as the St. John’s in the hopes the British would give battle before the rebels crossed that river.

In the aftermath of the failed campaign, Houstoun attempted to place the blame on Howe for retreating. Houstoun insisted “a great Number of the Inhabitants of East Florida bear our Cause.” He explained away his late start in the season by arguing that the delay was intentional rather than the result of his lack of success in recruiting, since they had to wait until a new campaign began in the North or else the British would have reinforcements to send to Florida. Despite his orders to redirect many of the army’s supplies and provisions to the militia, Houstoun also

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claimed, “how the Continental Troops came to be sickly is not for me to
determine...the Militia altho’ many of them out for three Months constantly, were
not so.”

Howe insisted he had achieved his intended objective to “dislodge the
Enemy from Fort Tony and St. Mary’s River, from which they had...been making
incursions, continually annoying & injuring the Inhabitants of Georgia.” In the end,
the repercussions for the failed expedition fell on Howe. He learned that Congress
somehow got the idea that the expedition “was under my Guidance or owing to my
recommendation or request.” He insisted to Henry Laurens, “This...was not by any
means the case,” that he had no control over the militia, that he only intended a
defense of Georgia.

Nevertheless, in September 1778, Congress voted to remove
Howe from his command and recall him to the North, giving command of the
Southern Department to Major General Benjamin Lincoln.

Within a matter of weeks of the third failed attempt to conquer Florida,
Georgians were arguing for another invasion of East Florida. Houstoun told Henry
Laurens, “our Situation at present looks gloomy. We seem to be encompassed with

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991 Many of Howe’s allies, who had opposed the expedition, wondered whether Howe’s objective of
pushing the enemy back to the St. John’s and then returning to Savannah was even worth the
investment in lives and money. Indeed, within a matter of weeks following the withdrawal of the
army and militias, Governor Patrick Tony of East Florida had ordered Brigadier General Augustine
Prevost, the military commander in Saint Augustine and the brother of James Mark Prevost, to
“establish new posts and...occupy our old ones in St Mary’s River that the province may be preserved
in its utmost extent.”
Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 29 July 1778, PHL, XIV, 88; George Walton to Henry Laurens, 3
September 1778, PHL, XIV, 262-263; Patrick Tony to George Germain, 24 July 1778, DAR, XV, 168-
169.
992 Robert Howe to Henry Laurens, 12 October 1778, Robert Howe Papers, Georgia Historical Society.
993 Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, XIV, 394n; Robert Howe to Henry Laurens, PHL,
XIV, 394-395.
Many in South Carolina continued to oppose such an idea. Rawlins Lowndes expressed his frustration that “One expedition after another seems to follow as naturally as the Succession of Seasons and to produce only, a call for another.” Others argued South Carolina’s forces should remain in the state to defend against a possible British attack on Charleston. Even Howe and his allies, however, were considering the necessity of another such expedition, if properly resourced. Joseph Clay argued, “We can expect no Security or Safety, for our inhabitants till the Floridas are reduced or a Peace takes place.” Howe made the same claim, that “the reduction of Saint Augustine, and the possession of East Florida [was] essential to the Interest of both So[uth] Carolina and Georgia, and almost to the very existence of the latter.”

Henry Laurens, who had previously taken positions both for and against an attack on Florida, now argued, “While St. Augustine remains in the possession of the Enemy Georgia will be unhappy, and her existence as a free and Independent State rendered very doubtful.” Even after it learned in October of a likely British expedition against either South Carolina or Georgia, Congress still recommended that the southern states “afford every necessary assistance to Major Gen Lincoln for...
enabling him to subdue the Province of East Florida.”

Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia could not reconcile simultaneous requests from South Carolina and Georgia for Virginia troops to defend against an impending British attack and troops and galleys for use in invading East Florida. Henry stated the obvious when he noted, “there seems some Degree of Inconsistency in marching militia such a Distance in the Depth of Winter [to East Florida while] under the Want of Necessaries to defend” South Carolina and Georgia at the same time. Before any further planning could occur, however, the rebels received a certain account of the danger to Georgia from the British expedition coming from New York. Lincoln had not yet arrived in South Carolina to assume his command, so Howe went to Georgia to oversee its preparations for the British attack.

**Conclusion**

In the period between 1776 and 1778, the new state governments in the South continued the process of consolidating control of the population, particularly of suspected Loyalists. They maintained much of the same infrastructure for policing and patrolling the cities and countryside, and issued new required oaths to

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1000 In a move that seemed only likely to increase the likelihood of conflicts of command, the Congress also resolved to give “each Major General who shall go on the intended expedition…a grant of three Thousand acres of Land; each Brigadier to a grant of two Thousand &c.” Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, 18 October 1778, PHL, XIV, 423; Henry Laurens to Richard Caswell, 14 November 1778, PHL, XIV, 486-487. Laurens himself said he was “uniformly averse from every proposition which tended to dissipate our strength and accumulate our debt,” and that he had “doubts of the policy & more of the success of the pending expedition against East Florida.” See Henry Laurens to George Washington, 20 November 1778, PHL, XIV, 516.

1001 Patrick Henry to Henry Laurens, 28 November 1778, PHL, XIV, 539-541. Virginia law allowed for sending state militia to neighboring states only to defend against an invasion or expected invasion. The defense of South Carolina and Georgia against an expected British attack would meet these requirements, while an planned offensive against East Florida would not. See Chesnutt, et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, XIV, 477n.
the state constitutions and governments that prescribed stricter penalties for violation or refusing to sign the oaths. As the rebels now had control of the government, neutrality became less tolerated, as anything short of full and active support represented a greater threat than it did in the first years of the war when their primary objective was to deny support for the royal governments. Through these continued efforts at internal control, the state governments were able to thwart most attempts by the Loyalist leadership to recruit supporters. Even the few instances where the Loyalists were able to gather, most notably in April 1778 as a large group of Loyalists marched from the South Carolina backcountry to Saint Augustine, their objective was to flee the state for the safety of East Florida, not to undermine the internal order of the southern states or overthrow the rebel governments.

For most of this period, however, the rebels were consumed with the defense of Georgia from the British regulars and Loyalist forces that were launching raids across the border from East Florida. The debate over how to do this would create divisions between states and political factions within states to an extent not previously seen. Most of the leadership in South Carolina generally opposed any attempt to conquer Saint Augustine, preferring instead to concentrate on defending their state from a British attack from the sea. Meanwhile the differences between conservatives and radicals in Georgia on this issue created political paralysis in that state that cost two Continental commanders their positions, as well as the death of one of the state’s executives. The Georgia radicals held political control for most of this period, and succeeded in lobbying Congress on the necessity of conquering
Saint Augustine. Most of Congress’s attention and resources, however, were committed to the North, the war’s primary theater at the time. The conservatives believed the southern states could not support such a campaign, which proved correct on three separate occasions. The difference of opinion between the two factions also meant a divided command climate and significant civil-military conflicts, which further hindered the expeditions.

The three Florida expeditions also yielded some lessons that might have been useful for the British to apply beginning in 1779 while operating in the same climate and on some of the same terrain. The underlying purpose of conquering Florida was to protect settlements in southern Georgia from the Florida Scout and other British and Loyalist forces. Conservatives and Continental commanders like Charles Lee, Lachlan McIntosh, and Robert Howe believed the best way to achieve this, given the resources available, was using a defensive strategy to protect those settlements. Even attempting to go into Florida, they worried, would be to overextend themselves and risk losing some of the territory they were already defending if they had to retreat from Florida in disorder. The radicals, however, focused on territorial conquest as the means to protect their settlements, and as a result quickly overextended themselves into territory they could not hold. Furthermore, during the chaotic retreats back to the safety of the Altamaha or even Savannah, they lost territory they already held. The British would operate according to the same mindset, believing that once they conquered Savannah, maintaining the offensive northward was the only way to protect states to the South. They would move quickly into South Carolina before they had consolidated control of Georgia, and into
North Carolina without first controlling South Carolina. While there was a clear preference for the offensive in the 18th century British Army, the three successive commanders of the Southern Department, including a former British officer, Charles Lee, showed that a defensive strategy was by no means inconceivable for the time.

The Florida expeditions also demonstrated the value of mounted troops over infantry for covering a vast region like the Georgia backcountry. Similarly, they showed the value of maintaining communication and coordinating efforts among various outposts. They demonstrated the critical importance of considering the risk of weather, terrain, and sickness when planning operations in the South. They showed the necessity of a well functioning civil-military relationship to coordinate operations in a conflict that was simultaneously political and violent. They warned against the certainty of easy victory and easy assumptions that local populations would openly welcome their attempts to conquer territory. All of these issues, however, would plague the British as they attempted over the next three years to pacify and reclaim the southern states.
PART THREE: 1776-1778
Chapter 10: So Little Has Been Done for the Security and Protection of Georgia

At mid-day on 12 May 1779, the South Carolina Privy Council, an advisory body for the governor, gathered in the Broad Street home of Governor John Rutledge to discuss an urgent matter. In addition to Rutledge and the Council members, also present were Continental officers Brigadier Generals William Moultrie and Casimir Pulaski, and Colonel John Laurens, the son of Henry Laurens. The matter at hand was how to respond to the British force under the command of Brigadier General Augustine Prevost, which at that moment sat at the gates of Charleston demanding the city’s surrender. A British expedition sent from New York had captured Savannah in the final days of 1778, and after an abortive march to Augusta to make contact with and organize Loyalist support in the Georgia and South Carolina backcountry was now testing the defenses of the South Carolina capital.

On the 11th, Rutledge had asked Moultrie “whether we had not best have a parly with the enemy; and whether we were able to resist their force.”1002 The ability to hold out against a British attack was of particular concern since Benjamin Lincoln, the commanding general of Continental forces in the South, had been in Augusta with the main army. He had delayed his movement while deciding whether to march against a lightly defended Savannah or move towards Charleston if it was

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1002 William Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 426.
determined Prevost did intend to attack that city.\textsuperscript{1003} Moultrie, who believed rebel forces in the city to be greater than Rutledge’s estimation, disagreed with the governor, but the Council had him send a message to Prevost asking “on what terms you would be disposed to grant a capitulation.”\textsuperscript{1004}

The arrival of a response the next morning from Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost, the younger brother of Augustine Prevost, is what had forced the unscheduled meeting of the Council at Rutledge’s house. The younger Prevost wrote that his brother wanted to avoid “the evils and horrors attending the event of a storm (which cannot fail to be successful).” He demanded unconditional surrender in return for promises that “every attention shall be paid...to prevent disorders.” He gave Moultrie four hours to respond.\textsuperscript{1005} The members of the Council leaned in favor of accepting the terms, believing, as Rutledge did, that their defenses were significantly weaker than the British force. Firm opposition from Moultrie, Pulaski, and Laurens convinced the Council to reject unconditional surrender, but they instead proposed that the state remain neutral for the rest of the war, with its final status to be determined by the ultimate outcome of the war between Britain and the United States.\textsuperscript{1006} Despite the outraged opposition of members Christopher Gadsden, Thomas Ferguson, and John Edwards, the Council voted in favor of proposing neutrality by a vote of five to three.\textsuperscript{1007}

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\bibitem{1003} David B. Mattern, \textit{Benjamin Lincoln and the American Revolution} (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 70.
\bibitem{1004} William Moultrie, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 427.
\bibitem{1006} William Moultrie to James Mark Prevost, 12 May 1779 in Moultrie, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 433.
\end{thebibliography}
Augustine Prevost ultimately refused the proposal, and the Council members could only “[look] very grave and stedfastly” on Moultrie for the next step. Gadsden and Ferguson told Moultrie privately to do what he thought was best and he would have their support. Moultrie declared, “We will fight it out,” and “ordered the flag to be waved from the gate, which was a signal agreed upon, should the conference [with the British] be at an end.” When they got no response from the British, Moultrie sent someone to investigate, and it was discovered that the British were no longer at their position. The next morning Moultrie sent Pulaski and his cavalry to locate the British forces. Pulaski “made two or three circuits at full speed,” but the British were gone. Inexplicably, it would seem, the British had retreated from Charleston “under the cover of night.”

Some historians have argued that following the British capture of Savannah in December 1778, the rebels in Georgia pursued a “policy...of nonactivity, to prevent the disaffected from becoming the opposition.” According to this argument, “Georgia's Whigs had little alternative after the arrival of British troops in 1778,” and could do nothing but “[Retreat] out of danger” and “[promulgate] a popular program to give them a basis of support, should the war be won elsewhere.” This argument, however, confuses the reality that the rebels avoided conventional battle with the British with the conclusion that they were inactive and could do little more than weakly attempt persuasion to maintain a base of support. It also assumes that

1008 Laurens was so devastated by the decision he “begged to be excused from carrying such a message” to the British lines. Two other officers also tried to refuse, but Moultrie insisted that they take the message. William Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 432-436.
British conventional victory gave them control over the inhabitants of the southern provinces. The rebels did avoid battle with the British army, which would also be their general approach after 1780 when the British invaded South Carolina. Nevertheless, they continued their strategy of controlling Loyalists to prevent the British from leveraging their support.

After the fall of Savannah, the British demonstrated a great deal of uncertainty about how to follow up on that initial success. This was in part due to the difficulties of coordinating plans across vast distances between London, New York, and Savannah, but it also demonstrated the inability of the British to identify strategic priorities and coordinate a coherent strategy among all involved parties. The officer who led the expedition against Savannah, Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, led a march from Savannah to Augusta in an effort to open communication with backcountry Loyalists. Where he established posts along the river, and where the British maintained a continued military presence, they were able to assume control of the terrain and the population enough to turn out respectable numbers of Loyalists. Nevertheless, Campbell would be the first of many British commanders to demonstrate unrealistic expectations about what it would take to organize Loyalist support. Without Loyalist support, Campbell was forced to abandon Augusta and retreat to Savannah, also abandoning Loyalists who did provide support.

Prevost’s march into South Carolina followed a similar pattern. What began as a limited operation to force Lincoln out of the Georgia backcountry and secure much-needed provisions in South Carolina turned into a poorly conceived attempt
to either force battle with Moultrie’s army or take Charleston. As with the march to Augusta, the British were repeatedly unable to force the rebels into open battle. Moreover, Prevost did not have sufficient manpower to take Charleston, but instead of organizing and developing Loyalist forces in the areas the British already controlled, Prevost marched on to Charleston.\textsuperscript{1010} This did not stop Prevost from expressing his surprise at the weak Loyalist turnout. Like many other British officers then, and historians since, Prevost argued correctly that the number of British forces was “too small to create a necessary confidence in the inhabitants to raise at once and shake off the yoke under which they are oppressed.”\textsuperscript{1011} However, while the British were often working with fewer forces in America than they would have preferred, the lack of understanding of the very nature of the rebel strategy meant the British were extremely inefficient with the troops they did have. This suggests that even with greater numbers the British would have had difficulty implementing their strategy.

The British did try to attract support from Loyalists, and even some rebels, by restoring civil government. The British believed this would, among other consequences, “conciliate the affections of the inhabitants…remove popular misapprehensions…promote the fair trade and check the improper enterprises of

\textsuperscript{1010} If anything, Prevost alienated potential supporters along the way by “ravaging the country in a barbarous manner, killing people and burning a number of houses as they go on.” William Moultrie to John Rutledge, 3 May 1779 in William Moultrie, \textit{Memoirs of the American Revolution}, I (New York: David Longworth, 1802), 397.
\textsuperscript{1011} Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 10 June 1779, The (UK) National Archives (TNA), CO 5/182.
the merchants...[and] extend the benefit of law and police as far as practicable.”

Before returning to Britain, Campbell named James Mark Prevost acting lieutenant governor of Georgia in an attempt to ensure a fluid civil-military relationship between him and his brother. By the end of March, however, the former civil officeholders under the old royal government were recalled to service, and that summer James Wright resumed his role as governor of Georgia. In a dramatic reversal from his approach to the rebels in the first years of the war, by 1779 Wright understood the rebel strategy, and the precarious position the British held in Georgia, better than most British officials. Ironically, it was Wright who argued, against the wishful thinking of Germain and others, that restoring civil government would not be able to replace military operations as the primary means of gaining Loyalist support. He insisted the security situation in the province made many aspects of civil government impossible, including holding elections for the assembly when there was a danger that many rebels would win those elections. Furthermore, it was the governor who insisted that there was a continued need for properly applied military force in the province, while the military leadership used the restoration of civil government as an excuse to remain on the offensive and avoid having to undertake the type of operations with which they were not comfortable. On several occasions when Wright requested military support, the military

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1012 Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 8 March 1779 in K.G. Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution (DAR), XVII (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1977), 81.
1013 Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 4 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell, Journal of an Expedition Against the Rebels of Georgia, 128, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
1014 Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 3 March 1779, in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; George Germain to James Wright, 31 March 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.
leadership argued there was little they could do with civil government restored in Georgia.

The British experienced a further challenge to their strategy in 1779 when the Indians failed to arrive in force to assist the British in opening up the backcountry on the march to Augusta. There had been warning signs by 1778 that they could not expect the type of support from the tribes that John Stuart, the Indian commissioner, had been promising since before the outbreak of the war. That year, far fewer Indians than were expected arrived in Florida to assist in the defense of that province during the last rebel expedition to take Saint Augustine. This was the result of a number of factors, including the deterrent effect of the rebel suppression of the Cherokee in 1776 and the continued efforts by the rebel agent George Galphin to keep the Indians neutral. The primary explanation, however, was the vastly different expectations among Stuart and his agents, and colonial officials in London and in the provinces, as to what kind of support the Indians could provide. For the vast sums expended on supplying and protecting the Indians, officials in London and the coastal capitals expected large forces of Indians to participate in coordinated attacks on the rebels near the coast. Cognizant of the immense difficulties in coordinating detailed plans over great distances, Stuart had in mind a more limited approach of raids along the frontier, even though he sometimes misled officials by promising more robust support than he knew was possible. When these different expectations made it seem Stuart had failed to do his job, officials in London lost a great deal of trust in him, audited his expenses, and accused his agents of disloyalty.
Forming the Southern Strategy

By the time of their defeat at Saratoga, and the forging of the alliance between the rebels and France, the British were questioning the efficacy of military force for pacification of the colonies. They decided to appeal instead to the political demands of the rebels, and formed a peace commission to negotiate with the Continental Congress. The Carlisle Commission, named for the Earl of Carlisle who headed the commission, was prepared to offer a form of self-rule and Parliamentary representation to the colonies, or “every privilege that is short of a total separation of interests.” The two sides could reach no agreement since Congress insisted on British recognition of independence, which the commission could not provide. Although the commission was unable to achieve its primary objective, its members did suggest to Germain that during their time in America they learned of significant “numbers of the people…inclined to prefer the proposed plan of accommodation with Great Britain to the measures now pursued by their leaders.” Furthermore, few of those who did prefer independence “are willing to purchase this independence at the expense of a continued and ruinous war.” In other words, there were a large number of sympathizers who could be counted on to support the British. Though Germain, who was perpetually optimistic about the likelihood of British success in the war, was disappointed the commission had little success, he shared their belief in the potential for Loyalist support, and even the possibility that some rebels could

1015 Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to Henry Laurens, 9 June 1778, DAR, XV, 135-137.
1016 Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 5 September 1778, DAR, XV, 195-198.
be won over by emphasizing the restoration of civil governance over the use of military force.

The idea of using Loyalists in the South to achieve British interests against the rebels dated back to efforts by the southern governors, and particularly Josiah Martin of North Carolina, to leverage Loyalist support. This effort ended in failure in March 1776 at Moore’s Creek Bridge in North Carolina, but the concept found in Germain a bigger supporter than his predecessor, the Earl of Dartmouth. Between 1776 and 1778 he received a great deal of input from both the former governors and prominent Loyalists with variations on the theme of organizing Loyalists and appealing for support through the restoration of civil government. In an August 1777 memorial, James Wright, former Georgia lieutenant governor John Graham, and former South Carolina governor and lieutenant governor William Campbell and William Bull, argued that with “a sufficient body of His Majesty’s troops” sent to the southern provinces, “a great number of the inhabitants would have thought themselves happy in having an opportunity of showing their loyalty to His Majesty and seeing government and good order restored.”

The four men argued that this should be done immediately, as “the rebels...are becoming more powerful every day.” The longer the British waited, the more likely their supporters would, “despairing of relief...be tired out and from a

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1017 According to this memorial, recovering the southern provinces would not only give the British a foothold in formerly rebellious provinces, but would also deprive the northern provinces of valuable commodities like “Rice, indigo, deerskins and tobacco,” exports which allowed for the purchase of arms, ammunition, and clothing. Memorial of Lord William Campbell and Others to Lord George Germain, August 1777, DAR, XIV, 182-184.
kind of necessity be obliged to take the oath of abjuration.”

Even the news of Saratoga and the French alliance had greatly dispirited southern Loyalists by diminishing the chance of an imminent British expedition for their relief. Wright suggested an immediate operation against the southern provinces to take advantage of differences that existed at the time between South Carolina and Georgia, whereby a contingent led by William Henry Drayton was pushing for South Carolina to annex Georgia. The four civil officers were, however, overly optimistic about the role

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1019 In November 1777, John Wells, Jr. wrote to Henry Laurens, then serving as President of Congress, that news of “the glad tidings from the North,” referring to the victory at Saratoga, had reached Charleston, and that “even the Tories seemed satisfied with the Event as it precluded the possibility of our being visited this Winter.” The following May, Laurens told George Galphin, the rebels’ Indian agent, “We hourly expect confirmatory Accounts of a Treaty between France & the United States of America,” which he believed would “operate to good effect upon the Savages of all Colours who are at this time attempting to ravage & distress us a little more in front & rear.” Laurens argued in the case of war with France, “British Troops may be wanted for defending their Islands,” and “their worthy friends the Indians will be left in an unpleasing situation.” The following month, Wells told Laurens that the news of the treaty with the French “has made some who would not conform within the time prescribed by law, regret they had not acted otherwise.” At about the same time, John Lewis Gervais told Laurens the news of the alliance would “give great Satisfaction to all (except Tories) & even some of those wished to recant.” John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 28 November 1777 in David R. Chesnutt, et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (PHL), XII (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 106-109; Henry Laurens to George Galphin, 1 May 1778, PHL, XIII, 225; John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 10 June 1778, PHL, XII, 439; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 19 June 1778, PHL, XIII, 491-492.

1020 Amidst the political chaos in Georgia in 1776 and 1777, the civil-military discord, and the failed expeditions to East Florida, there was concern among much of the leadership in South Carolina and some of the conservatives in Georgia about the state of the province. John Wereat wrote to fellow conservative George Walton in August 1777, “you will readily conceive the Situation of this State; neither is there any prospect of a change for the better.” Wereat argued, “many more talk seriously of removing to Carolina; & it’s probably that by the Conduct of those who misrule the State, we shall in a short time be joined to Carolina or Florida, God avert the latter the former would be infinitely preferable to our present Situation, when neither Liberty, or property are secure.” William Henry Drayton had proposed to the Georgia constitutional convention in January 1777 that the two states unite, but Button Gwinnett was able to get the proposal voted down. After Gwinnett’s death, Drayton circumvented the Georgia government and circulated petitions to the inhabitants of Georgia calling on them to support a union. John Adam Treutlen, the governor of Georgia, issued a proclamation accusing Drayton of “endeavouring to poison the minds of the good people of this state, against the Government thereof,” and offered a reward of £100 (Georgia currency) for Drayton’s arrest. Drayton called Treutlen’s accusations “a compound of nonsense and falsehoods.” Wright proposed that this division between the two provinces, and the general political disorder in Georgia, “seems the most favourable opportunity of reducing that province to His Majesty’s obedience.” John Wereat to George Walton, 30 August 1777 in in Lilla M. Hawes, ed., *Papers of Lachlan McIntosh, 1774-1799* (PLM), 485.
civil government would play in winning support for the British, and dismissive about the efficacy of military force. They showed some early mistaken ideas of how to leverage Loyalist support, assumptions that would characterize British operations in the South through the end of the war.\footnote{1021}

In September 1778, the former attorney general of South Carolina, James Simpson, suggested to Germain an attack on Charleston, which would cause the rest of the province to fall. The British could then provide safe haven in South Carolina for northern Loyalists, which would also allow them to overwhelm any remaining rebels in the province.\footnote{1022} In October 1778, Moses Kirkland, the former backcountry Loyalist leader, sent a proposal to Germain for a coordinated attack by Loyalists, British regulars, and Indians against Savannah. Kirkland believed that a march to take Augusta after Savannah fell would allow for “the Friends of Government...[to] flock from all parts to that Post to join his Majesty's Troops.” This march to Augusta was apparently all Kirkland believed it would take to pacify Georgia, as the focus of his plan turned quickly to South and North Carolina.\footnote{1023}

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Collections of the Georgia Historical Society (CGHS), XII, 71; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 29 July 1777, PHL, XI, 412-413; John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 7 August 1777, PHL, XI, 431-432; John Adam Treutlen Proclamation, 15 July 1777, Keith M. Read Collection, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; William Henry Drayton to John Adam Treutlen, 1 August 1777, Library of Congress; Chesnutt, et al., eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, XI, 412n-413n; James Wright to George Germain, 8 October 1777, TNA, CO 5/665.
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A number of other officials, including East Florida governor Patrick Tonyn and the peace commissioners, advocated various plans for a southern expedition, with different levels of participation for Indians and slaves.\textsuperscript{1024} A southern expedition was unlikely, however, before 1778 given the opposition of General Sir William Howe, the commander in chief of British forces in North America from 1775 until May 1778. Howe strongly opposed additional military operations of any significance in the southern colonies after the rebel victory at Sullivan’s Island in June 1776. He believed the “power and influence” of the Loyalists had been overstated, that those who did exist were unreliable, and that the South was a theater of secondary importance. The primary British objective should be to “act against the enemy’s main army,” and for this purpose they stressed the expediency of “keeping the troops collected” so as not to waste an opportunity to act against Washington.\textsuperscript{1025}

By Spring 1778, however, Howe’s recently submitted resignation had been accepted, and Germain was busy planning operations in the southern theater. Germain proposed a strategy that would rely on arming the vast numbers of

\textsuperscript{1024} Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 5 September 1778, DAR, XV, 195-198; Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 16 November 1778, TNA, CO 5/181; Archibald Campbell, \textit{Journal of an Expedition Against the Rebels of Georgia in North America}, 8 November 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to Archibald Campbell, 3 November 1778 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

\textsuperscript{1025} William Howe to George Germain, 16 January 1778, DAR, XV, 29.
inhabitants in the South who had grown tired of the distresses of living under the rebel governments and were “dispos[ed] to return to their allegiance.” The first part of the plan would involve an expedition from New York and a force from Saint Augustine under the command of Augustine Prevost coordinating an attack on Savannah, with the help of Loyalists of the Florida Scout and “a large Body of Indians” led by Stuart. Loyalists would flock to “join the King’s Troops,” which would allow for an immediate attack on the South Carolina backcountry. This, in turn, would isolate the rebels in the low country and allow for Loyalists from North Carolina to also join the army. Simultaneous expeditions against Charleston and Cape Fear in North Carolina would follow, and the entire South would fall to the British in rapid succession.1026 As was typical for British officials, this plan was wildly optimistic, particularly in its timing. The problem, however, was not that it was based on a mistaken idea of Loyalist support in the South, but that it was based on unrealistic expectations of how the British would organize and leverage Loyalist support. Additionally, as Germain would learn over the course of 1779, much to his dismay, the plan was predicated on absolute best-case scenarios for coordinating with Stuart and the Indians.1027

1026 George Germain to Henry Clinton, 8 March 1778, DAR, XV, 57-62.
1027 Furthermore, Germain foresaw numerous other simultaneous operations in North America that he believed to be of vital strategic significance. John Shy’s criticisms of Germain are reflective of those of many other historians, namely that Germain “tended to shift priorities, almost from one month’s letter to the next, even from paragraph to paragraph.” He had so many strategic priorities that were “object[s] of ‘vast’ importance, vast being one of his favorite words.” At the beginning of 1779, as he was planning the southern expedition, Germain outlined his many priorities for that year to Clinton. They included “bring[ing] Mr Washington to a general and decisive action” as soon as possible. If this could not be achieved, Clinton was to maintain a force large enough to “oblige General Washington to keep the whole of his regular troops together” and seek “safety in the Highlands of New York or the Jerseys.” This would preclude him from being able to send a relief force to other states that came under British attack. Clinton was also to assign two corps, of 4,000 troops each, to act in New England
The Fall of Savannah and March to Augusta

The expedition for Savannah left New York in November 1778 under the command of Archibald Campbell, while Prevost moved from Saint Augustine into southern Georgia. The fleet reached Tybee Island on 23 December, and on the 29th Campbell put men on shore at Girardeau’s Plantation, downriver from Savannah. With the help of one of James Wright’s slaves, Campbell was able to take a path through a swamp that formed the right flank of the rebel defensive lines. Caught in a pincer, Major General Robert Howe, who was still in command since Benjamin Lincoln had not yet arrived to relieve him, ordered a retreat, and a rout followed. The Georgia Continentals, who formed the left of the rebel line, had to either swim across a creek that blocked their retreat or surrender. A number of men drowned trying to escape.1028

Howe received widespread enmity for the conduct of his defense, for abandoning Georgia by fleeing across the Savannah with what he could find of his

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1028 Archibald Campbell Journal, 6 November 1778, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Henry Clinton to Archibald Campbell, 8-9 November 1779, in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 5 December 1778 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Archibald Campbell to Augustine Prevost, 5 December 1778 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Minutes of the Executive Council, 26 December 1778 in Allen D. Candler, ed., Revolutionary Records of Georgia (RRG), II (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 129; Robert Howe to Unknown, 30 December 1778, Robert Howe Letters, Georgia Historical Society; John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 2 January 1779, John Houstoun Letters, Georgia Historical Society; Rawlins Lowndes to Henry Laurens, 3 January 1779, PHL, XV, 21-24; John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 3 January 1779, PHL, XV, 24-27; Archibald Campbell to George Germain, 16 January 1779, DAR, XVII, 33-38; Archibald Campbell Journal, 25-29 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
force, and for even choosing to mount a defense of Savannah at all “with such a
Handful of men [against] such a Body in an open Field.” More than half of the
force present at the defense of the town was killed or captured, but since only about
850 Continentals and militia were present, the loss of manpower was not
insurmountable. Lincoln arrived shortly after the fall of Savannah, and began
organizing rebel forces at the town of Purrysburg in South Carolina, between
Charleston and the British force in Savannah. Meanwhile, in November 1778, at the
same time Campbell was sailing for Savannah, Augustine Prevost’s force from East
Florida entered Georgia, and on 10 January took the town of Sunbury. Prevost
appears to have done nothing along the way to build Loyalist support as his force
“ravag[ed], sack[ed] and burn[t] every Thing in their Way.” Even a “House of God
was reduced to Ashes.”

Campbell quickly turned “[his] Attention chiefly...to the Preparations
necessary for marching the Troops under my Command to Augusta.” He expected
upwards of 6,000 Loyalists to join the army in Augusta or along his route up the
river. Early intelligence from militia Colonel John Boyd, a South Carolinian who
came from New York with Campbell and had been recruiting Loyalists in the South

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1029 Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, 14 January 1779, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library; John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 22 January 1779, PHL, XV, 44-45.
1031 The rebels had fortified Midway Congregational Church, “A spacious, elegant Meeting House, in St. John’s Parish,” but retreated ahead of Prevost’s advance. Nevertheless, the church “was burnt to the Ground.” Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, 14 January 1779, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
1032 Archibald Campbell Journal, 8 November 1778, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
Carolina backcountry, suggested, "a large Body of Loyalists meant to join me."\(^{1033}\)

Within days of the fall of Savannah, Campbell's force left the town for Augusta.\(^{1034}\)

He established posts along the river at Cherokee Hill, Abercorn, and Zubly’s Ferry, and continued to the settlement of Ebenezer, 25 miles from Savannah.\(^{1035}\) Along the way, Campbell posted a proclamation “on the Church Door [in Ebenezer], and against every Cross Road between Savannah and Ebenezer.” It told the inhabitants of the British presence in Savannah, and, “to ...[the] well disposed Inhabitants,” offered “the most ample protection, in their Persons, Families and Effects; on Condition that they shall immediately return to the Class of peaceable Citizens, acknowledge their first Allegiance to the Crown, and with their Arms support it.” All those who continued to resist “shall be answerable for all the Miseries which may ensue.”\(^{1036}\)

Campbell established a post at Ebenezer, the Two Sisters Ferry, Tuccassee-King, and Hudson’s Ferry, and “improved the Defences” at the plantation of former rebel governor John Adam Treutlen. This defensive chain secured the river and allowed the British to move provisions by boat from Savannah to Ebenezer,

\(^{1033}\) Archibald Campbell Journal, 9 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia. Some sources provide Boyd’s first name as James instead of John.

\(^{1034}\) The march started out inauspiciously when Campbell learned, with “great concern,” that “there was not a Chart of Georgia in the Possession of any Officer in the Army nor any Information of the Roads, Swamps or Creeks.” Nor did Clinton have any such map in New York. Campbell knew this would make it more difficult to open communication with the backcountry, and concluded “the only Resource therefore left me, was such Information as I could procure from the People of the Country.”\(^{1034}\) This would make it both more important and more difficult to procure Loyalist support. Archibald Campbell Journal, 31 December 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

\(^{1035}\) Archibald Campbell Journal, 1 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; John Wilson, Encounters on a March Through Georgia in 1779: The Maps and Memorandums of John Wilson, Robert Scott Davis, Jr., ed. (Sylvania, GA: The Partridge Pond Press, 1986), 19. Campbell claimed the owner of the Abercorn plantation had been “compelled to take up Arms in Opposition to the King’s Troops in their Progress to Savannah, by which he lost his life.”

\(^{1036}\) Proclamation Issued by Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell and Admiral Hyde Parker in Archibald Campbell Journal, 3 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
and also allowed Campbell to proceed to Augusta knowing his rear was secure, as “there is not a single movement the enemy can attempt but what must be early discovered.”\textsuperscript{1037}

Campbell soon realized that Georgia was not yet pacified. Five days after issuing his first proclamation, Campbell had to issue a second based on “Information...that many Ringleaders of Sedition, and some skulking Parties from the Rebels of Carolina, still continue to infest this Province.” Campbell instructed inhabitants to “guard themselves against the Dangers of such wicked and destructive Enemies,” and “make diligent Search after all such notorious Offenders, that their lurking Places...may be instantly made known.” He did not, however, delay his march to instead assist the Loyalists in these measures or otherwise organize Loyalist support in the area. He offered monetary rewards for “each Rebel Committee or Assembly Man, brought into any of the Military Posts” as well as “every Rebel who is found lurking about the Country.”\textsuperscript{1038} Campbell tried to put a positive spin on the situation to Germain, claiming that he had issued the proclamation merely to “establish the public security and check every attempt to disturb the peace of individuals.” He told Germain that fifty miles into his march from Savannah there had not been “a single rebel to oppose them,” and that he had “in the space of ten days settled the frontiers of Georgia in a state of tranquility.”\textsuperscript{1039}

\textsuperscript{1037} Archibald Campbell Journal, 4 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; Wilson, \textit{Encounters}, Davis, ed., 23-27; Archibald Campbell to George Germain, 16 January 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
\textsuperscript{1038} Proclamation Issued by Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell in Archibald Campbell Journal, 8 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{1039} Archibald Campbell to George Germain, 16 January 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
These boasts ignored the reality that the rebels were not at the time trying to oppose Campbell’s regular army. Campbell’s early reports that the rebels were fleeing in front of his advance eventually turned to frustration with his inability to bring the rebels to open battle. Charles Pinckney, the president of the South Carolina Senate and member of the Privy Council, described this element of the rebels’ strategy of avoiding open battle with the British regulars. He told William Moultrie that the rebels should “For God’s sake...carry on the Fabian war as much as possible.” At the end of January Campbell learned that several rebel armies of Continentals and militia had met, and “taken Post at Boggy Gut to dispute our Progress” to Augusta. The next day the British marched for Boggy Gut “in great hopes of meeting with the Enemy, but nothing was seen excepting the Traces of their Fires.” When Campbell learned the rebels had fallen back to the north side of Macbean’s Creek, “a deep swampy Ravine, over which the Army must pass on its Way to Augusta,” he marched the army “to the edge of the Creek,” and remained there for some time “without discovering any other Sign of the Enemy, than a little Smoke.” The British fired their guns “against the most suspicious Part of the Swamp,

1040 Charles Pinckney to William Moultrie, 22 January 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 278. A Fabian strategy takes its name from Quintus Fabius Maximus, Roman dictator and general during the Second Punic War who avoided large battles with Hannibal’s Carthaginian army, leading the enemy to exhaust itself through a war of attrition. Not everyone was as supportive of a Fabian Policy. Although Moultrie adopted it in his retreat to Charleston, he told Pinckney, “The Fabian maxim does not agree altogether with American dispositions and undisciplined troops; they soon grow tired and desert.” Pinckney’s cousin, Major Thomas Pinckney, wrote during Campbell’s retreat from Augusta, “I am inclined to believe we shall not have our Coats tarnished with smook this Campaign but shall continue what we have hitherto been, mere Parade Soldiers.” William Moultrie to Charles Pinckney, 6 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 365; Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Pinckney Horry, 22 February 1779 in Jack L. Cross, ed., “Letters of Thomas Pinckney, 1775-1780” in The South Carolina Historical Magazine 58 (October 1957): 227-228.
without dislodging any of the Rebels.”

It was a constant “difficulty [for the British] to get up with” the rebel army.

The rebels recognized the low likelihood of striking a decisive blow against the British army and instead targeted Loyalists in Georgia and South Carolina to prevent them from joining the British. Rebel militia north of the British advance crossed back and forth across the Savannah River to both join the militia under Brigadier General Andrew Williamson and to act within Georgia. On 14 January, several hundred militia remaining in the state met under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel James Ingram at the jail in Burke County, south of Augusta on the Savannah River, to counter Campbell’s proclamations. They issued their own proclamation “giving the disaffected three Days time to come in,” sign an oath of allegiance, and take up arms against the British. They identified a number of suspected inhabitants to arrest or have their estates seized as a means of preventing them from aiding the British. They made it clear that the inhabitants had “no way of returning to the Class of peaceful Citizens but by driving from the Continent every external enemy,” or be treated “as enemies in every sense of the word.” Ingram reported, “the Burk people flock to the [rebel] Standard very fast, and that he had

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1041 Archibald Campbell Journal, 28-30 January 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
1042 Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 4 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, 3 March 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
1043 Supreme Executive Council to the Governor and Council of South Carolina, 18 August 1779 in Candler, ed., Minutes of the Executive Council, RRG, II, 163.
1044 James Ingram, Proceedings of a Council of War Held at Burke Jail, Paul Leicester, ed. (Brooklyn, Historical Printing Club, 1890), 14.
1045 Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Counties of Burke and Effingham, 14 January 1779 in Ingram, Proceedings, Leicester, ed., 16-18.
both officers and spies “scouring the Country” to prevent additional inhabitants from joining the British.\textsuperscript{1046}

The British reached Augusta on the evening of 31 January, and Campbell immediately focused on strengthening the post from the growing rebel army across the river. He saw an opportunity to divide the rebel force by attacking the rear of part of the army, cutting it off from the rest, but had no way of crossing the river, as the rebels had taken all the boats in the area to the other side of the river. From Augusta Campbell sent small mounted parties further up the river and into the Georgia and South Carolina backcountry to force the surrender of remaining forts and watch for the approach of Boyd with the Loyalists he had raised. Most of the British force, however, remained at Augusta, improving defenses and building flat boats that would allow them to cross the river. The rebels recognized that these small parties could raise Loyalist and Indian forces, and decided to move up the river as well, and “by our movements...stop that communication” between the British and the Loyalists.”\textsuperscript{1047} Given the small size of the British detachments, Moultrie argued the rebels had “a superior army, and the whole country open to us,” and expressed his confidence that the rebels would be able to prevent the British from raising Loyalist support, particularly in South Carolina where Boyd was recruiting.\textsuperscript{1048}

\textsuperscript{1048} William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 9 February 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society.
The rebels were effective, and Campbell would later express surprise that “from every Intelligence, there was scarcely a hope of our being now joined at Augusta with the Loyalists from the back Country.”\textsuperscript{1049} Approximately 1,400 men in and around Augusta “swore allegiance to the King, [and] took the benefit of His Majesty’s gracious protection,” but Campbell did not make much of an effort to organize these Loyalists to provide any support.\textsuperscript{1050} Prevost later reported to Clinton that while many backcountry inhabitants were “loyal in their inclinations,” the rebels successfully controlled “possession of all the passes so as to prevent in a great measure every chance of communicating with the King’s troops.” They also maintained “considerable bodies in different parts of the country purposely watching [the] motions” of the Loyalists. Though Boyd had collected about 700 Loyalists, he and Campbell were unable to communicate with each other. Prevost blamed Boyd for “never sen[ding] but one messenger” who was “intercepted or at least not heard of,” but Campbell made no real effort to communicate with Boyd either.\textsuperscript{1051}

Campbell instead focused on crossing the river, attacking the rebel army in South Carolina, and moving into the South Carolina backcountry, even as the Georgia backcountry was still in upheaval. In an effort to create a diversion that would force at least part of the rebel army back to the coast, Prevost ordered an attack by sea on Port Royal in South Carolina, and while Moultrie did return to the

\textsuperscript{1049} Archibald Campbell Journal, 12 February 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{1050} Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 4 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{1051} Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 1 March 1779, DAR, XVII, 68-70.
low country, the British attack “met with a severe Repulse.” At about the same time, “a great Body of Rebels” from North Carolina under the command of General John Ashe reached the rebel army across from Augusta, further exacerbating Campbell’s precarious position.\textsuperscript{1052} By 10 February, the British had built four flat boats, which would have allowed them to cross the river and attack, but the addition of Ashe’s militia forces led Campbell and his officers to conclude that an attack would be “rather hazardous in our present Situation,” given the long and vulnerable lines of communication with Savannah.\textsuperscript{1053} Prevost later noted to Germain that, “without such rising [of backcountry Loyalists] both hearty and powerful it would be very difficult...to supply so distant a post.”\textsuperscript{1054} On the 13\textsuperscript{th} Campbell gave the order for a retreat down the river towards Savannah, and the following day the army abandoned Augusta for the return march.

As Campbell was making plans to abandon Augusta, Boyd was above Augusta moving down-river with his Loyalists to meet Campbell. When Campbell decided to abandon Augusta to return to Savannah, he did not make further attempts to relay this information to Boyd. On the same day Campbell left Augusta, rebel militia under the command of Colonel Andrew Pickens surprised Boyd at Kettle Creek, north of Augusta in Georgia, killing Boyd and sending the Loyalist militia fleeing in disarray. These Loyalists searched desperately for Campbell’s army, and “were under every

\textsuperscript{1052} Archibald Campbell Journal, 8 February 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{1053} The decision not to attack was reaffirmed on 11 February when four slaves from the South Carolina side escaped from their masters across the river at the spot Campbell had planned to attack. Campbell later cursed “the Infamy of these Deserters,” since “[the Enemy] became awake and perfectly watchful.” Archibald Campbell Journal, 10-11 February 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{1054} Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 5 March 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
experience of want and apprehension.” A detachment Campbell sent to gather as many of them as possible succeeded in retrieving part of Boyd’s militia, though only with “uncommon Difficulties.” Campbell’s retreat from Augusta therefore dealt the British a strategic blow in their efforts to organize Loyalist support, as those backcountry inhabitants who had joined the British now found themselves abandoned, again at the mercy of the rebels, and reluctant to publicly support the British again in the future.

Ashe’s army followed Campbell’s force down the river, but was forced to halt at Brier Creek, about halfway between Augusta and Savannah, when the British burned the bridge over the creek behind them. Lincoln called a council of war at Black Swamp, the main rebel camp on the South Carolina side of the river, where the rebels made plans for an attack against the British position at Ebenezer. Before this plan could be set in motion, however, a British force under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost successfully flanked Ashe’s militia, surprising and routing the rebels on 3 March. While exact casualty figures for the rebels are unknown, best estimates suggest that out of the 1,100-man force, about 150 men died and more than 200 were taken prisoner, including Colonel Samuel Elbert. The situation, however, soon appeared less dire for the rebels than initially believed. Though both Moultrie and Major Thomas Pinckney of the South Carolina Continentals observed that the defeat had “deferr’d the Conclusion of the Campaign for some Time,” Pinckney also noted that the members of Ashe’s force

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1055 Archibald Campbell Journal, 16-18 February 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
that escaped, reinforced by North Carolina militia under Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford, still amounted to “at least 1200 Men,” creating a sufficient force that allowed them to “not…be at all apprehensive for our Safety.”\footnote{Thomas Pinckney to Harriott Pinckney Horry, 7 March 1779 in Cross, ed., “Letters of Thomas Pinckney,” 230-231; William Moultrie, \textit{Memoirs}, I, 326.} Prevost himself told Germain the battle had little effect, and that “even after so decisive a blow on that part of the rebel arms, the frontiers, the most plentiful and populous part of the province, were still occupied by them.”\footnote{James Mark Prevost to George Germain, 14 April 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.}

Prevost also told Germain that the continued actions of the rebels in Georgia and South Carolina made the Loyalists “apprehensive of joining us heartily and led many of them to turn to zealous supporters of the rebel cause.”\footnote{Ibid. Efforts to raise a Provincial Corps of Loyalists in Georgia had failed. Archibald Campbell to Augustine Prevost, 2 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.} The rebel Executive Council in Georgia was forced to leave Augusta as Campbell approached. Nevertheless, it resolved on 9 January, the day after Campbell issued his second proclamation, that “particular notice” would be taken of “all those persons that have moved their property and do not return to defend this State in her present distress…in order that they may be dealt with, at a future day according to their merit.”\footnote{Minutes of the Executive Council, 9 January 1779 in Candler, ed., RRG, II, 130.} In South Carolina, the General Assembly passed “An Act to Prevent Persons Withdrawing from the Defense of the State to Join Its Enemies,” which allowed for penalties of death and confiscation of property for any persons who
joined the British.\textsuperscript{1062} In March and April 1779, South Carolina held a trial of 150 Loyalists at Ninety Six, after which half the prisoners were released. Of the 72 found guilty, 22 were sentenced to death. Only five of the 150 were actually hanged, however, and the other 17 who had been sentenced to death were taken to Orangeburgh, where they were held to keep them isolated from the population and away from British lines.\textsuperscript{1063}


\textsuperscript{1063} Some historians have used the rebels’ actions, including the Loyalist trials at Ninety Six and the five subsequent executions, as evidence of a single-minded effort by the rebels to govern with cruelty and destroy Loyalists. Jim Piech argues, “Captured Loyalists suffered particularly harsh treatment,” and “Whig officials in South Carolina, believing that harsh punishment would be most effective in frightening the state’s Loyalists into quiescence, treated those who had joined the British with extreme cruelty.” This included imprisonment and confinement in “an extremely overcrowded blockhouse” in Orangeburgh. This argument follows British claims that Loyalists captured attempting to join the British should have been treated as prisoners of war, and, as Augustine Prevost claimed, the rebels treated Loyalists in a manner “so severe and awful in execution, with such a spirit of faction and barbarity.” In response to James Mark Prevost's insistence that the Loyalists be treated as prisoners of war, Andrew Williamson pointedly noted that they were inhabitants of the state of South Carolina, and therefore subject to its civil law. He also noted that many of the Loyalists had “been more than once pardoned after condemnation,” and that “the lenity of our executive authority, and the interposition of some humane persons in behalf of these villains, has even by themselves been ridiculed.” The rebels did indeed often make a concerted effort to pardon Loyalists, as they knew excessive cruelty and violence could be counterproductive to their strategy of control. Many of the Loyalists had received reprieves because they “had been seduced and terrified into this fatal step” by Colonel Boyd, or had joined the British because of “want of proper Information of the Nature of our Contest with Great-Britain.” In early 1780, the South Carolina General Assembly also heard petitions from a number of “unhappy wives” of men who had not obeyed a series of proclamations issued by John Rutledge the previous year to return from the British lines and once again swear their allegiance to the state government. The families of those men claimed “great difficulty support[ing] their families” and asked that their property not be confiscated or they would be “immediately ruined.” The Assembly decided to suspend the Act, and its prescribed punishments, as it pertained to the 51 families who had submitted the petition. Robert Scott Davis, Jr., “The Loyalist Trials at Ninety Six in 1779,” \textit{The South Carolina Historical Magazine} 80 (April 1979): 175-176; Robert Stansbury Lambert, \textit{South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution} (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 83-84; Piechuc, \textit{Three Peoples, One King}, 141-142; Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 10 June 1779, TNA, CO 5/182; James Mark Prevost to Andrew Williamson, 6 April 1779 in J. Almon, ed., \textit{The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events for the Year 1779} (London, 1779), 173-174; Andrew Williamson to James Mark Prevost, \textit{The Remembrancer}, 174-176; \textit{The Gazette of the State of South Carolina}, 14 April 1779.
After Augusta

At the end of Campbell’s march to Augusta and subsequent retreat, both sides were largely in possession of the same territory as at the beginning of the year after the fall of Savannah. The rebels of South Carolina and Georgia were unable to convince Congress to send support, including additional troops and frigates to act against the British along the coast and in the Savannah River. With the British back in the environs of Savannah, therefore, the rebels emphasized continued action in the backcountry to “prevent intercourse between the enemy and the inhabitants” of both Georgia and South Carolina. In early April, James Mark Prevost “sent a proposal to Gen. Williamson, to suffer a particular part of the inhabitants to remain at home unmolested by either side.” With the British having made no military gains to induce the rebels to accept this offer, the political leaders of South Carolina and Georgia dismissed it out of hand. South Carolina governor John Rutledge called it “too absurd, and ridiculous to require a moments consideration,” and told Williamson to continue his efforts to prevent communication between the British and the inhabitants of the two states.

Campbell relinquished his command to attend to personal business in Britain, but not before painting a favorable picture of his time in command for Clinton and Germain. He argued the march to Augusta had been successful because he returned with provisions and ammunition, had not lost “more than One British Soldier,” and

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1065 John Rutledge to Andrew Williamson, 5 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 371-372.
had outposts along a portion of the Savannah River. Writing the day after the British victory at Brier Creek, Campbell claimed they had the rebels in a position where “a single de Route on their Part, will terminate the Campaign.” This prediction proved to be incorrect, and ignored the strategic importance of organizing Loyalist support in favor of the more familiar and comfortable objective of forcing the rebel army to give battle. Campbell did, however, write to Augustine Prevost on his “Ideas concerning the Security of the Province,” and perhaps from some degree of awareness of the unsuccessful nature of his move into the interior of Georgia, he now suggested “it would be imprudent...to follow other Views than those of securing the Conquest already made.” He recommended securing Savannah, the posts along the Savannah River that the British still held, and Sunbury, instead of risking that territory, and the access it provided to the local population, by again overextending themselves.

Despite a lack of success in pacifying Georgia, the British continued to plan for operations in South Carolina. Augustine Prevost suggested to Clinton that the solution for pacifying Georgia might be to take Charleston. He argued, “by entering the heart of the province [the army] would reduce the enemy to the most dangerous situation and must crush them inevitably.”

James Mark Prevost wrote to Germain about “the importance of effecting the conquest of the southern provinces,” and the ease with which it could be done, despite noting that the victory at Brier

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1067 Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 4 March 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
1068 Archibald Campbell to Augustine Prevost, 2 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
1069 Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 1 March 1779, DAR, XVII, 68-70.
Creek had no noticeable effect on the numbers of Loyalists willing to openly support the British.\textsuperscript{1070} By this time Germain had also received “an account of Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell’s rapid success in Georgia,” meaning the fall of Savannah and the unopposed march to Augusta, and concluded that it must have resulted in Campbell being “joined by very considerable Numbers [of Loyalists] upon your Arrival at Augusta.”\textsuperscript{1071} Still unaware of Campbell’s lack of success in recruiting Loyalist support, but always optimistic about the chances for overwhelming success, Germain suggested to Clinton that “the most sanguine hopes are entertained that [Campbell] will find means of extending his operations into the Carolinas.”\textsuperscript{1072} Germain also declared confidently to Augustine Prevost that, “the rebels were at once deprived of all footing in the province” and that as a result Loyalists in South Carolina must be “flock[ing] to the King’s standard.”\textsuperscript{1073}

Henry Clinton was perhaps the most cautious of the leading British military and political officials in reacting to news of the campaign in Georgia and the wisdom of pushing ahead to South Carolina prematurely. In April, Clinton conceded that the success in taking Savannah meant they could probably also take Charleston, but he questioned for the moment what could be accomplished beyond that. He made the initial error of conflating the absence of active Loyalist support with the absence altogether of Loyalist sentiment, when he pushed back against an immediate invasion of South Carolina. He told Germain he had “as yet received no assurances of

\textsuperscript{1070} James Mark Prevost to George Germain, 14 April 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
\textsuperscript{1071} George Germain to Archibald Campbell, 13 March 1778, TNA, CO 5/182.
\textsuperscript{1072} George Germain to Henry Clinton, 3 March 1775, DAR, XVII, 70.
\textsuperscript{1073} George Germain to Augustine Prevost, 13 March 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
any favourable temper in the province of South Carolina to encourage me in an undertaking where we must expect much difficulty." He got closer to the real problem later in this letter when he noted invading South Carolina “might induce a number of persons to declare for us whom we might afterwards be obliged to abandon,” which would make it difficult to gain Loyalist support in the future. Clinton also made it clear that they would likely have to withdraw a number of troops from the South, since he continued to see the North as the more important theater, and the destruction of Washington’s army as the greatest strategic priority.1074

The British therefore faced a curious dilemma whereby the political and military officials who believed strongly in the importance of the southern strategy did not understand the intricacies of effectively building, organizing, and holding Loyalist support. The commander who was least certain of the strategic importance of the war in the South, however, at times displayed a better understanding of the political-military requirements of the strategy. This led to some tension between Clinton, and Prevost and Germain, with Prevost telling Germain, “many inconveniences arise from the dependence of this [southern] army on the commander-in-chief in America.” He asked that “supplies of every kind be sent immediately from England or Ireland,” thereby circumventing Clinton.1075 It also

1074 Henry Clinton to George Germain, 4 April 1779, DAR, XVII, 96-97.
1075 Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 4 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
created conflict between Clinton and Germain over expectations for operations in the northern and southern theaters.\textsuperscript{1076}

Meanwhile, Germain’s belief in Campbell’s success prompted him to order the former civil officers of Georgia, including James Wright, to return to the province.\textsuperscript{1077} This push to restore civil government as a means of conciliating the inhabitants of Georgia originated from the observation that “insufficient means [had] hitherto [been] used towards engaging, employing, and retaining the well-disposed and reclaimed inhabitants.” From this starting point, the British operated under the assumption that the inhabitants of Georgia, South Carolina, and other provinces had full control over which side they supported, and weighed which offered them the most appealing incentives. According to this line of reasoning, what the inhabitants wanted most of all was a restoration of commerce, and for that purpose, “in a rebellion...[civil government] may often prove of more avail than any possible exertions of military or naval force.”\textsuperscript{1078} Germain believed the example set

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1076} Clinton pushed back against Germain’s recommendations on more than one occasion, noting Germain’s tendency of providing great detail his vision for a campaign in letters that he he ended by noting that none of what he had written was a positive order and that Clinton should do whatever is best given local circumstances. Clinton argued that by framing his orders as merely recommendations, Germain “secure[s] the right of blaming me if I should adopt other measures and fail, and should I follow that system with success I appear to have no merit but the bare execution.” After explaining his difficulty in sparing troops at a time when he was “threatened by Washington in great force and the French fleet,” he told Germain, “For God’s sake, my lord, if you wish that I should do anything, leave me to myself and let me adapt my efforts to the hourly change of circumstances.” Otherwise, Germain should “tie me down to a certain point and take the risk of my want of success.” Henry Clinton to George Germain, 22 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 129-130.

\textsuperscript{1077} George Germain to Archibald Campbell, 18 May 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

\textsuperscript{1078} Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 8 March 1779, DAR, XVII, 79-83.
\end{footnotesize}
in Georgia would resonate in South Carolina, and “induce [inhabitants] to invite instead of opposing the introduction of the King’s troops when they arrive.”

These were all laudable and necessary goals for the eventual restoration of British political authority in Georgia, and Campbell was correct that they would be useful in “suppressing that System of Depredation and Licentiousness, which has increased to a Degree, dangerous to the Safety and Permanent Tranquility of the Province.”

The problem, however, was this did not account for the rebel strategy of control. While the British were trying to put forth the best case in appealing for the people’s support, the rebels had already settled the issue by forcibly controlling their movements and actions. Wright would recognize this reality shortly after his arrival, but in the meantime the British sought to make their case to a people that often did not have a choice. Furthermore, in arguing against the efficacy of military force in building support, the British were dismissing the one means they had for breaking that rebel control and giving the people a choice. The reason military force had been unsuccessful was not because it was incompatible with their objective of building a base of support, but because they used it for the unrelated, and elusive objective of defeating the main rebel army rather than isolating the rebels from the rest of the population.

To the Gates of Charleston

On 19 April 1779 Benjamin Lincoln met with his officers in a Council of War, where it was decided that, with Campbell having returned to Britain and Augustine

1079 George Germain to Henry Clinton, 25 June 1779, DAR, XVII, 149-150.
1080 Archibald Campbell to James Mark Prevost, 4 March 1779 in Archibald Campbell Journal, 3 March 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
Prevost remaining in Savannah, Lincoln should move his army to Augusta to
“prevent, if possible, the enemy receiving supplies from the back part of the country,
circumscribe their limits, prevent their junction with the unfriendly, and savages in
Georgia, and in the back part of the state.”

Lincoln marched for Augusta with 2,000 men on the 20th, leaving Moultrie with about 1,200 troops at Purrysburg and
nearby Black Swamp to defend the route to Charleston. On the 25th, the rebels
learned that the main enemy force had advanced to Ebenezer and was preparing to
cross the Savannah River, though it was still “uncertain which way they intend[ed]”
to move. The rebels abandoned Purrysburg, which soon thereafter fell to the
British.

By the 30th the rebels had determined with some certainty that the British
were headed for Charleston. Prevost intended to lure Lincoln back from Augusta
to keep him from blocking British communications with the backcountry. He also
intended to address the weakness of the British position at Savannah, where they
faced a “scarcity of every article of provisions in a country so much exhausted on all
sides.”

Moultrie led a phased retreat from the Savannah River to Charleston,
hoping to avoid open battle and let Prevost overextend himself, as Campbell had
done on his march to Augusta. Moultrie fell back to the Coosowhatchie River, where
he asked John Rutledge for reinforcements from the militia he was collecting in

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1081 Minutes from a Council of General Officers, 19 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 374-375.
1082 William Moultrie to Daniel Horry, 25 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 380-381; William
Moultrie to Stephen Bull, 29 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 387-388; William Moultrie to
Benjamin Lincoln, 29 April 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society.
1083 William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 30 April 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3,
Massachusetts Historical Society.
1084 Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 21 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 127-129.
Orangeburgh. He asked Lincoln to return to join him in defense of South Carolina, but for the time Lincoln was unconvinced that Prevost actually intended to “attempt Charlestown with the few troops they have thrown over the Savannah.”

From the Coosowhatchie, Moultrie fell back to the Tullifinny River, and, on 5 May, to the Ashepoo River, as his rearguard skirmished occasionally with the British advance. The rebels “[put] every impediment in the way” of the advancing British troops, including burning bridges and “falling…trees across the roads.” As Prevost advanced, he set his sights entirely on Moultrie’s army and Charleston, doing nothing to organize Loyalist support. Moultrie again requested reinforcements from Lincoln and Rutledge, but other than a letter from Lincoln telling him he would send some Continentals to reinforce him, he heard nothing for several days. In the meantime, he continued his retreat from Ashepoo, reaching Jacksonboro on the 6 May, and Charleston on the 8th. Prevost, meanwhile, left the

1085 Lincoln’s contemporaries and historians both criticized him for this delay in responding to Prevost’s march, and that “By hesitating, he wasted valuable time that would have allowed him and Moultrie to trap Prevost between them.” Even in his skepticism that the British intended to take Charleston, however, Lincoln held a Council of Officers on 2 May, immediately after receiving Moultrie’s request, at which it was decided to send three hundred continental troops to Moultrie and request that Rutledge send reinforcements from the militia at Orangeburgh. At the same time, however, Moultrie wrote Lincoln expressing temporary uncertainty of the enemy’s direction, suggesting the British army was actually en route up the river to look for Lincoln. Only two days later did he learn from Moultrie that the British were indeed headed towards Charleston, and Moultrie again asked Lincoln for reinforcements. There was also some skepticism among government officials in Charleston whether Prevost was a threat to the city. Rebels in Charleston had long believed that the greatest danger to the city would be a British attack by sea rather than land, an argument Lieutenant Governor Thomas Bee now reiterated to Moultrie. Bee was therefore reluctant to send men to Moultrie “unless in the last extremity.” Mattern, Benjamin Lincoln and the American Revolution, 70; Minutes of a Council of General Officers, 2 May 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society; William Moultrie to John Rutledge, 30 April 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 390-391; William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 1 May 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 391; William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 2 May 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society; William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 4 May 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 405; William Moultrie to Benjamin Lincoln, 5 May 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society; Thomas Bee to William Moultrie, 2 May 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 417.

1086 Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 21 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 127-129.

1087 William Moultrie to Charles Pinckney, 5 May 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 405-406.
route of the rebels’ retreat and crossed the Edisto and Ashley Rivers to approach Charleston from the north. The standoff of 11 and 12 May followed, during which the Privy Council proposed neutrality and James Mark Prevost and Moultrie exchanged messages regarding Charleston’s surrender. When the British intercepted a letter from Lincoln addressed to Moultrie informing the latter that he was en route with reinforcements, Augustine Prevost made the decision to retreat.

Historians have suggested that Prevost retreated because his attempt on Charleston was only a bluff, while others cite “some unexplained reason” for Prevost’s rejection of the offer of neutrality and subsequent retreat.\footnote{1088} Prevost himself, however, made clear that he had expected to be reinforced by a great number of Loyalists, which would have allowed him to hold the city once it fell. He expressed his surprise that despite the “unmolested progress of His Majesty’s troops to the gates of Charleston,” and the earlier victory at Brier Creek, “very few and those of little influence joined the King’s standard.”\footnote{1089} As a result, he told Clinton that while he believed he could have taken Charleston, it would have resulted in enough loss of men to “reduce the troops to remain on the defensive in Charleston and perhaps be attended with every disadvantageous circumstance for want of provisions, ammunition &c.” Furthermore, “owing to the rapidity of our movements” in South Carolina, the British were still “very ill provided” with necessary provisions.\footnote{1090} The false confidence in his progress created by Moultrie’s retreat

\footnote{1088} Wilson, \textit{The Southern Strategy}, 111; Mattern, \textit{Benjamin Lincoln and the American Revolution}, 71. 
\footnote{1089} Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 10 June 1779, TNA, CO 5/182. 
\footnote{1090} Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 21 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 127-129.
distracted Prevost from one of his reasons for the march, and lured him deep into South Carolina with false promises of conquest.

Oliver Hart, the Baptist preacher who in 1775 had served with William Henry Drayton and William Tennent to break Loyalists’ hold on the South Carolina backcountry, observed to his brother Joseph how little Prevost had achieved, and how much he had risked with his march to Charleston. According to Hart, “The rapid Maneuvre of the Enemy...will probably enrich individuals of their Party, but can be of no real Service to the King, or Cause of Britain; for it will in no Sence strengthen Government, or tend to the Subjugation of America.” Hart also noted that Prevost risked support in Britain by chasing elusive objectives while ignoring implementation of the intended strategy. Hart argued, “It can hardly be supposed that the People of England will tamely consent to support such a Banditti of Robbers, at the Expense of so much Blood and Treasure.”

The British march to Charleston also allowed the Georgia rebels time to reestablish a semblance of political authority. The assembly elected in December 1778 had not yet chosen a governor or elected an Executive Council by the time Savannah fell to the British. In January, as many members as could be convened met in Augusta and chose an Executive Council under the leadership of William Glascock. This Council fled Augusta ahead of Campbell’s march, and returned in February after he had abandoned the city, but only met sporadically after that time. In early July, delegates of what remained of the Assembly, claiming to represent eight

1091 Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, 18 July 1779, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
counties, voted to “[put] authority over the state into the hands of a supreme council as a temporary form of government.” The Supreme Executive Council, with John Wereat acting as president and governor of the state, was given authority to act until January 1780. It was to be “conducive to the welfare, happiness, and security of the rights and privileges of the good people of the said State, and the maintenance and existence of legal and effective authority in the same.”

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1093 Supreme Executive Council to President of the Continental Congress and Benjamin Lincoln, 10 July 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 141.
1094 The membership of this Council consisted of many moderates and conservatives, including Wereat, Joseph Habersham, Joseph Clay, Seth John Cuthbert, William Few, and John Dooly. The members had experience in the revolutionary government and militia dating back to the formation of the Council of Safety in 1775, and were experienced in maintaining centralized authority and control over the inhabitants of the state. The radicals, who had dominated Georgia politics for most of the war, nevertheless protested its legitimacy. There was no provision for such a Council in the Georgia constitution, and as a result it did not receive recognition from the Continental Congress. The Supreme Executive Council nevertheless held de facto legitimacy as the sole rebel political authority in Georgia for much of 1779, and they sought to reinforce this legitimacy by agreeing to serve without pay and circulating petitions through the backcountry for the inhabitants to sign to demonstrate their support for the board. Despite the lack of Congressional recognition, George Lamplugh also notes several of the new Council members had ties with Congress and Continental officials. Joseph Clay, John Wereat, and Joseph Habersham were all friendly with Lachlan McIntosh, and Clay had a Congressional commission as Deputy Paymaster General of the Continental Army in Georgia. According to Lamplugh, these members were likely chosen at least in part “to allay fears in Congress of a repetition of the disputes that had marred earlier efforts at cooperation between State and Continental officials.” Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, 6 August, 16 August, 26 August 1779 in Candler, ed., RRG, II, 146, 154, 170; George Lamplugh, “‘To Check and Discourage the Wicked and Designing’: John Wereat and the Revolution in Georgia,” The Georgia Historical Quarterly 61 (Winter 1977): 299.
1095 Supreme Executive Council to President of the Continental Congress and Benjamin Lincoln, 10 July 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 141. In late November, George Walton, formerly a conservative, allied himself with the radicals and called for elections for a new assembly. At the same time, John Wereat called for elections to be held the first Tuesday in December, with the Assembly to meet in January when the mandate of the Supreme Executive Council was set to expire. The Assembly returned in Walton’s election only met for a few days, with William Glascock as speaker, and the Executive Council chosen from the Assembly met for only a few weeks beyond that. The most notable action of the radicals in this competing Executive Council was to again recommend that their old nemesis Lachlan McIntosh, a former friend and political ally of Walton’s who returned to Georgia earlier that summer, be sent back to the northern theater. The recommendation from the Executive Council to Congress regarding McIntosh, was signed by Glascock as speaker of Walton’s assembly, though Glascock insisted he had never seen the petition and his signature was forged. Glascock was highly critical of Walton’s Executive Council and Assembly, the latter of which Glascock himself chaired. He claimed “every matter that was brought in, and carried in the House of Assembly, if it might be so called...was first settled, and determined upon, in a private Club” by Walton and two other radicals, George Wells and Richard Howly. The members
Council members received authority to regulate the militia and "appoint, suspend and discharge all civil officers." It emphasized control of the movements of inhabitants in Georgia, such as when it learned that "sundry inhabitants of this State, have made a practice of going within the enemies lines without leave" of the Council. It gave notice that anyone who did not first appeal to the Council for permission to move between lines “shall be apprehended as Traitors.” In August, Lachlan McIntosh, who had returned to the state upon the fall of Savannah, requested the Council’s opinion on whether he might offer pardons to inhabitants who had gone to the British during Campbell’s march. The Council suggested he wait until “a sufficient force shall be in the State to subdue our deluded Citizens” to suggest the threat of violence, before balancing the threat with the offer of a pardon.

**Retreat to Savannah and the Siege of Savannah**

After falling back from Charleston in May, the British crossed to the south side of the Ashley River and marched towards James and Johns Islands south of Charleston to avoid Lincoln’s approaching army. On the coastal islands, the British were “plentifully supplied with rice and cattle,” which finally allowed the British to secure the provisions they needed. At the end of May, the British began crossing of the Assembly, believing the proceedings to be a sham, stopped attending and “left the Club to themselves, to Act as they pleased.” The elections called by John Wreeat to succeed the Supreme Executive Council took place in December, and an Assembly that included both factions met in January. Richard Howly was named governor, putting the government back under radical control as it had been for most of the war. Affidavit for William Glascock, 1782-1783 in Havens, ed., PLM, 124-125.

1096 Supreme Executive Council to President of the Continental Congress and Benjamin Lincoln, 10 July 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 142-143.
1098 Supreme Executive Council to Lachlan McIntosh, 30 August 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 171-172.
1099 Augustine Prevost to Henry Clinton, 21 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 127-129.
the Stono River at Stono Ferry from Johns Island to the mainland. At about the same
time, Lincoln joined Moultrie in Charleston before establishing a post about six
miles from the British position at Stono.1100

Over the next two weeks, Lincoln made several efforts to attack the British, who
were busy reinforcing Stono as they continued collecting boats to assist in their
retreat. The two sides met in some light skirmishing, but the rebels generally found
the British positions too strong to attack.1101 On 16 June, Prevost and most of the
British force left Stono by boat to continue the retreat to Savannah via the coastal
islands, while a rearguard under the command of Colonel Richard Maitland
remained at Stono. On 20 June, Lincoln attacked the remaining forces, about 600
men, at Stono. The British held their position, and after they received
reinforcements Lincoln decided to withdraw his forces. Three days later, however,
the British left Stono and moved to Port Royal by way of the islands, where they
rejoined Prevost and the rest of the army. Once at Port Royal, the British left a corps
there under Maitland’s command “sufficient to act at all times upon a most
respectable defensive” as the rest of the army returned to Savannah.1102

Upon the return of Prevost’s force to Savannah, the summer months
precluded any significant campaigning by either side, and positions returned to
what they had been for most of the year. The rebels did, however, maintain control

1100 Benjamin Lincoln to John Rutledge, 30 May 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3,
Massachusetts Historical Society; Benjamin Lincoln to William Moultrie, 1 June 1779, Benjamin
Lincoln Papers, Reel #3, Massachusetts Historical Society; William Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 449; Mattern,
Benjamin Lincoln and the American Revolution, 72.
1101 Benjamin Lincoln to William Moultrie, 1 June 1779, Benjamin Lincoln Papers, Reel #3,
Massachusetts Historical Society; Isaac Huger to William Moultrie, 1 June 1779 in Moultrie, Memoirs,
I, 466-467.
1102 Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 4 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/182.
over much of the backcountry and prevent the British from opening any type of communication with the Loyalist inhabitants. The rebel militia, with the support of some of the Continental Army, were "all cheerfully under arms to oppose the concerted invasions of the Enemies Irregulars and Indians." The rebels were certain the British would turn their attention to the pacification of the Georgia backcountry. The Executive Council told the Governor and Privy Council of South Carolina that the "exertions of the people of the back Country [against both Campbell in his march to Augusta and Prevost on the march to Charleston] have greatly exasperated General Prevost, who declares he will have nothing unattempted, to ruin them." The members of the Council also told Lincoln they could not "in reason, suppose that [the British] will keep a considerable body of Troops immured in Savannah, whilst the back Country, so necessary to their quiet and subsistence, as well as to their future designs, remains unconquered." If they did not attempt to conquer the backcountry and raise Loyalist support there, it would be difficult for them to move to South Carolina, and would make their communications with the inhabitants "very precarious and uncertain." The Council suggested "giv[ing] the most considerable interuption to British communication with the interior of the province."

Despite the Executive Council’s assumption, the British made little effort to pacify the Georgia backcountry in the summer and autumn of 1779, and instead continued to focus their attention on South Carolina. Even after learning of the limited Loyalist support during the expeditions to Augusta and Charleston, Germain

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1103 Supreme Executive Council to the Governor and Council of South Carolina, 18 August 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 164.
1104 Supreme Executive Council to Benjamin Lincoln, 18 August 1779 in Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, Candler, ed., RRG, II, 155-159.
confidently told Clinton, “The feeble resistance Major-General Prevost met with in his march and retreat through so great a part of South Carolina is an indubitable proof of the indisposition of the inhabitants to support the rebel government.” Germain did not consider that the “feeble resistance” had been intentional on the part of the rebels, and instead predicted that taking Charleston would “be attended with the recovery of the whole of that province and probably North Carolina would soon follow.” Even though little effort had been made either on the way to Augusta or Charleston to prioritize organizing Loyalist support, Germain did show the first signs of frustration with the Loyalists, and blamed them rather than the commanding officers for their lackluster showing in Georgia. He told Clinton, “I am convinced our utmost efforts will fail of their effect if we cannot find means to engage the people of America in support of a cause which is equally theirs and ours.”1105 Germain erroneously believed the British had done all they could to support the Loyalists, and were unsuccessful only because the Loyalists were not willing to do what was necessary to win.

A report from South Carolina Attorney General James Simpson on Loyalist support in that province convinced Germain and other officials to push north from Georgia. Simpson correctly noted that many of the inhabitants of South Carolina who had opposed the rebels as late as 1777 had become “the objects of almost unremitting persecution ever since,” and that some even “found means to make their Peace and...become equally Tyrannical over those which whom they had formerly associated.” The remaining Loyalists “have been drove away or otherwise

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1105 George Germain to Henry Clinton, 5 August 1779, DAR, XVII, 177-178.
fallen Martyrs to the distresses they had suffered,” but nevertheless “there were still
great numbers who continued firm in their opposition and were become most
violent in their enmity to those by whom they had been oppressed.” Simpson,
however, painted a picture of rebel weakness, that “want of both the conveniences &
necessaries of life” now demonstrated “eager wishes for a Settlement and Peace, and
mentioned with regret the remembrance of what they called the old times.”
Simpson’s reports reinforced the prevailing British belief that there was a sufficient
number of Loyalists in South Carolina awaiting the return of the British, but that
leveraging that support would require little effort from the British after the
conquest of Charleston.

The British did continue with the process of restoring civil government.
When Wright returned during the summer, he immediately realized the situation
was not how it had been represented to him. He could not understand why civil
government had been restored when “The Province and People had [not] been
restord to the Kings Peace.” Although he was under orders to call elections for an
assembly as soon as possible, he informed Germain that he would have to delay any
elections “for some time.” With Prevost’s march to Charleston, “the Possession &
hold of this Province has been very much interruptd weaken’d & reduc’d” and “was
in great danger of being totally lost.” Until they had a secure hold over the province,
“our Efforts to re-establish Solid Government & good order I Conceive can be but

1106 James Simpson to George Germain, 28 August 1779 in Alan S. Brown, ed., “James Simpson’s
515-518.
Fable.” As he familiarized himself with the situation in Georgia, he became increasingly “Convinced of the Wretched Situation the Province is in.” The “Inhabitants [of the backcountry were] skulking about to avoid the Rebel Partys.” The situation was so precarious that he asked the reconstituted Governor’s Council whether he should declare martial law in Savannah, but the Council determined this would be ineffective, since “the Powers usually exercised in Time of Martial Law, were wholly in the Hands and Command of the General of His Majesty’s Troops in this Province.”

The Governor’s Council also sent a petition to Wright insisting that the British had to put a stop to continued actions of the rebels lest it result in “the total Ruin of the Province.” The petition regretted that the “Troops stationed here...have not been so stationed as to afford Security and Protection to His Majesty's faithful subjects.” The Governor’s Council also expressed concern that since Campbell’s march to Augusta, “so little has...been done for the Security and Protection” of the province. Instead of establishing posts in the backcountry, the military left “the whole of the country...open to the Depredations of the Enemy...without Check or Control.” Despite this clear-eyed assessment of British failures thus far in Georgia, the Council seems to have decided against delivering such criticism. In their draft of the petition, these points were all crossed out, leaving an anodyne approval that

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1107 James Wright to George Germain, 31 July 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.
1108 James Wright to George Germain, 9 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.
1109 Minutes of His Majesty's Council in Georgia, 8 September 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
restoring civil government would “evince to the whole world that Great Britain
never meant to oppress or injure her Colonies.”

In the late summer of 1779, the British began making preparations for a new
expedition to take Charleston. Clinton informed Germain in August that he would be
unable “to bring [Washington] to a general Action,” and was “obliged...to abandon
every view of making an effort” in the northern theater before winter. He echoed a
belief held by Germain, and eventually Cornwallis, that the key to pacification of one
state in the South was to move north and conquer the next state. He told Germain he
was “convinced...that if we do not conquer South Carolina; everything is to be
apprehended for Georgia.” Despite his earlier comments on the difficulties of
turning out Loyalist support in Georgia, he argued, “We have flattering hopes of
assistance from the inhabitants” of South Carolina. During the summer, in
advance of a movement to South Carolina, he was also named a “commissioner for
restoring peace to our colonies...and for granting pardon to such of our subjects
there as shall deserve our royal mercy.”

The British had to delay plans to take South Carolina, however, when a
French fleet under the command of Count d’Estaing arrived at Tybee, and the
combined Franco-American force attempted a failed siege of Savannah that the
British repulsed with heavy losses for the rebels. The rebels knew that the

1110 Upper House of Assembly to James Wright, Undated 1779, Hargrett Library, University of
Georgia.
1111 Henry Clinton to George Germain, 21 August 1779, DAR, XVII, 189-191.
1112 Instructions to General Sir Henry Clinton, 22 July 1779, DAR, XVII, 165-168.
1113 John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 22 October 1779, PHL, XV, 193-194; Augustine Prevost to
George Germain, 1 November 1779, TNA, CO 5/182; James Wright to George Germain, 5 November
1779, TNA, CO 5/665; William Moultrie, Memoirs, I, 449, II, 33-34, 36-42; Mattern, Benjamin Lincoln
518
failure of the siege meant the British would turn their attention to Charleston.

Nevertheless, the British position in Georgia was still precarious at best, demonstrating the extent to which the rebels could achieve their political objectives without defeating the main British army in open battle. The day after detailing to him an account of the successful repulse of the Franco-American troops, Wright told Germain that he was unable to “give...an agreeable or satisfactory account of the Situation of affairs in General in this Province.” As a result he was still unable to hold elections for the assembly.\(^{1114}\) There was too great a risk that rebels would win the elections in some districts or disrupt elections in other areas. The rebels also had success in disrupting other functions of the civil government. In December 1779, Wright noted that “many of the People whose attendance would be required at the ensuing Sessions of the General Court, as Jurors or Witnesses, were...wholly incapable of supporting themselves in this place, while attending those Duties” as a result of “Depredations of the Enemy and the unhappy Situation of the Country.”\(^{1115}\)

\(^{1113}\) Many historians see the failure of the Siege of Savannah as the culminating point of “the wreckage of the past year’s campaign” to defeat the British army and drive them out of Georgia. According to this argument, the rebels’ failure meant “The British presence in Georgia, once reduced to a toehold, was now in danger of becoming permanent.”

\(^{1114}\) James Wright to George Germain, 6 November 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.

Even with the recent victory at Savannah, Wright claimed, “things have been Growing worse.”

He took a few steps toward wrestling control over the population from the rebels. He required those who did not come to the assistance of the British when Savannah was under attack, and only returned after the British successfully defended the city, “to give a[n]...Account of their Conduct During the Siege.” He also advocated paying particular attention to the actual process of raising and organizing Loyalists. He recommended commissioning more militia officers, who were “much wanted in several Parts of the Province.” Rather than waiting for Loyalists to come to the British lines, these officers would “collect the Inhabitants, many of whom are well disposed and willing to act in Defence of Government.”

He made other recommendations based on his assessment of how the rebels operated, but these too would go largely unanswered. Noting that British infantry was simply unable to have much effect against mounted rebel troops, he argued “a party of Horse wou’d Effectually Scour the Province, Drive away the Remainder of the Rebels, and with a few Established Posts Give Peace and Security to the well affected here.” According to Wright, the posts at Ebenezer, Abercorn, and Sunbury consisted of “only Foot Soldiers” who could not “go far from their respective Posts in Pursuit of any Small Parties of Rebells” who were “distressing the Loyal

1116 James Wright to George Germain, 6 November 1779, TNA, CO 5/665
1117 Ibid.; Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 22 October 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.
1118 James Wright to George Germain, 6 November 1779, TNA, CO 5/665
Inhabitants...relative to which He received almost daily Complaints.” He asked for a 150 mounted troops for Georgia, to “give full Protection to the Settlements in General and...Rout any Party of Rebels that may Attempt to Disturb us.” Without these steps, he argued, “the Civil Government...must be very Feeble and will remain so.”

**Trouble in the Indian Department**

Another reason the rebels’ situation was less dire than might have been expected is because the British were having great difficulties securing the type of cooperation they needed from the Indian tribes for their strategy to succeed. This was in part the result of the concerted efforts of the rebels, and in part because of British mistakes and unrealistic planning given the many variables involved. In the aftermath of the defeat of the Cherokee in 1776, the rebels managed to drive the tribe out of most of South Carolina, rendered them unable to act against the frontier inhabitants for some time, and managed to create distrust between the Cherokee and British. The rebels’ victory also had significant deterrent effects on other tribes, and as a result the argument the British used with the Cherokee, that the rebels

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1120 James Wright to George Germain, 6 November 1779, TNA, CO 5/665.
1121 *Ibid*. Wright also took a hard line against the movement of slaves in an effort to instill order and security, even though he had once given some support to the idea of confiscating slaves owned by rebels. In October, the Council received a petition from inhabitants of Savannah and Christ Church Parish that “a Number of Slaves appe[ar] in Arms and behave [w]ith great Insolence.” They had been “joined by some white persons who...commit great Outrages and plunder in and about the Town.” To prevent “the dreadful Evils that must arise, if such Proceedings are not checked,” Wright and the Council ordered that “all Slaves may be immediately disarmed, and no white person be suffered to trouble or molest any other without legal Authority.” Two weeks later, Wright received more “Complaints of Armed Negroes going about the Country, to the Terror and Distress of the Inhabitants,” and ordered “that Orders be given to the officers of the Militia for suppressing all Disorders of that Nature, in Conformity to the Patroll and Negro Laws.” Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 5 November 1779, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
were stealing their land, proved less effective in convincing other tribes to attack the rebels.\textsuperscript{1122}

Through the efforts of George Galphin, the rebels’ agent to the Creek, and “large supplies of goods and ammunition [which] poured into the Carolinas and Georgia from the French Islands,” the rebels were able to “flatter [the Creek] with the prospect of a trade.” They also informed the Indians “they could have no hopes of supplies from” Stuart in Pensacola as they had “intercepted the London ships destined to” the Floridas. According to Stuart, Galphin was “a formidable instrument in the hands of the rebels,” and was “listened to by many of the Lower Creeks and they began to form a party and to debauch the minds of many.”\textsuperscript{1123} Galphin’s efforts yielded even greater success when some Creek towns sought to kill Stuart’s agents, David Taitt and William McIntosh. The two men received advanced warning that allowed them to escape, but by the end of 1777, Stuart had lost much of his influence.

\textsuperscript{1122} Before Germain, William Howe and other British officials in the northern theater and in London understood the scale of the Cherokee defeat, they were urging Stuart to use the effort made by the Cherokee to encourage other tribes to attack the frontier inhabitants. Stuart used many of the same arguments with the Choctaw and Chickasaw that he had to encourage the Cherokee to act, including claims that it was the “declared intention of the rebels to possess themselves of your lands,” and that the British intended to “prevent encroachments on their land.” John Stuart to George Germain, 23 January 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 3 February 1777, PHL, XI, 295; Henry Laurens to Jacob Sandilands, 4 February 1777, PHL, XI, 297; John Stuart to George Germain, 14 June 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 23 June 1777, PHL, XI, 388; John Stuart to George Germain, 6 October 1777, DAR, XIV, 194-195; William Howe to John Stuart, 13 January 1777, DAR, XIV, 28-29; George Germain to John Stuart, 7 February 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Stuart to the Choctaws and Chickisaws, 14 May 1777, TNA, CO 5/78.

\textsuperscript{1123} In July 1777 Galphin brought several headmen from the Creek towns of Cussita and Oakfuskee to Charleston where they “were much surprised at the Quantity of Goods, Arms Ammunition &c which they saw here.” The rebels also showed them “the strength of their batteries and forts...and the advantage gained there over the King’s ships.” When the Creek headmen returned home, “They convened people from all parts and communicated what they had seen and what they had been told.” According to Stuart, “The poison spread to many more and further than it was expect[ed].” John Stuart to George Germain, 10 March 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Stuart to George Germain, 23 January 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Rutledge to Henry Laurens, 9 August 1777, PHL, 434; John Stuart to George Germain, 6 October 1777, DAR, XIV, 193.
with the Creek Indians, and the rebels believed, as John Lewis Gervais told Henry Laurens, “The Creek Indians have at last declared in our favour.” After the failed rebel invasion of Florida in 1778, there was some concern among the rebels that the Creek were planning an attack on Georgia, based on the perceived weakness of the state. In the summer of 1778 there were limited attacks on the frontier, which over the course of several months resulted in the deaths of 20-30 individuals, including members of garrisons at several forts. On the whole, however, the rebels’ concerns were overwrought, and there was little likelihood of the general war that some expected. Even the British understood the influence Galphin held in the Creek Nation. Peter Chester, the governor of West Florida, told Germain in August 1778 that the Creek “have been prevailed upon to go out against the rebels to very little effect” even as they took presents from the British.

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1124 Gervais may have spoken too soon, however, as Stuart succeeded in reclaiming enough support in many of the Creek towns in the first months of 1778 that they allowed Taitt and McIntosh to return to the Nation. Also, with the exception of Galphin, the rebels misreported Alexander Cameron as having been driven out by the Indians rather than William McIntosh. This William McIntosh was also not Lachlan McIntosh’s brother, but a cousin who remained loyal to the King. John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 3 November 1777, PHL, XII, 16; George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 13 October 1777, PHL, XI, 552-554; William Henry Drayton to Henry Laurens, 1 November 1777, PHL, XII, 2; Henry Laurens to James Duane, 24 December 1777, PHL, XII, 197-198; John Stuart to George Germain, 23 January 1778, TNA, CO 5/79; Peter Chester to George Germain, 24 August 1778, DAR, XV, 186-188; John Stuart to George Germain, 13 April 1778, DAR, XV, 96; John Stuart to George Germain, 2 May 1778, DAR, XV, 113.


1127 Peter Chester to George Germain, 24 August 1778, DAR, XV, 186-188.
Furthermore, throughout 1777 and 1778, Galphin and others explained to Congress and the state governments that sporadic attacks by the Creek were the consequence of the actions of individual rebel supporters in the Ceded Lands of Georgia, the territory given by the Creek to the province of Georgia in 1773. These attacks, therefore, did not reflect a broader sentiment of support for the British. On several occasions these inhabitants killed individual Indians, stole their horses, and sent surveyors into Indian lands. Galphin argued that these “people in the Ceded Land will undo all we are Doing” and “make our Enemies words true that we want to take all there Land from them.” If the rebels could stop the actions of these individuals, there “wo[ul]d be no Danger of a Creek war.” Otherwise he would not have it “in my power to keep pea[c]e Long.” Nevertheless, even Galphin argued that “while the rebels were “[Ce]rt[a]il[y the aggress[o]rs in the begin[n]ing,” the Indians “have Car[ri]ed the[ir] resentment to[o] far.” They needed “a good Drub[bl]ing,” and the rebels “Can never put up with the Insul[ts] without Let[t]ing them [k]no[w] we are the[ir] masters.” In October, Andrew Williamson and Colonel LeRoy Hammond crossed from South Carolina into Georgia with their militia regiments, which caused the Indians to return to their towns.

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1128 George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 13 October 1777, PHL, XI, 552-554; George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 22 December 1777, PHL, XII, 175-177; George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 8 March 1778, PHL, XII, 525-527; George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 26 October 1778, PHL, XIV, 452-545; George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 11 November 1778, PHL, X, 484-485.
1129 George Galphin to Henry Laurens, 26 October 1778, PHL, XIV, 452-545. Others agreed with Galphin, including John Wells, Jr., the printer from Charleston, who argued “No terms should be kept with the perfidious Race,” and “Fire & sword are the only arguments that can avail with them.” Gervais echoed Wells’ argument, that “the Creeks will not be quiet till they are chastised.” John Wells, Jr. to Henry Laurens, 28 August 1778, PHL, XIV, 242-243; John Lewis Gervais to Henry Laurens, 21 September 1778, PHL, XIV, 334.
1130 Rawlins Lownes to Henry Laurens, 22 September 1777, PHL, XIV, 342; John Houstoun to Henry Laurens, 1 October 1778, PHL, XIV, 376.
either side could take any further action, the rebels received word of the British expedition sailing from New York for Savannah.

Even with the efforts of Galphin and the rebels to keep the Indians neutral, the British made a number of mistakes themselves that ensured the Indians would be of little help. Whereas the rebels prioritized control of population movements, the British often had more difficulty preventing the rebels free access to the Indians. Stuart complained to William Howe in April 1777 that “the admission of all sorts of people into the Indian countries...however proper in times of peace, in the present situation of affairs is full of danger and may be productive of very bad consequences” as it would allow the rebels to deal freely with the Indians.1131 Additionally, while the rebels emphasized continuous communications and information sharing across states, the British failed to do the same. Stuart explained to Germain that his “situation with respect to my Indians has been much more difficult” than his northern counterpart’s, as the latter was “near the generals to consult with and receive their instructions.”1132

Indeed, a significant problem for the British would be trying to coordinate precise timing and movements in major offensives over hundreds of miles between coastal cities and the Indian nations. At the same time, different officials had different ideas about what the Indians would be able to contribute. Unlike the rebels, who wanted to Indians to remain neutral, the British needed them to take an active part against the rebels. Stuart had always contended that his objective was to get the

1131 John Stuart to William Howe, 13 April 1777, DAR, XIV, 68-69.
1132 John Stuart to George Germain, 23 January 1777, TNA, CO 5/78.
Indians to act “in our favour,” but did not always specify what he meant. He believed they would be of some utility in limited “excursions in small parties upon the settlements” of the frontier.\textsuperscript{1133} Most of the tribes, however, were simply too far from the coast to offer much assistance in operations further east. To do so would require them to march hundreds of miles alone “through a distant country...without posts or magazines of provisions, [and] without any warlike apparatus or conveniency.” If the British wanted the Indians’ assistance in the low country, or even in most of the backcountry, they would have to send regular troops to Pensacola to meet the Indians and lead a joint attack with them against the rebels. The British regulars could also tell friend from foe, and prevent indiscriminate attacks by the Indians that killed or wounded Loyalists as well as rebels.\textsuperscript{1134}

Other British officials, including Germain, Augustine Prevost, and East Florida governor Patrick Tonyn had other ideas of what to expect from Stuart’s repeated insistence that the Indians were well disposed to act on behalf of the British. Much of this difference in interpretation was the result of the Stuart’s continued rivalry with Tonyn, who still wanted to take responsibility for Indian affairs for himself. He was livid that very few Indians, particularly from the Creek Nation, came to the defense of East Florida during the rebels’ attempted invasion in 1778. Stuart had told Germain that the Creek were “in the best disposition,” and that he would “immediately send off a considerable number of them to reinforce East

\textsuperscript{1133} John Stuart to Augustine Prevost, 24 July 1777, TNA, CO 5/78.
\textsuperscript{1134} John Stuart to Augustine Prevost, 24 July 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Stuart to George Germain, 14 June 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; David Taitt to John Stuart, 23 May 1777, DAR, XIV, 93-95; John Stuart to George Germain, 6 October 1777, DAR, XIV, 192-195.
Florida.”¹¹³⁵ This optimistic prediction, however, contrasted with his insistence to Prevost the year before that the Creek “cannot be prevailed upon to march five or six hundred miles to the assistance of St Augustine.” Stuart noted at the time that the closest Creek town to Saint Augustine “is 370 miles distance.”¹¹³⁶ This more realistic view proved true, and no significant numbers of Indians arrived in Saint Augustine to defend the province other than from the nearby Seminole tribe that corresponded with Tonyn more than Stuart.¹¹³⁷

By 1778 Germain started to realize that after more than three years of Stuart insisting most of the Indians were prepared to act in support of the British, he might not be able to count on their support in the ways he had assumed when planning the southern strategy. The timing could not have been worse, with “a detachment from the main army...preparing to embark for the southward with which [the Indians] were to cooperate in the reduction of those provinces”¹¹³⁸ Tonyn also told Germain that Stuart and his deputies were to blame for the lack of Indian assistance at Saint Augustine. According to Tonyn, when Taitt and William McIntosh were eventually allowed back into the Creek towns, they gave a talk on behalf of Stuart telling the Indians to “remain neuter and take no part in any future operations against the rebellious colonies.”¹¹³⁹ Germain insisted that Stuart “make those men examples to

¹¹³⁵ John Stuart to George Germain, 3 June 1778, DAR, XV, 130-131.
¹¹³⁶ John Stuart to Augustine Prevost, 24 July 1777, TNA, CO 5/78
¹¹³⁷ Patrick Tonyn to George Germain, 24 July 1778, DAR, XV, 168-169.
¹¹³⁸ George Germain to John Stuart, 10 March 1778, DAR, XV, 67.
¹¹³⁹ George Germain to John Stuart, 5 August 1778, DAR, XV, 179-180; George Germain to John Stuart, 2 December 1778, DAR, XV, 277.
your other officers...by dismissing them from your service." Stuart denied Tonyn's charge and defended his deputies, and accused Tonyn of disrupting relations with the Indians by constantly meddling in Indian affairs.

Stuart continued to lose influence with Germain through 1778 and 1779. Even though the rebels were rarely able to outspend the British on provisions and other gifts for the Indians, by simply trying to compete the rebels were making it prohibitively expensive for the British. This was particularly true given that the British were trying to buy active support, while the rebels only needed to buy neutrality. As a result, expenses in the Indian Department increased exponentially, with increasingly little to show for the money in return. In addition to the provisions, ammunition, clothing, and other goods the British had to supply, Stuart often had to support large parties of Indians for a time at Pensacola when they were trying to escape rebel parties or poor harvests. Given that the Indians had not performed to their excessive expectations, the growing expense of the Indian Department met with increasing criticism from Tonyn, Germain, and even the Treasury, which initiated an audit of the Department’s expenditures. Germain informed Stuart that the Indians would be required “early in the winter [of 1778-1779] to reduce those provinces to the King’s obedience,” and told him in no uncertain terms that it

1140 George Germain to John Stuart, 2 December 1778, DAR, XV, 276-278.
1141 David Taitt to John Stuart, 23 May 1777, DAR, XIV, 93-95; David Taitt to Thomas Brown, 23 May 1777, DAR, XIV, 95-96; John Stuart to George Germain, 14 June 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Stuart to George Germain, 22 August 1777, TNA, CO 5/78; John Stuart to George Germain, 6 October 1777, DAR, XIV, 192-195; George Germain to John Stuart, 11 October 1777, DAR, XIV, 209-210; John Stuart to George Germain, 5 March 1778, DAR, XIV, 54-56; John Stuart to George Germain, 13 April 1778, DAR, 94-97; John Stuart to George Germain, 11 January 1779, TNA, CO 5/80; Alexander Cameron and Charles Stuart, 10 April 1779, DAR, XVII, 97-99; George Germain to John Stuart, 2 June 1779, TNA, CO 5/80; David Taitt to George Germain, 6 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/80; Charles Shaw to George Germain, 7 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/80.
would “be incumbent on you to exert all your influence to keep them in a disposition to [support the operation] when it shall be required.”

Stuart again expected that for an operation of that size, the British would be sending troops to join with the Indians and march into Georgia. As he was en route to Savannah from New York, Archibald Campbell asked Clinton to have Stuart “make a Diversion in our favor by the Back Woods of Georgia, even as far as the Frontiers of South Carolina.” At the end of November, though, Stuart informed Germain that, “No reinforcement of troops is as yet arrived here.”

By 11 January, as Campbell had already taken Savannah and was well on his way to Augusta, Stuart was still telling Germain, “The promised reinforcement of troops to this province [West Florida] has given us all great spirits.” He assured Germain he would “wait with the utmost anxiety and impatience for their arrival, an event which has been long daily expected.”

Germain was livid when he learned that the Indians had not arrived to assist Campbell on his march to Augusta, and told Augustine Prevost that he could not figure out how to interpret the recent failures of the Indian Department given Stuart’s assurances “that parties were always in readiness to act with the King’s

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1142 George Germain to John Stuart, 5 August 1778, DAR, XV, 179-180.
1143 Archibald Campbell to Henry Clinton, 5 December 1778 in Archibald Campbell Journal, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.
1144 Furthermore, once Stuart informed the Indians of a coming operation, the longer the delay meant the more he lost influence with the Indians. They were “by no means insensible of our weakness and often upbraid me with having amused them with the hopes of a numerous force appearing to act in the southern provinces.” John Stuart to William Knox, 26 November 1778 (Continued from John Stuart to William Knox, 9 October 1778), DAR, XV, 211-215.
1145 John Stuart to George Germain, 11 January 1779, TNA, CO 5/80
forces whenever they should be called upon.”

Eight days he wrote this letter to Prevost, Stuart, who had been ill for some time, died. Germain saw opportunity in Stuart’s death to break the stranglehold he had for years held over Indian affairs, including throughout the entire war. He broke the Indian department into two, one department responsible for the Creek and Cherokee, and the other for the Choctaw and Chickisaw. He named Thomas Brown as the commissioner of the latter department, while Alexander Cameron, who had years of experience with the Cherokee and Creek but was also one of Stuart’s closest deputies, was removed from that department and given responsibility for the Choctaw and Chickisaw. Germain’s final step was to fold these weakened Indian departments under the authority of the military commanders for the respective regions.

**Conclusion**

With the fall of Savannah in December 1778, the British attempted to shift theaters and strategies. As they turned their attention to the southern theater, no longer were they going to concentrate their resources solely on defeating the enemy army, which would not have been as big a blow to the rebels as if it happened to

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1146 Small parties of Creek Indians arrived in Georgia in the spring and summer, but they were difficult to control, disorderly, and lawless and “proved so extremely trifling...[and] so very cautious that no real service can be had of them; their only consequence at present is their not being in the rebel interest.” Eventually Augustine Prevost gave them some presents and provisions and sent them home “well pleased and rewarded.” James Wright had a different opinion, admitting that the numbers were small, but that they still might be of some use. He knew though that Prevost would send them home since “I know from all that he has told me, that he don’t like Indians.” Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 10 June 1779, TNA, CO 5/182; Augustine Prevost to George Germain, 4 August 1779, TNA, CO 5/182; James Mark Prevost to George Germain, 14 April 1779, TNA, CO 5/182; Commissioners for Indian Affairs to George Germain, 10 May 1779, DAR, XVII, 118-123; James Wright to George Germain, 31 July 1779, TNA, CO 5/665; James Wright to George Germain, 1 August 1779 in Letters from Sir James Wright, CGHS, III, 257.

1147 Charles Stuart and Alexander Cameron to George Germain, 26 March 1779, TNA, CO 5/80; Alexander Cameron and Charles Stuart, 10 April 1779, DAR, XVII, 97-99; George Germain to Henry Clinton, 25 June 1779, DAR, XVII, 150-152; George Germain to Thomas Brown and Alexander Cameron, 25 June 1779, TNA, CO 5/80.
Washington’s army in the North. Instead, they would revisit a strategy they had initially used as they tried to hold on to power in 1775 and 1776, namely relying on the support of Loyalists and any others who were reconcilable to British rule. This would sap the strength of the rebels, and with France now in the war, and security requirements increasing significantly across the globe, it was even more imperative that the British gain this additional manpower. The question they had to answer was how to draw out these Loyalist supporters. British officials, to varying degrees, recognized that the Loyalists had been left in a dire situation in the years since 1776 when the last British officials left the southern provinces. They did not, however, fully grasp all aspects of the rebel strategy, and operated under the assumption that the inhabitants of the provinces had the liberty to freely weigh the merits of each side before deciding their loyalty. This assumption led the British to believe their mere presence would be sufficient to turn out Loyalists, who would move on their own to wherever the British were positioned. The best way to appeal to these supporters was not with military force, but with conciliatory measures, including immediate resumption of civil governance.

The southern strategy went wrong for the British almost from the start, but mostly because of their own mistakes and inconsistent implementation of their strategy. After the British took Savannah, they immediately sent a large party to Augusta, during which they expected Loyalists along their route and from all over the backcountry to join them in their march. The British, however, focused their attention primarily on the rebel army under Benjamin Lincoln. The rebels did not place as much importance on attacking and defeating the British army, and
conducted a steady retreat ahead of the British advance. The rebels instead focused on preventing the British army from doing what was necessary to leverage Loyalist support in the backcountry. The British soon found themselves at Augusta, with little Loyalist support, their lines of communication with Savannah overextended, and the rebel forces growing in size after their initial disarray following their defeat at Savannah. The British decided to abandon Augusta and retreat towards Savannah, which had the effect of leaving anyone who did publicly support them at the mercy of the rebels, and less likely to risk much in the future to help the British.

The British repeated the same process by marching into South Carolina. Initially intended as a feint to draw Lincoln back to the low country and secure much needed provisions, the British were fooled by the rebels’ Fabian strategy into thinking Charleston would be an easy conquest. The rebels again lured them into overextending themselves and forgetting their initial objective of securing provisions, and the British again ignored the Loyalists along their route, oftentimes alienating them through theft and property destruction. As with the retreat from Augusta, when the British found themselves too weak to take Charleston, they wondered why no Loyalists had come to their support.

While the army was distracted with defeating the main rebel army, James Wright, once again governor of Georgia, assumed responsibility for implementing many of the measures the British believed would appeal to inhabitants to support the government. Almost immediately upon his return to Georgia, however, he realized that the state of the province had been misrepresented to him, and the British had control over only a very small part of the province around Savannah. He
was supposed to call immediate elections for an assembly, but realized there was no way to do this with most of the province under the control of the rebels. Elections would either result in rebels winning in many districts, or, at the very least, the rebels would be able to disrupt the elections and prevent the inhabitants from voting. Other parts of the government were similarly unable to function as a result of disruption by the rebels.

In a letter to Germain in November 1778 outlining their vision for the southern strategy, the Carlisle Commission insisted, “it [be] clearly understood that military force was not to be employed in this country but with an ultimate purpose of enabling His Majesty's faithful subjects to resume their civil governments with such redress of grievances.” This constituted one problem with British strategy, while the army’s focus on bringing the main rebel army to battle constituted the other. Limiting the use of military force solely to measures that would further the establishment of civil governance ignored the much more serious security problems in the province. There were very few British officials in addition to Wright who made the case for the importance of military force, though Wright argued the army had to rethink the way it applied that force in keeping with the objectives of the southern strategy.

While Wright sometimes got caught up himself in the enthusiasm for moving operations into South Carolina, he more often argued that the army needed to focus on breaking rebel control in the backcountry of Georgia. He advocated the establishment of more posts to expand British control of the province, and

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1148 Commissioners for Quieting Disorders to George Germain, 16 November 1778, TNA, CO 5/181.
continuously insisted that mounted troops were necessary to patrol the expansive interior of the province to separate the rebels and the inhabitants. He was repeatedly unsuccessful in securing the army's assistance, but would continue to make this argument as the British moved their operations into the Carolinas. The military commanders, as well as political officials in London like Germain, would make the argument that Georgia was protected by British positions in South Carolina, not accounting for the rebels still operating in the backcountry. Ironically, it was the military officials who were often more supportive of civil government in Georgia, as it allowed them to avoid responsibility for the province and focus their efforts on defeating the main rebel army. The British would make many of the same mistakes in 1780 after the fall of Charleston, and into 1781, when they eventually abandoned the southern strategy en route to their final defeat at Yorktown.
Chapter 11: The King's Cause Ruined

Following the successful defense of Savannah against the Franco-American siege in October 1779, Henry Clinton prepared a force of nearly 9,000 men for an invasion of South Carolina. He left New York in December, arrived at Savannah in early February, and after collecting additional forces from Savannah, sailed north to Charleston and landed the first British troops at John’s Island in mid-February 1780. Unlike his failed attack on Charleston in 1776, this time Clinton decided to attack by land. The army took several weeks to land all personnel at John’s Island and move towards the Ashley River, which they crossed on 29 March, cutting off the approach to the city along Charleston Neck. In the following weeks they also cut off the northern approaches to the city and the naval commander, Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot, succeeded in crossing the bar into the harbor, effectively enclosing the city on all sides. After a protracted siege, the city fell to the British on 12 May 1780.¹¹⁴⁹

¹¹⁴⁹ South Carolina’s political leadership convinced Benjamin Lincoln to keep the army in the city to mount a resistance against the British attack, though to ensure continuity of government, Governor John Rutledge did manage to escape Charleston before the British lines closed around the city. After sustained British bombardment, however, Lincoln offered to surrender the city if Clinton allowed the Continental troops to leave unmolested. Clinton refused, and the siege continued until 11 May when Lincoln accepted Clinton’s terms, ending in the formal surrender the following day. John S. Pancake, This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolines, 1780-1782 (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 64-66.
On 2 May, before the rebels in Charleston even capitulated, James Simpson, the former attorney general of South Carolina who now served as Clinton’s secretary, directed Richard Pearis, the backcountry Loyalist leader, to “proceed with all convenient expedition to Such places in the Country as are Inhabited by the loyal Subjects.” Pearis was to inform them of the arrival of the British force, and order them to be ready to assemble and march to the British forces that would be moving their way into the backcountry. These instructions suggested the British had not learned from their experience in Georgia what would be required to raise Loyalist forces. The Loyalists were not only to assemble, which the rebels had proved skilled at preventing, but were to arrest leading rebels, “resolutely endeavour to cut their way through” any rebel forces that opposed their march, destroy rebel supplies, and recruit additional Loyalists along their march. Only once they reached the army would they “be furnished with Ammunition and Arms where they are wanted.”

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1150 James Simpson to Richard Pearis, 2 May 1780 (Enclosure) in Richard Pearis to Alexander Innes, 12 June 1780, The UK National Archives (TNA), PRO 30/11/2. Pearis told the Loyalist Claims Commission in 1786 that he disarmed all the rebels and “raised 5 or 6000 men” over a stretch of a hundred miles between the Savannah and Broad Rivers, mostly in the area of Ninety Six. He did raise men, and took the surrender of Andrew Williamson and Andrew Pickens, but there is little evidence to support the extent of his claims, unless Pearis meant simply that he informed that number of the arrival of British troops. Loyalist claims required witnesses to attest to the account the claimant submitted of his activity in support of the Crown. Pearis’s claim includes statements from witnesses attesting to Pearis’s role in leading Loyalists in 1775-1776, his imprisonment in 1776, the damages and distress inflicted by the rebels on Pearis’s property and family, and his continued activity with the Loyalists after 1777, including after the British invaded South Carolina. He also produced the instructions he received from Clinton via Simpson. His claim, however, does not include any witness statements to support his contention of the number of Loyalists he raised in implementing those instructions. Furthermore, Pearis was less than honest elsewhere in his claim, stating, “early in the Commencement of the late dissentions in America,” he “took a decided and active part in favor of Government.” He does not mention that he actually sided with the rebels until the Provincial Congress denied him the appointment of Indian commissioner. Furthermore, the officer who arrived to take command at Ninety Six, Lieutenant Colonel Nisbet Balfour, did not find five thousand men ready to fight with the British, but merely “a sett with [Pearis]” that Balfour thought “must immediately be sent home.” Otherwise Pearis, who Balfour referred to as a “man of infamous character,” and his men would cause “much distress among the inhabitants.” He also told Cornwallis...
The unrealistic expectations for the Loyalists included in these instructions to Pearis highlight the extent to which the same problems that had plagued British operations in Georgia would persist through the British capture of Charleston and advance into the South Carolina backcountry. These problems also began much sooner following the fall of Charleston than historians have generally suggested. Even as the British debated whether a punitive or a conciliatory policy would best attract support, the rebels continued their emphasis on controlling Loyalist movements and limiting support instead of engaging the British army in open battle. Those among the British who supported conciliation by appealing to inhabitants did not allow for the control the rebels established over the population, and assumed that the Loyalists had the freedom to act on their principles. The argument that victory would go to whichever side could be more ruthless was, in turn, based on the misconception that the rebel strategy was little more than oppressive violence meant to destroy Loyalists and required a similarly brutal response.

The British mimicked some of the rebels’ measures, including associations and a system of parole and pardons. However, they did not fully appreciate the context of these measures in the rebel strategy. The rebels recognized that signing an association or an oath would not permanently tie an individual to the rebel cause, that Pearis’s claim to have disarmed rebels throughout the backcountry was a “joke,” as “they have given in only old useless arms and keep their own good ones.” Alexander Innes, formerly the secretary to the last royal governor of South Carolina, Lord William Campbell, was familiar with Pearis from the early years of the war. Innes, now in command of the South Carolina Royalists, a provincial regiment formed of many of the Loyalists who fled to East Florida in 1778, perhaps remembered Pearis’s initial allegiance to the rebels. He referred to Pearis as “a man of very indifferent character” who he “would not have entrusted...with a corporal’s guard.” Cornwallis and his subordinates, Balfour and Innes, were unaware of Clinton’s instructions to Pearis, already damaging any effort to maintain unification of effort and purpose across South Carolina. Richard Pearis Loyalist Claim, August 1786, TNA, AO 12/49.
and certain individuals would need continued monitoring. Nevertheless, the association would remove at least some individuals as a threat, and uniform implementations of these oaths provided a clear assessment of the individuals in the province, those who remained a threat to the rebel governments, and where those Loyalists were clustered. The British use of associations and oaths was haphazard, sporadic, and with little understanding of the ancillary benefits of such measures.

The rebels had also taken steps to tie persons who had taken the oath, but whose loyalty was still suspect, closer to their own cause, even when this meant arming those of suspect loyalty and incorporating them in the militia. As Henry Laurens attempted to do with his neighbor James Brisbane, they would force these individuals to take an active role that would tie them to the rebels and create a disincentive structure that might make it more difficult to return to the British. The British, however, hesitated to include in the Loyalist militia or provincial units anyone who had taken an active role in the rebellion. They preferred to leave those who surrendered to the British on parole. This not only ignored those individuals with loyal principles who were forced into acquiescing to the rebels’ authority, but also led to a sense of false security for the British. Unlike the rebels, the British believed the status of parole would simply remove these individuals as threats to their authority, allowing them to safely ignore these persons as they pursued the remainder of the rebel army. The result was a confused policy that was unevenly applied, and lacked an understanding for the dynamics of those measures that had made them such effective tools for the rebels.
The British also pursued a vacillating policy with respect to building Loyalist militia and provincial regiments, which further impeded efforts to utilize Loyalist support. They sabotaged their initial efforts to raise militia by prematurely removing regular army regiments from outlying districts where they had been providing support for newly formed militia units. Left exposed to rebel partisan activity before they could become an effective fighting force, these militia regiments often dissolved and ceded control of territory and the population therein to the rebels. General Charles, Lord Cornwallis, who commanded the British forces in the South, subsequently advocated for forming provincial units that would be more professional and reliable, and allow for more flexible use across the southern provinces and negate the effects of uneven militia development across districts. In many respects, however, it was too late to convince Loyalists to join these corps, and eventually the British had neither militia nor provincial units upon which they could rely.

In addition the British failed to appreciate the lessons they might have learned from the previous year spent trying to pacify Georgia, or from the rebels’ efforts to defend Georgia from raids from East Florida between 1776 and 1778. They never considered a defensive strategy to consolidate control over ground already held. Instead, the strategy to defend and pacify each occupied province was to take the next province to the north. Cornwallis assumed that no significant numbers of rebels could be operating south of British lines. He became increasingly exasperated with requests from James Wright, the governor of Georgia, for manpower to pacify the Georgia backcountry. Wright wanted to establish posts in
Georgia that would allow the British to extend their control over that province, and mounted units that would allow the British to extend patrols into the backcountry, but Cornwallis refused both. He repeatedly insisted that as long as the British maintained a post at Ninety Six in the South Carolina backcountry, Georgia was perfectly safe. He eventually became so fed up with Wright that he foisted responsibility for communicating with him on other officers.

With a few minor exceptions, Cornwallis largely gave up trying to implement the southern strategy, predicated as it was on building Loyalist support, after Ferguson’s defeat at King’s Mountain. He turned his efforts instead to seeking decisive battle with the rebels’ main army, and pushing his army further north, which he believed was necessary for the pacification of provinces to the south. The constant pressure to push forward from one province to the next meant that the posts the British did establish in the backcountry were exposed to the continuing rebel activity. This also made it difficult to maintain communication between posts, which therefore often went ignored, resulting in uneven and incoherent implementation of British strategy across the southern provinces. As frustration grew, the British increasingly resorted to punitive raids by officers like Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton and Major James Wemyss, with the goal of coercing support through punishment. Eventually, the British abandoned the task of pacifying the Carolinas altogether and moved into Virginia.

**Paroles, Protections, and Pardons**

Clinton, who hoped to return to New York as soon as possible following the surrender of Charleston, did not intend to remain any longer than was necessary to
oversee the implementation of British rule in town and the establishment of posts in the backcountry. Command of the war in the South fell to Cornwallis, who had served under the command of both Clinton and Howe in the North but had yet to receive his own command. Cornwallis was in one very important respect an odd choice to be given command of the implementation of the southern strategy. If Howe, who was close with Cornwallis, is to be believed, Cornwallis had at least some doubts as far back as late 1777 about the core assumptions underpinning what would become the southern strategy. In January 1778, Howe himself had expressed to Germain his opposition to an early version of the strategy proposed by Governor William Campbell of South Carolina, Governor James Wright, and others that relied on the use of Loyalists to assist the British in pacification of the southern provinces. Howe had disagreed with the assessment that the southern Loyalists held “power or influence,” and argued that “Experience has proved” that the British would have “nothing better to expect than an equivocal neutrality” from the Loyalists. He also assured Germain “that Earl Cornwallis,” who at the time was in England on leave, shared his opinion and would “urge such forcible reasons against the plan” as well. A little over two years later, however, the fate of the British war effort rested in the hands of a commanding general whose confidence in the efficacy of the British strategy was in doubt. 1151

In the aftermath of Charleston’s surrender Cornwallis sent troops into the backcountry to establish “posts of Troops from the Pedee to the Savannah

rivers.”¹¹⁵² Major Archibald MacArthur of the 71st Regiment commanded a post at Cheraw Hill, near the northern border of the province. Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull, a Loyalist officer of the New York Volunteers provincial regiment, commanded another post at Rocky Mount, south of Charlotte, also along the northern border of South Carolina. Both of these posts fell under the higher command of Lord Rawdon, who established another post at Camden.¹¹⁵³ Lieutenant Colonel Nisbet Balfour marched up the Saluda River, while Alexander Innes, formerly the secretary to the last royal governor of South Carolina, Lord William Campbell and now in command of the South Carolina Royalists provincial regiment, marched up the Broad River. The two met en route and continued to Ninety Six.¹¹⁵⁴ Cornwallis initially believed that these posts would only be necessary for a short time, to “compleat the arrangement of the militia.” He believed after “the militia is established in any kind of order, very few posts will be necessary.”¹¹⁵⁵ This turned out to be an unrealistic assessment of the requirements for building Loyalist forces. Cornwallis envisioned the militia providing security for their respective districts almost immediately with little support from the army.

In the weeks following the surrender of Charleston, Clinton issued a series of proclamations outlining his own policies for the population. The first, which he issued on 22 May 1780, promised protection to those who supported the Crown and threatened punishment for those who remained in arms against the British or the

¹¹⁵² Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 20 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/76.
¹¹⁵³ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
¹¹⁵⁴ Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 12 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
¹¹⁵⁵ Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 13 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77.
Loyalists. He also “require[d] and command[ed] all persons whatever to be aiding and assisting to His Majesty’s forces, whenever they shall be required, in order to extirpate the rebellion.”\textsuperscript{1156} He followed this on 1 June with another proclamation, issued together with Arbuthnot, offering a pardon to those “deluded subjects [who] have been perverted from their duty by the factious arts of self-interested and ambitious men” as long as they swore an oath of loyalty to the king. These individuals would once again receive the benefits to which they were entitled as British citizens, and would be “exempt from taxation, except by their own legislature.” Those who had been “polluted with the blood of their fellow citizens...under the mock forms of justice” were ineligible for this pardon.\textsuperscript{1157} Two days later, he issued a third proclamation releasing all inhabitants who had been captured by the army or surrendered since the arrival of British forces in South Carolina in February from their paroles. Any inhabitants who had served in the military line, however, in the militia or in the garrison in Charleston, were excepted and remained prisoners on parole.\textsuperscript{1158} 

Historians have overwhelmingly blamed Clinton’s proclamations, particularly that of 3 June, for freeing the inhabitants of South Carolina to return to fighting for the rebels. They argue that the proclamation of 1 June promised that inhabitants who professed their allegiance to the king would not be required to take up arms against the rebels and would be allowed to remain neutral. By canceling

\textsuperscript{1156} Henry Clinton Proclamation, 22 May 1780, TNA, CO 5/397.
\textsuperscript{1157} Henry Clinton Proclamation, 1 June 1780 in Banastre Tarleton, \textit{A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America} (London: T. Caddell, 1787), 74-76.
\textsuperscript{1158} Henry Clinton Proclamation, 3 June 1780, TNA, CO 5/397.
paroles, according to this argument, the proclamation of 3 June eliminated the possibility of neutrality and forced the inhabitants to take sides, leading many of them to return to the rebels. There was, however, no actual contradiction between any of the proclamations Clinton issued. His 22 May proclamation addressed only two classes of people, including those who had remained loyal and those who remained in arms against the British. It did not address those who had participated in the rebellion but surrendered to the British over the previous months. It did, however, stipulate that anyone who was to be considered “faithful and peaceable subjects” would need to “be aiding and assisting to [the king’s] forces, whenever they shall be required” to defeat the rebels.

The proclamation of 1 June, addressed the second group addressed in the 22 May proclamation, the rebels who remained in arms, and offered them a full pardon and the opportunity to “return to their allegiance...to those laws and that government which they formerly boasted was their birthright.” They would then be considered among “His Majesty’s faithful and well-affected subjects,” the first group that the proclamation of 22 May addressed. As such, they would be required to assist the king’s forces whenever required. Those who remained in arms against the British and those responsible for the death of Loyalists remained ineligible for any of these benefits. The third proclamation, issued 3 June, addressed those individuals

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1160 Henry Clinton Proclamation, 22 May 1780, TNA, CO 5/397.
who had surrendered as early as February 1780, before British policy on prisoners had been decided. They would be released from that parole, which had been issued as a temporary expedient as Clinton decided on policy for prisoners, and would then join those who had remained loyal that Clinton first addressed in his 22 May proclamation, and obtain “all the rights and duties belonging to citizens and inhabitants.” This included the responsibility to assist the army whenever needed. Rather than contradict one another, the three proclamations were actually complementary, with each attempting to divide the rebels and increase the numbers of Loyalists aiding the British.\footnote{1161}

It is necessary to form an accurate understanding of the nature of these proclamations because the historians who have criticized Clinton for the 3 June proclamation do so largely because Cornwallis himself criticized them.\footnote{1162} Cornwallis’s criticism, however, was self-serving, and changed over time. His initial criticism was not that the proclamations were too harsh, but that they were too lenient, and would allow for certain rebels to swear loyalty to the king and receive protection and the full rights of British citizens. He decided, however, that the proclamations did not materially affect his plans because he did not intend to allow any former rebels to seek protections or serve in the militia. Those who had served in a military or other leadership role in the rebellion would remain on parole, as stipulated by Clinton in his proclamations. Furthermore, Cornwallis did not intend

\footnote{1161} Henry Clinton Proclamation, 22 May 1780, TNA, CO 5/397; Henry Clinton Proclamation, 1 June 1780 in Tarleton, \textit{A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781}, 74-76; Henry Clinton Proclamation, 3 June 1780, TNA, CO 5/397.  
to allow even those rebels who had not served in the military line during the rebellion into the new militia. They were to instead remain at home and provide supplies and provisions as needed to the British.\textsuperscript{1163} Only later, as the situation deteriorated, did Cornwallis and his officers blame the proclamations for their problems by forcing those who had been on parole to take sides.\textsuperscript{1164} Likewise, Cornwallis would later criticize the idea of allowing inhabitants to remain neutral, adopting the same mindset that had motivated Clinton in issuing his proclamations.\textsuperscript{1165}

Whereas other British officers interpreted a parole to mean they no longer had to worry about that individual, Clinton likely realized, as the rebels did, that such promises were not sacrosanct, and that while some individuals would adhere to their promises, others would not.\textsuperscript{1166} He was proved correct over the next year as countless rebels broke the terms of their paroles and continued fighting. Given his skepticism about the value of securing true neutrality, he hoped to force all inhabitants to publicly declare their allegiance. This would give the Loyalists “an opportunity of detecting and chasing from among them such dangerous neighbors.”

\textsuperscript{1163} Charles Cornwallis to James Patterson, 10 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 11 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/87; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 13 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77; Charles Cornwallis to Archibald McArthur, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77; Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, 16 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77; Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson, 16 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77. See also Ian Saberton, The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theater of the American Revolutionary War, I (East Sussex: Naval and Military Press Ltd, 2010), 40.

\textsuperscript{1164} Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 14 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 17 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.

\textsuperscript{1165} Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 4 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80; John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 7 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64; Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 12 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80

\textsuperscript{1166} This was the same point John Lewis Gervais made when he told Henry Laurens that they could not count on Loyalists always adhering to their oaths of loyalty. See Chapter 9.
He believed that the British, like the rebels, could force former rebels into taking an active role in the new Loyalist militias, thereby creating a structure of disincentives that would reduce the likelihood, if not eliminating it altogether, that they would return to the rebels.1167

Cornwallis’s vision for the militia, drafted in the weeks following Charleston’s surrender, divided the inhabitants into several categories. “Those who have been in publick stations” in the rebel governments, including government officials and militia officers, and others “who are particularly obnoxious to” the Loyalists would be removed from their homes and sent to the coastal islands on parole, while the most violent would be imprisoned. The remainder of those who had served with the rebels would be disarmed and remain at home on parole, occasionally called upon to provide “provisions, horses, waggons” and other supplies. Those inhabitants who remained loyal would be organized into two types of militia for their respective districts. The first would consist of men who were older than 40, had more than four children or more than a hundred slaves, had served with a regular or provincial corps for more than three years, or “have any bodily infirmity that renders them unfit to bear fatigue.” They would be responsible for maintaining order at home, and would not be “called out of their respective districts except in case of an insurrection or invasion of the province.” Those between the ages of 18 and 40 who did not meet the conditions of the first group would “be liable to be called upon to serve six of each twelve months,” would receive the same pay and provision as

provincial troops, and might be called to fight anywhere from Georgia to North Carolina. He did promise, however, that they would not all be called on at the same time or for the full six months unless absolutely necessary.\footnote{1168}

However straightforward Cornwallis’s plan for the Loyalist militia was, the implementation was chaotic, uneven, and often self-defeating. British officers moving rapidly through the backcountry gave only cursory attention to organizing militia in different regions. As Innes traveled up the Broad River, for example, he arrived at Shire’s Ferry, north of Cannon Creek, on the morning of 14 June 1780, where he “[put] things in some little order.” He stayed only until that evening, however, before departing for Ninety Six.\footnote{1169} Balfour, like Innes, was under orders to proceed to Ninety Six as quickly as possible, and during his march he also had to organize militia at Orangeburgh, in the Dutch Fork between the Saluda and Broad Rivers, north of the Congaree River, and in Ninety Six.\footnote{1170} He was forced to outsource some of this work to “a faithful person near Orangeburgh who assures me of the loyalty of that district.”\footnote{1171} Even then, he was unable to give the necessary attention to each district, and told Cornwallis “it will not be possible to get names

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  \item \footnote{1168} Draft Plan for Dealing with the Disaffected and the Militia, 4 June 1780 in Saberton, ed., The Cornwallis Papers, I, 123-124; Charles Cornwallis to James Patterson, 10 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77.
  \item \footnote{1169} Innes intended to stay until the following evening, but for reasons unknown to him, Robert Cunningham appeared at Shire’s Ferry that day. Cunningham was at the time the commander of militia at Ninety Six, and his appearance at Innes’s camp meant there was no loyal militia commander at Ninety Six. Arguing that it was “absolutely necessary some officer should be there as soon as possible,” Innes left the evening of the 14th to push on to Ninety Six. Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 15 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
  \item \footnote{1170} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
  \item \footnote{1171} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 6 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
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for militia officers in so short a time as my passing quickly through the country will allow.”

Balfour suggested that raising militia and relying on it to provide the sole source of security in a region might be a longer-term process than had been assumed. He noted, “The idea of getting a militia to take arms and join you immediately is to me a very extraordinary one.” Instead, they would need to conduct a systematic effort to disarm the rebel militia, followed by a process of “new modelling their officers,” based on the assumption that loyal officers would be able to ensure the loyalty of their subordinates. Only when these two steps had succeeded might they be able to trust the militia to “be assembled and regulated with orders to meet at all times of danger, when called upon, [and] at stated periods.”

Cornwallis insisted that the militia be composed “of men either of undoubted attachment to the cause of Great Britain or whose behavior has always been moderate.” Finding men of local prominence who could command the militia and had not taken part in the rebellion, however, proved particularly difficult in practice. Cornwallis’s order did not account for the many Loyalists who, under pressure from the rebels, had taken an active role against the British, and as Balfour searched for local leaders he found there were not many who met Cornwallis’s criteria. Writing from near the Conagaree River, a frustrated Balfour told Cornwallis, “I have used my best endeavours to find out proper people for militia officers in this and the other

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1172 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 9 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1173 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 30 May 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1174 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
districts, but I cannot find a single man of any property or consequence that has not
been in the rebel service.”

George Turnbull faced the same problem in Rocky Mount, as did Archibald
McArthur in the Cheraw district. In Cheraw, the formation of a militia was delayed
by “the want of people proper for officers from the rebellion’s having been so
universal.” Balfour also observed, “all the leading men of property have been on
the rebel side so that a proper person to head [the militia] will be difficult to get.” He
asked Cornwallis, with an emphasis on his words that suggested a continued
inability to find suitable men to lead the militia, “As to those officers who have
served in the rebell militia, would you choose to allow any of them to serve in the
present?” In his reply two days later, Cornwallis reiterated, “I cannot approve of
admitting any officers of the rebel militia into ours for the present.”

It quickly became clear that the British had little reliable intelligence about
the identity of the key rebels in the South Carolina and Georgia backcountries. In his
request to Cornwallis for permission to recruit former rebel militia officers, Balfour
suggested Colonel William Thomson, who had commanded both militia regiments
and a provincial regiment of rangers that the Provincial Congress had raised in the
summer of 1775. Thomson had been one of the most active militia officers in the
campaign to control the backcountry Loyalists in the summer and autumn of 1775,
and had fought for the next three years against the Indians, and against the British at

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1175 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 7 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1176 Archibald McArthur to Charles Cornwallis, 13 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1177 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 9 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to
Nisbet Balfour, 11 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/87.
Sullivan’s Island. He took part in two of the Saint Augustine expeditions, and fought the British at nearly every major battle from the fall of Savannah until he surrendered with the fall of Charleston. Nevertheless, Balfour informed Cornwallis Thomson “has not been harsh or oppressive,” before admitting that he actually had little information about Thomson’s role in the war, and could procure very little information about him in his home in the upper part of the Orangeburgh district.1178

This lack of intelligence might have suggested wisdom in Cornwallis’s denial of Balfour’s request to recruit former rebels to lead the militia, if his reasoning had been an awareness of this lack of intelligence. Cornwallis, however, was making the same mistakes himself. As he passed through Orangeburgh, Balfour met John Adam Treutlen, the former radical rebel governor of Georgia, who had been staying in South Carolina since his hometown of Ebenezer fell to the British in 1779. The radical governors of Georgia had been unmatched in their zeal for controlling Loyalists, going so far as to also target their more moderate political opponents as secret Loyalists. Still, Cornwallis had already granted Treutlen a parole in violation of his own guidelines for taking prisoner the most active rebel leaders. Balfour rescinded that parole and sent him as a prisoner to Charleston after Treutlen admitted he had not told Cornwallis his identity. One of the most ardent rebels in the southern provinces, and a former governor of Georgia, had been able to remain

1178 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 7 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
anonymous as the British army not only passed through his district, but granted him a lenient parole.\textsuperscript{1179}

One of the proximate causes of this lack of intelligence about the inhabitants of the backcountry was that the British relied excessively on local Loyalist leaders to identify rebels. This was their primary approach even though they also recognized that given the degree of rebel control over the Loyalists the previous five years, it would be “necessary to secure [certain rebels] to save their lives from the just resentment of the people they have persecuted.”\textsuperscript{1180} At the same time, the British did not consider using some of the measures the rebels had to obtain and develop intelligence on the inhabitants of the different districts. The British used Associations sporadically, but more so in districts that they had to pass through quickly. In Orangeburgh, for example, where Balfour had to rely on “a faithful person” to organize Loyalists, a group agreed to “take up arms and keep the peace until the militia” could be more formally established.\textsuperscript{1181} They hoped these measures would encourage local inhabitants to provide security for their districts and towns where there was no other alternative. The British therefore saw the Association in a very single-minded sense, as an instrument that would thereafter allow them to largely ignore those areas under the assumption that it was under the control of the

\textsuperscript{1179} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 6 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2. Balfour also discovered that Lord Rawdon had issued a parole to Charles King, formerly a senator representing the Lower District between Broad and Saluda Rivers, with permission for him to remain at his home among the other inhabitants. Balfour modified that parole, forcing King to go to James Island “and remain there till called for.”

\textsuperscript{1180} Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 8 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2. Innes told Cornwallis he had Loyalist leaders “proceed immediately to throw their neighbours into one or other of the lists” of the different classes of inhabitants based on loyalty.

\textsuperscript{1181} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 6 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
newly Associated groups. They did not consider using these lists as a type of census that would allow them to build information on the inhabitants and their activities, prevent rebel movements, and identify possible candidates for command of the militia. Even if they had thought of this, since they did not force the Association on those who did not want to sign as the rebels had, it would have been an incomplete census, and therefore useless for that purpose.

A lack of dependable means of identifying rebels among the population and an inability to find adequate officers for the new militia under the terms Cornwallis had stipulated were not the only challenges the British faced. They also had no unified system for distributing paroles, administering oaths of allegiance, or incorporating individuals into the militia. Clinton, Cornwallis, and other officers appointed their own people, often acting under different criteria, to administer the oath and hand out paroles. Cornwallis complained to Balfour that “the aid-de-camps at Head Quarters” had been administering the oath of allegiance and “distributing protections, declaring some of the most violent and persecuting rebels good and loyal subjects.”1182 A further issue for the British was that oftentimes no one communicated with one another or attempted to standardize criteria for the various classifications they were creating for the inhabitants. This was the case when, unbeknownst to Cornwallis, Clinton had Simpson order Pearis into the backcountry to distribute paroles and allow leading rebels to remain at home once they had been disarmed. Even more problematic for the British, Cornwallis knew nothing of the proclamations of 1 and 3 June that Clinton had issued, and only learned of them

1182 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 11 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/87.
when he encountered several inhabitants who wished to surrender according to the terms of the proclamation of 1 June.\textsuperscript{1183}

Furthermore, Balfour learned that “some very violent rebels” would travel away from their homes to seek more lenient paroles from those who were unfamiliar with their role in the rebellion and return home free to interact with their neighbors. He urged Cornwallis “to warn the officers giving paroles to examine nearly into those at so great a distance as those here.”\textsuperscript{1184} Despite his warnings, he found that “violent and active magistrates” appeared in Ninety Six District “having returned from Charles Town with protections.” Balfour had sent them to the coastal islands as prisoners on parole, but some of them “found [their] way to Charles Town and succeeded in [their] applications” to take the oath of loyalty and receive protection.\textsuperscript{1185}

Balfour also made some effort at standardizing across districts of the process of determining paroles and administering the oath of loyalty. He created a list of individuals on parole and the conditions of their parole, including whether their movements had been “confined to particular places,” to send to the Commissary of Prisoners to create a central clearinghouse of information on the inhabitants. Nevertheless, he admitted this list would be incomplete as it only included individuals “that I could hear of,” and that “many are passed over which we could

\textsuperscript{1183} Alexander Innes Addendum to Richard Pearis to Alexander Innes, 12 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
\textsuperscript{1184} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 6 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
\textsuperscript{1185} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 17 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
not get intelligence of.” He also informed Cornwallis that where protections had been granted, and “where I have been certain of their impropriety I have taken them away and given paroles.” This sort of haphazard and confused approach to dealing with the backcountry inhabitants, and rescinding a favorable status for a more strict one, would have been more likely than any of the proclamations Clinton issued to push inhabitants back to the rebels.

The British also had great difficulty preventing the movement of inhabitants on parole beyond the areas to which they were confined. This was a byproduct of a lack of intelligence about the population and the general confusion that characterized the whole process. It was also the inevitable result of a mindset that an individual on parole was no longer a security concern and required minimal additional monitoring, in contrast to the rebel policy for prisoners on parole where they had to check in on a regular basis with a leading individual in their local community and had their movements regularly monitored by the rebels. Balfour informed Cornwallis of a Colonel William Heatley of Orangeburgh District had returned from Charles Town, “as has most of the violent people in the country.” Balfour argued this “ought immediately to be stoped, for this will...throw every impediment in the way of settling the country.” While at the Congaree River, meanwhile, Innes reported that “while a knot of violent rascals from Virginia remain here, [the people] never can be in peace or security.” Cornwallis also reported to

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1186 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1187 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 12 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1188 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 9 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1189 Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 8 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
Clinton that a Henry Pendleton of St David’s Parish in the Cheraw district, who had served as a judge and representative in the general assembly and who Cornwallis claimed “in his judicial character committed a number of barbarous murders” of Loyalists, “has escaped from his parole.” He added, “not less than 500 Continental prisoners have made their escape since the town was taken.”

“There is a Grate Opening to Effect Something in the Partisan Stile”

The British might have had more time to formulate and coordinate sound policy for developing organized and competent militia regiments instead of these ad-hoc measures had the rebels not remained active in the backcountry. It is a common contention in the history of the southern campaign that the British were firmly in control of South Carolina following the fall of Charleston and even through the summer of 1780, and that only with later defeats in major battles did they start to lose that control. Many inhabitants, whether out of sincerity or as a means of biding their time, did surrender to British forces as they dispersed throughout the province. As with the fall of Savannah, however, British conventional victory by no means brought an end to a rebel strategy that focused primarily on Loyalists rather than British regulars. Brigadier General William Lee Davidson of the North Carolina militia succinctly summarized this strategy when, in September 1780, he informed Governor Abner Nash of North Carolina of the rebels’ success dispersing parties of

1190 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
Loyalists along the border of North Carolina and South Carolina. He argued, "a General Action at this time would be dangerous but there is a grate opening to effect something in the partisan Stile."\textsuperscript{1192}

When Balfour arrived at Ninety Six he discovered, “both sides of the [Savannah] river are much disaffected.” Similarly, he reported that “our friends” were not “so numerous as I expected from Saluda to Savannah River.” Likewise, “Almost the whole district from the [Saluda] up to the Indian lands are disaffected” and simply waiting for the right opportunity to rise against the British. Balfour described a meeting he had with Andrew Williamson, who had surrendered but refused to take up arms against the rebels. Williamson informed Balfour that if he wanted to pacify Ninety Six district, “a stronger force would be necessary than [the British] would wish to spare.”\textsuperscript{1193} From Rocky Mount, Turnbull noted a number of developments causing continued disorder in Camden district. Rebel propaganda efforts made it difficult to keep order in the district. On one occasion he learned that “The rebells have propagated a story that we seize all their young men and send them to the Prince of Hesse.” He told Cornwallis, “It is inconceivable the damage such reports has done.”\textsuperscript{1194} Turnbull also noted that “a number of violent people have abandon’d their habitations,” and it was unknown where they had gone.\textsuperscript{1195}

The rebels were reorganizing the militia nearby. Richard Winn, who had served as an officer in the Ranger regiment under William Thomson, left his home of

\textsuperscript{1192} William Lee Davidson to Abner Nash, 24 September 1780, William Lee Davidson Papers, Davidson College.

\textsuperscript{1193} Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 24 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.

\textsuperscript{1194} George Turnbull to Charles Cornwallis, 15 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.

\textsuperscript{1195} Ibid.
Winnsboro on the approach of the British, and fled north to the New Acquisition district, on the border with North Carolina.\textsuperscript{1196} There he joined forces with Colonel Edward Lacey and Captain John McClure of the Turkey Hill militia regiment and Colonel William Bratton of the New Acquisition district regiment. Those militia regiments had dissolved after they learned of the fall of Charleston, but Winn and Bratton began recruiting men in the New Acquisition district in early June. By Winn’s account the rebels managed to raise more than a hundred men, and soon turned their attention to breaking up parties of Loyalists who were gathering throughout the district to join the British. On 6 June, McClure dispersed a group of Loyalists at Beckham’s Old Fields, near Rocky Creek and the Catawba River in Chester County. Two days later Winn, Bratton, and McClure located and defeated another body of Loyalists “strongly posted under the command of Col[onel] Ch[arles] Coleman” at Gibson’s Meeting House, “twelve miles above [Shire’s] Ferry.”\textsuperscript{1197}

Meanwhile the advance of Cornwallis’s forces into the South Carolina backcountry raised the hopes of Loyalists in North Carolina that the British would extend their march into that province. Cornwallis later informed Germain that he had wanted to continue marching into North Carolina without delay after establishing posts in South Carolina, but North Carolina was “almost approaching to a Famine,” which made it “impossible for me to penetrate into that Province before

\textsuperscript{1196} The New Acquisition District consisted of roughly the same area as present day York County.  
the Harvest.” He therefore “sent emissaries to our friends in that country to state my situation to them” and order them to “remain quiet until I can give them effectual support, which could only be done by a force remaining in the country.”

Nevertheless, when Lieutenant Colonel John Moore of Tryon County, west of Charlotte, arrived home after taking part in the siege of Charleston, his account of the British victory led a group of Loyalists to assemble at Ramsour's Mill. Despite Moore's initial efforts to relay Cornwallis's instructions to remain quiet, the Loyalists continued assembling in larger numbers. When General Griffith Rutherford of the North Carolina rebel militia learned at Charlotte of the Loyalists assembling in Tryon County he ordered local militia leaders to call up their men. On 20 June 1780, a rebel force attacked the Loyalists, who fled and dispersed.

Rawdon received reports that it was too dangerous to consider moving into North Carolina to support those Loyalists, as “The enemy secure every person against whom the smallest suspicion lies...[and three] of our emissaries...have been taken up.”

Cornwallis, Balfour, and other British officers in South Carolina cited Moore’s defeat as the cause of the growing disaffection and the difficulty in forming Loyalist militia, and historians have largely repeated this claim. Cornwallis also had motive

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1198 Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 20 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/76.
1199 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 2 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
1200 Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 22 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 24 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 24 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 30 June 1780, PRO 30/11/2; Samuel C. Williams, ed., “General Richard Winn’s Notes,” 203.
1201 Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 25 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
to mark Ramsour’s Mills as the turning point in British fortunes, as he believed it would absolve him of responsibility for the deteriorating situation. Although he emphasized after the battle that he had ordered Loyalists in North Carolina to remain quiet until he could move into the province, the British also sent mixed signals to those Loyalists. When Cornwallis told Clinton on 2 June that he had suggested the North Carolinians remain quiet, he added, “At the same time I assured them that if they thought themselves a match for their enemies without any regular force and were determined to rise at all events, I would give them every assistance in my power by incursions of light troops, furnishing ammunition, &c.”  

Furthermore, Colonel Ambrose Mills, who lived on the Green River in North Carolina, west of Tryon County, went to see Innes at Shire’s Ferry to request assistance for Loyalists he had raised and brought to South Carolina to act in North Carolina. Cornwallis told Innes that while Mills “has been premature in his rising,” since he lives “in a remote corner of the country quite out of our way and insists on defending the settlements of himself and his followers, we must let him act,” and he had Innes give him some ammunition. He told Innes that Mills should only act on the defensive, but it was a fine line between offense and defense when there were rebel forces embodied throughout much of that region of North Carolina. By arming Mills and allowing him to act, and telling the Loyalists elsewhere in North Carolina that they could act if they must, Cornwallis was sending what was at best a mixed  

\[1202\] Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 2 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
message that suggested a lack of attention to the motivations of the Loyalists for giving their support to either side.\textsuperscript{1203}

Simultaneous with the action at Ramseur’s Mills, the New Acquisition district militia continued making incursions into settlements and disrupting efforts to form Loyalist militia. In mid June, Captain Christian Huck, a Loyalist from Philadelphia who commanded a light dragoon troop attached to the British Legion, dispersed these rebels on orders from Turnbull, and destroyed the iron works they used as a base. Cornwallis informed Clinton this “put an end to all resistance in South Carolina.”\textsuperscript{1204} Despite this confidence, most of the militia from the New Acquisition district remained in arms. In early July, Turnbull learned that Bratton, McClure, and “some of the violent rebels” had returned to their homes “and were encouraging the people to join them.”\textsuperscript{1205} Turnbull sent Huck to capture the men, but Bratton, McClure, Winn, and others learned of Huck’s presence first and on 12 July attacked and killed Huck where he camped near Bratton’s home. Only weeks later Turnbull faced another threat from the militia, this time under the command of Thomas

\textsuperscript{1203} Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to Alexander Innes, 16 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77. Before he returned to New York, Clinton also told Cornwallis to “send a flagg to North Carolina offering a general pardon and protection to the inhabitants, provided they wou’d lay down their arms.” Henry Clinton to Charles Cornwallis, Undated, TNA, PRO 30/11/4.

\textsuperscript{1204} His subordinates echoed this overconfidence. Innes told Cornwallis in early June, “I could assure your Lordship there will not be a shadow of opposition in this province attempted.” A week later, he informed Cornwallis, “there is not the least appearance of an enemy on this side the North Carolina Line.” Balfour told Cornwallis at the end of June from Ninety Six, “if temper and management can be made use of here for some time, I think your Lordship will find this part of the country soon settled.” Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 8 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 15 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 27 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.

\textsuperscript{1205} Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 15 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72. While McClure returned home to attend to the harvest, Bratton “was publishing proclamations and pardons to who whou’d return to” the rebels. George Turnbull to Lord Rawdon, 12 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
Sumter who had been recruiting men in North Carolina. Together with men from the New Acquisition and Chester districts, Sumter, Winn, Lacey and others attacked Turnbull’s base at Rocky Mount on or about 31 July. They were repulsed from that position, but on 6 August successfully attacked the nearby British post at Hanging Rock, garrisoned by provincials and Loyalist militia. According to Winn, the “Tories [were] totally defeated with a great loss of killed.” It was around this time Cornwallis first expressed sentiments of displeasure with the Loyalist militia, telling Clinton of the “infidelity which we have experienced of our militia.”

The British were having similar problems in Ninety Six district, where Balfour noted that the rebels were “exerting themselves wonderfully in stirring up the people.” He reported that a party of rebels from Georgia had joined militia in South Carolina. Balfour was concerned that unless “some step was immediately taken” to counter the rebels’ show of force in the area, the Loyalist militia “would make a shameful business of it and, retiring, leave the country to be laid waste.” Major Evan McLaurin, a longtime Loyalist leader in the backcountry who was also at Ninety Six, noted that with the commotion occurring in the district, “the disaffected hereabout began to prick up their ears.” The situation worsened as July turned to August. Cornwallis named Balfour Commandant of Charleston, and replaced him at Ninety Six with Lieutenant Colonel John Harris Cruger, a Loyalist and provincial

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1207 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 10 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
1208 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 20 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2. Balfour also told Cornwallis that rebels held posts on the Broad and Pacolet Rivers, as well as a third one at the fork of the Tyger and Enoree Rivers. From these posts, they “feed very strong plundering partys across...just to the heart of this settlement.”
1209 Evan McLaurin to Alexander Innes, 20 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
officer from New York. In early August, Cruger learned of parties of rebels on the Pacolet River, and also reported that Colonel Elijah Clarke, a militia commander who had fought the Indians as well as the British after the fall of Savannah, was collecting several hundred rebels in the Ceded Lands of Georgia. Furthermore, on 10 August, several prominent rebel prisoners being held at Ninety Six escaped.\footnote{John Harris Cruger to the Officer Commanding at Camden, 4 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63; John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 7 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63. Among the escaped prisoners were John Thomas, who had taken a parole, and his son, also named John, who had taken over from his father as commander of the Spartan regiment of militia in the northern part of the district and been captured. John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 11 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63; Ian Saberton, ed., The Cornwallis Papers, I, 259n-260n.} Innes noted with the many threats developing around them, “it is really a hard matter to say which side requires [Cruger’s] attention most.\footnote{Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 12 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.}

The situation was no better in the eastern part of the state, in the Cheraw district near the North Carolina border and in the Georgetown district east of the Santee River. As a result of “the unhealthiness of the situation on [the] Pedee” River, a number of men in McArthur’s 71st Regiment became sick. Rawdon and Cornwallis were also worried about a force of Maryland and Delaware Continentals under the command of Major General Johann de Kalb in North Carolina near Hillsborough, as well as rebel militia in North Carolina. In late July, with Cornwallis’s approval, Rawdon ordered McArthur to withdraw his regiment from Cheraw Hill closer to Camden. Cheraw was to be left to the militia under the command of Colonel William Henry Mills.\footnote{Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 15 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 23 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 28 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78.} This proved to be a fateful decision, as it left much of the eastern part of the state with only the militia for its defense. Cornwallis claimed this was a
necessary step given de Kalb’s approach, but he also later told Germain that the
rebel forces were all “a great distance from us” and that it was “impossible to march
any considerable body of Men across the Province of North Carolina before the
Harvest.” He therefore believed he had some time before the Continental forces in
North Carolina would pose a threat.\footnote{1213}

The British also recognized the “great importance of the Post” at Cheraw
Hill.\footnote{1214} Nevertheless, rather than reinforce Cheraw when many of the troops
became ill, Cornwallis and Rawdon left the post to the militia. They had done the
same at Waxhaw, following the defeat of the Loyalists at Ramsour’s Mill. Rawdon
reported to Cornwallis that the people of Waxhaw were “playing such a double
game that I find it necessary to send troops among them,” and “if I do not take that
step, all the wheat of that country will be carried off to the enemy.” Cornwallis
disagreed, arguing that any troops at Waxhaw could not retreat if the situation
worsened lest it “dishearten the whole country.” Rawdon would then have to send
additional troops to support them, something Cornwallis did not want. He ordered
Rawdon to have the “troops rejoin you at Camden,” leaving instead “some part
of...[the] militia embodyed” under the command of Colonel Henry Rugeley.

By the end of July, therefore, Cornwallis had withdrawn regular forces from
much of the border region between North and South Carolina. Predictably, the
situation at Cheraw quickly deteriorated. McArthur decided to evacuate his sick to

\footnote{1213} Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 20 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/76.
\footnote{1214} Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 6 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72. At McArthur’s request
Cornwallis had agreed to let him remain there “longer than it was intended he should” after the
British movement into the backcountry.
Georgetown on boats by the Pee Dee River, a responsibility he left to Mills, who later claimed he had no notice that McArthur was falling back from Cheraw. Two days after McArthur and the 71st departed Cheraw, a number of the Loyalist militia defected and, with a party of rebel militia from North Carolina, captured all of the sick soldiers along with an officer and the surgeon. Mills went to Georgetown to inform Major James Wemyss, who commanded that post, and along his entire route he “was pursued by different partys untill he got within a few miles of” Georgetown. Wemyss reported the rebels’ numbers “are daily increasing,” and that “The people here are exceedingly alarmed.”1215 When Cornwallis, who was still in Charleston, asked Rawdon about the events in Cheraw, Rawdon blithely replied that he had only “heard of plundering parties distressing the country...but of no uproar that betokened revolt.”1216 Cornwallis therefore ordered the “severe chastisement of the traitors at Cheraws,” arguing, “It is absolutely necessary to inflict some exemplary punishment on the militia and inhabitants of that part of the country.”1217

Wemyss had his own problems in and around Georgetown, which had fallen to the British on 1 July. Almost three weeks into the occupation, Wemyss admitted, “the longer I remain here, the more I discover the disaffection of the people.”1218 As elsewhere in the province, he was having difficulty identifying suitable Loyalist leaders, and was uncertain how best to identify former rebels to prevent them from

1215 James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 28 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1216 Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 3 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63. As evidence of this he cited some of the militia from that district falling back to British posts with their wives and families, which was hardly a vote of confidence in British position in that part of South Carolina.
1217 Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 4 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
1218 James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 17 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
joining the militia. He told Cornwallis, “private quarrels and resentment subsist so much, even amongst our friends, that it is a difficult matter to obtain a true character of any man.”1219 The situation at Georgetown worsened precipitously with the withdrawal of the 71st Regiment from Cheraw, and the defection within Mills’ militia. The rebels established control over a nearby ferry, “and by that means stop very much the intelligence I otherwise would have.” Wemyss informed Cornwallis, “the whole country is in confusion and uproar.”1220

Cornwallis decided “in the present situation of things,” Wemyss could not “do any good towards forming a militia at Georgetown.” He told Wemyss that though it would be “disgracefull” for him to leave Georgetown, “and for a time…attended with the worst of consequences in that part of the country,” he ordered him to “march with much secrecy from Georgetown.” He was to go to the High Hills of Santee, south of Camden and at the confluence of the Santee and Wateree Rivers, where he was to determine the state of British control of the Santee.1221 Rawdon tried to intervene before Wemyss could act on his orders, and assured Cornwallis that the rebels were “not collected in any part” outside of Georgetown, nor had any of the rebels infiltrating Cheraw made their way towards Georgetown. He said instead that he would have “some trusty persons take a sweep” of the district.1222 Nevertheless, Wemyss soon left Georgetown to move closer to Camden, leaving much of the eastern part of the province to the rebels. In mid-August, Lieutenant Colonel Francis

1219 James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 22 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1220 James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 28 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1221 Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 30 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78.
1222 Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 3 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.
Marion, who had been in the backcountry recuperating from a broken ankle when he learned his Continental regiment had surrendered at Charleston, began collecting men and ordered Lieutenant Colonel Peter Horry to assemble militia from the Kingstree district, march to Lenud’s Ferry on the Santee, and “destroy all the boats and canoes on the River.” He was then to establish guards at each ferry “and prevent any persons crossing to or from Charleston on either side of the River.”

Cornwallis and Rawdon attempted to blame the deteriorating situation throughout the province on Clinton’s proclamations of 1 and 3 June. Cornwallis had initially insisted that they did not in any way affect his plans as they still precluded any rebels who had served in a military capacity or in a political office, and that he had no intention of allowing former rebels to serve in the militia. As the situation worsened, however, he claimed that the proclamation of 3 June was in fact to blame, as the “want of discrimination” against former rebels contained in the proclamation assured the British “would lose...friends by it, and as certainly not gain over...enemies.” Rawdon echoed Cornwallis’s claims, arguing that while most of the inhabitants along the frontier had not supported the British, they were also not actively fighting them until they were released from their paroles.

These sentiments again placed too much confidence in the sanctity of the parole and demonstrated that not enough care was given to monitoring the activity of former rebels who had taken a parole. Many of the rebels who were on parole or

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1224 Charles Cornwallis to Marriott Arbuthnot, 29 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 22 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 7 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2;
had taken an oath of allegiance had gone back to the rebels with little concern for whether they were in violation of their status. Wemyss reported that many of the rebels who captured the prisoners being sent to Georgetown on the Pee Dee were technically still on parole or had taken the oath. Tarleton noted that many of the rebels in the area of Lenud’s Ferry on the Santee were also still on parole.\textsuperscript{1225} Cornwallis also assumed that so many in Mills’ militia regiment had defected because Mills had allowed former rebels to enlist. This is possible, particularly given the general confusion many of the British officers experienced in trying to determine who had participated in the rebellion and who had remained loyal, as well as the absence of any systematized method of determining the makeup of the population in the province. Nevertheless, likely of much more importance in causing the militia on the frontiers to dissolve was the British withdrawing their regular forces from those posts, leaving behind a militia they had spent little time or energy on organizing and training. Cornwallis dismissed this possibility, however, telling Wemyss that reports of the strength of the rebels had been “exaggerated...to a most ridiculous amount.”\textsuperscript{1226}

**From Camden to North Carolina**

On 24 July 1780, Major General Horatio Gates arrived at the rebel camp in North Carolina to take command of the Southern Department and immediately established plans for an attack against the British post at Camden. Upon learning of the threat to Camden, Cornwallis, who had returned to Charleston temporarily to

\textsuperscript{1225} Banastre Tarleton to Charles Cornwallis, 5 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.  
\textsuperscript{1226} Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 28 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78.
oversee the organization of military government there, returned to the backcountry and on 15 August marched from Camden to attack Gates’ army. As was typical when the rebels faced the British army in open battle in the South, they performed poorly, particularly the militia. The British forces routed the rebels on the 16th as the North Carolina militia fled the field, leaving the flank of the rebel army exposed for the British to turn. Two days later, at Fishing Creek north of Camden and on the west side of the Catawba River, Tarleton similarly routed a force under Sumter’s command of a hundred Continentals and 700 militia. Cornwallis was convinced the victories at Camden and Fishing Creek had at last cleared the province of rebel forces, and “the internal commotions & insurrections in the Province will now subside.” Many historians have made similar claims suggesting these two victories gave the British indisputable control of the backcountry once again.

1227 Cornwallis had been concerned Sumter’s position “might prove a foundation for assembling the routed Army” fleeing from Camden. Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 21 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/76. Haldane to Turnbull or Ferguson, 20 August 1780

1228 Ibid., What Cornwallis did not know when he wrote those words to Germain on 21 August, however, was that two days earlier a force of approximately 200 rebels under the command of Colonel Elijah Clarke, James Williams, and Isaac Shelby surprised and defeated nearly 300 Loyalist militia and 200 provincials under the command of Alexander Innes at Musgrove’s Mill on the Enoree River. Even after learning of this defeat, Cornwallis, who did not like to receive bad news that did not meet with his assumptions and expectations, insisted to Cruger, “It is impossible there can be any enemy openly in arms near the frontier after the total rout of Gates and Sumpter.” Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 24 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.

1229 Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis, 1640-165; Pancake, This Destructive War, 107-108; M.F. Treacy, Prelude to Yorktown: The Southern Campaign of Nathanael Greene (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 23; Lambert, South Carolina Loyalists, 130. Lambert quotes Robert Gray, a Loyalist militia officer, as saying that Camden “restored tranquility to the country,” and “had Lord Cornwallis had a sufficient army,” he would have been able to keep South Carolina secure and march into North Carolina. Lambert, like many historians, blame Clinton for Cornwallis’s insufficient numbers, but Cornwallis had insisted to Clinton that the number of troops he had under his command “is in my opinion full equal to the purpose intended by it, unless some considerable reinforcement of Continentals should come from the northward.” Cornwallis had just routed those Continentals. Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 18 May 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Robert Gray, “Observations on the War in Carolina” South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 11 (July 1910): 142.
Cornwallis believed that by driving off Sumter and capturing rebel officers like General Griffith Rutherford of the North Carolina militia at Camden, he could defeat the rebels in the Carolinas.\textsuperscript{1230} What he did not appreciate at the time, however, was that the rebels had a steady supply of leaders who could assume command and maintain the same strategy of control that previous political and military officials had implemented and maintained for the past five and a half years. In their pacification effort in the South Carolina backcountry in the summer and autumn of 1775, the rebels had understood that they needed to target the Loyalists at both the top and bottom. Isolating Loyalist commanders from the people, as they did with the likes of Moses Kirkland and Thomas Fletchall, was necessary but insufficient, as the Loyalists were often able to find competent officers to assume command. The rebels, under William Henry Drayton's leadership, therefore targeted the Loyalist inhabitants as well, thereby weakening any force that remained under the new commanders.

Unlike the rebels, the British would focus much of their efforts on only targeting leadership.\textsuperscript{1231} To Cornwallis's chagrin, however, within a week of his defeat at Fishing Creek, "the indefatigable Sumpter" was "again in the Field, & is beating up for Recruits with the greatest Assiduity." Brigadier General William

\textsuperscript{1230} Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 29 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
\textsuperscript{1231} Much of the original rebel leadership from the first years of the war had been captured at Charleston. After Camden, the British found in some of the baggage left behind by American officers letters from these individuals who were supposed to be prisoners on parole. These prisoners continued to "h[o]ld constant meetings in town and carr[y] on correspondence with the country to keep up the flame of rebellion." They "impose[d] on the ignorant by spreading false reports throughout the whole province to encourage the disaffected and intimidate the others." To "[put] a stop to their proceedings," Cornwallis ordered they be sent to Saint Augustine to remain on parole. Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 3 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Tarleton, \textit{A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781}, 156.
Smallwood, who commanded one of the Maryland regiments that held its ground at Camden “used every Exertion to encourage and induce the Militia to assemble at Charlotte,” and reported to Gates six days after the battle that “they have turned out in great numbers [and] seem spirited.”\textsuperscript{1232} Cornwallis realized that his battlefield success was not having the effect he had anticipated, and he ordered Balfour to print “a number of hand bills with a summary account of our success” and send them to Cornwallis so he could “disperse them in North Carolina, as our cause suffers so much by the falsehoods and misrepresentations of the rebels.”\textsuperscript{1233} In the eastern part of the province, Cornwallis learned that the rebels strength was increasing, and that “Numbers have left their families on Lynches Creek and Black River and gone off with the rebels.”\textsuperscript{1234}

The British saw a dramatic increase in Loyalist support following Camden, but continued to face the same problems that had plagued them since they moved into the South Carolina backcountry, particularly a lack of intelligence on the allegiance of the inhabitants. In Ninety Six, Cruger was troubled by the returns of several militia regiments, noting that even the commanders “knew not themselves what men and arms they had for service.”\textsuperscript{1235} In Orangeburgh, Colonel John Fisher of the militia reported that in the week since the battle at Camden, a number of “suspicious people” had been stopped passing through the district pretending to be Loyalists driven off by rebel parties. Fisher was unable to verify the veracity of their

\textsuperscript{1233} Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 24 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
\textsuperscript{1234} John Hamilton to Charles Cornwallis, 28 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.
\textsuperscript{1235} John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 23 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.
report, and so had them detained. If they were unable to “clear themselves,” they would be sent to Charleston. Noting the confusion this created, Fisher lamented the lack of “some general rule...to distinguish friends from foe.”

After the Loyalists’ defeat at Ramsour’s Mill, the situation for Loyalists in North Carolina had grown increasingly precarious, making Cornwallis anxious to move as early as possible. With the deteriorating situation in South Carolina, however, Cornwallis’s thinking on North Carolina shifted subtly, and he now saw North Carolina as the key to defending South Carolina and Georgia. According to this thinking, only the presence of the Continental Army in North Carolina sustained the rebellion in the South Carolina and Georgia. As he told Clinton at the end of June, capturing North Carolina “would prove an effectual barrier for South Carolina and Georgia” and allow the militia in South Carolina to be more effective. Furthermore, taking North Carolina would not require any additional manpower, since it “could be kept with the assistance of our friends there by as few troops as would be wanted on the borders of [South Carolina] if North Carolina should remain in the hands of our enemies.” His assumption was that since the rebellion was fomented only by rebels in North Carolina, and not rebels behind British lines in South Carolina and Georgia, which he repeatedly claimed had been cleared of resistance, removing forces from the posts in those states to take North Carolina would not pose any problems.\footnote{John Fisher to Henry Haldane, 25 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63.} \footnote{Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 30 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72. He added, “Consequently, if your Excellency should continue to think it expedient to employ part of the troops 572}
The day after the victory at Camden, Cornwallis sent messengers to North Carolina “with directions to our friends there to take arms & assemble immediately, & to seize the most Violent People and all military Stores & magazines belonging to the rebels.” He “promised to march without loss or time to their support,” as soon as supplies he was expecting from Charleston arrived. As when Clinton sent Pearis into the South Carolina backcountry before Charleston had even surrendered, his directions called for Loyalists in North Carolina to show themselves and assemble more than a month before he actually entered that province. Despite the victory at Camden, the army was “much enfeebled by sickness...without magazines or a proper supply of horses for the purpose,” and he had to wait at Camden as the army resupplied. He eventually learned, to his frustration, that since the “Severity of the Rebel Government has so terrified & totally subdued the Minds of the People,” the Loyalists in North Carolina “do not seem inclined to rise until they see our Army in Motion.”

The British did not depart Camden until 7 September. Leaving Turnbull to command at Camden, Cornwallis moved with the main army towards Waxhaw, while Tarleton and the Legion followed on the west side of the Catawba River. The army was delayed while waiting for Tarleton to recover from a fever, which allowed the rebels time to continue assembling militia under the command of Sumter,

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1238 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 29 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72. Cornwallis later learned that some Loyalists on the Pee Dee River in North Carolina had embodied, and even “disarmed several of the Enemy's Stragglers,” but were “so undecided in their Councils” that they were able to do little else, and “even suffered General Gates to pass to Hillsborough with a Guard of six Men only.” Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 19 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/76.
General Jethro Sumner and General William Lee Davidson, and a cavalry corps commanded by Colonel William Richardson Davie. Cornwallis moved from Waxhaw on 24 September, with the advanced guard entering Charlotte two days later. With Tarleton recovering, but not well enough to resume command of the Legion, Lieutenant Colonel George Hanger commanded the advanced guard, which met resistance upon entering the town from Davie’s cavalry. An ill-advised charge by Hanger resulted in heavy casualties for the British, but as the rest of the army entered the town, Davie fell back, leaving Charlotte to the British. Cornwallis immediately issued a proclamation assuring protection for those who would come in to give their parole, and informed Balfour that his plan was “to advance to Salisbury, stay there long enough to give our friends some time to join, and then march to Cross Creek, raise the Highlanders, [and] communicate with shipping” at Cape Fear.

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1239 On 18 September, while the army waited at Waxhaw, Cornwallis intended to have Tarleton move “forward to frighten and scarify the militia.” He learned, however, of “Tarleton being dangerously ill of a fever,” which cost the British the use of the Legion for a time since Cornwallis did not have faith in any of its other officers to command, and because they needed to protect their position while Tarleton recovered. Cornwallis was concerned about leaving a cavalry corps exposed in a fixed spot miles away from the main army, and so sent his aid-de-camp, Lieutenant John Money to evacuate Tarleton. By the time Money arrived, Tarleton’s condition had improved enough that he could evacuated across the Catawba to the main army. Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 19 September 1780, PRO 30/11/76; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 21 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 22 and 23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80; Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson, 23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80; Journal of Lieutenant John Money, 18-23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.

1240 Journal of Lieutenant John Money, 26 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.

1241 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 5 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81; Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 7 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81.
“I Am Inclined to Hope That You Will Not be Much Disturbed”

As he waited at Waxhaw preparing to move towards Charlotte, Cornwallis admitted to Balfour that the rebels of South Carolina would take advantage of the army leaving the province to create instability in its rear. Before he left Camden he assured Cruger, still in command at Ninety Six, that while he would be taking most of the army to North Carolina, he was “inclined to hope that you will not be much disturbed.” Before moving towards Salisbury, Cornwallis intended to establish a post at Charlotte under the command of James Wemyss, to assist in the defense of Ninety Six district and help to “perfectly secure” the district. Cruger informed him, however, that Charlotte was “too remote to have any effect on this quarter.” As had been the case on numerous occasions over the previous months, South Carolina was nowhere near as secure as Cornwallis assured other officers. In early September, militia under Elijah Clarke joined forces with rebels in the Ceded Lands and attacked Augusta, where Thomas Brown commanded. The attack caught Brown completely by surprise, but with the assistance of two hundred Cherokee who were visiting and encamped three miles outside of town, Brown was

1242 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 13 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
1243 Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 4 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
1244 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 2 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3. Cruger instead requested permission to establish cavalry to cover the vast district.
1245 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 28 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64. Many of the men who attacked Augusta were on parole, which led the British to believe they would not be a threat. Cornwallis told Clinton that the insurrection in the Ceded Lands was “unexpected.” Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 22-23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
able to hold off the rebels until Cruger could come to his aid.\textsuperscript{1246} Upon hearing of Cruger’s advance, Clarke and his men retreated.

Although the British managed to hold Augusta, Cruger told Cornwallis that the situation in the district was “alarming.”\textsuperscript{1247} Cruger faced threats from Clarke’s men as well as from rebels in the Ceded Lands and Long Cane settlement. He told Balfour, “The people of the country on both sides of the [Savannah] river” were “yet amazingly disaffected.”\textsuperscript{1248} Cornwallis dismissed Cruger’s concerns, telling Balfour, “I think he seems to be rather more alarmed than is necessary.”\textsuperscript{1249} He did suggest that Cruger take measures to pacify Long Cane, though he added, “This is the most favourable moment for your doing it as no real danger can threaten Ninety Six from any other quarter.”\textsuperscript{1250} He also hoped Cruger would be able to handle these

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\textsuperscript{1246} When he moved into the South Carolina backcountry, Cornwallis hoped “to keep the Indians in good humour, but on no account whatever to bring them forward or employ them.” He believed they were a distraction and that “it is not the intention of the Commander in Chief to make any military use of the Indians.” After he learned of the role the Indians played in the defense of Augusta, however, Cornwallis acceded to Balfour’s suggestion that “the best mode of at once stopping all these kind of expeditions appears to me to be the employing the Indians to clear certain districts where these people retreat to and resort.” Cornwallis told Balfour, “I see the necessity of making use of the Indians altho’ it is positively contrary to my instructions. I therefore would have it done under the restrictions you mention, and desire you will give orders about it.” Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 3 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Charles Cornwallis to Thomas Brown, 17 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 20 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 27 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
\textsuperscript{1247} John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 13 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
\textsuperscript{1248} John Harris Cruger to Nisbet Balfour, 19 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64. Cruger also recommended a post in the vast tract of territory between the Enoree and Tyger Rivers, where most of the inhabitants had left their homes to join the rebels and wait for Cornwallis to move away from South Carolina. He also argued troops were needed to occupy the fork between the Broad and Saluda Rivers. Without these reinforcements, Cruger told Cornwallis, “I apprehend difficulty...this winter.” John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 15-16 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
\textsuperscript{1249} Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 18 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
\textsuperscript{1250} Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 18 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
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problems without requiring reinforcement from the main army, at the time still at Waxhaw, as that would "be very inconvenient."\footnote{1251 Charles Cornwallis to Richard England, 20 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.}

Several days after the successful defense of Augusta, Cruger learned that Clarke was still in the neighborhood of Augusta collecting his men, and likely intended “to return to Augusta when [Cruger] left it, destroy the few friends of Government and keep up this new insurrection till they could establish a formidable body in this quarter." Cruger decided to march up the river to attempt to catch Clarke before continuing on to “settle all the Ceded Lands business.”\footnote{1252 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 23 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.} Clarke’s men, however, moved through the area too quickly for Cruger to catch them, and so Cruger continued to the Ceded Lands, burning the courthouse, some rebel fortifications, and “private houses belonging to the most notorious villains.” A large number of the local inhabitants had joined Clark, including “almost every capital scoundrel,” but Cruger believed the Loyalist militia of around 200 men would be able to maintain security in that notoriously disaffected region. He was more concerned, however, about remaining too far from Ninety Six, and returned to that post.\footnote{1253 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 28 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.} Balfour informed Cornwallis, “The Augusta business is over” and, “I would suppose it was by no means any plan to stop your operations but merely a plundering party.”\footnote{1254 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 27 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.} The British commonly referred to nearly every action the rebels took as a “plundering party,” which led them to conclude that punitive raids and punishment alone, followed by a withdrawal of all forces but some local militia,
would be sufficient to coerce a change in behavior from the rebels.\textsuperscript{1255} The lack of appreciation for the rebels’ strategy of maintaining sustained control over local inhabitants and disrupting the weakened and exposed Loyalist militia, meant that any British successes rarely led to positive long-term effects.

The situation was no better elsewhere in South Carolina. Loyalists from the Pee Dee region fled to Camden with their families, and reported rebel control of Cheraw. Cornwallis saw the need to reestablish militia there lest they “leave all that frontier open to the enemy.” He told Clinton, “The disaffection...of the Country East of Santee is so great that the Account of our Victory [at Camden] could not penetrate into it” as the rebels prevented people from even discussing the battle and spread their own propaganda.\textsuperscript{1256} To counter the “infinite mischief” done by these “infamous falsehoods so industriously circulated by our enemies,” Cornwallis ordered Wemyss to “seize the busy retailers of those pernicious lies and order them a whipping in some publick place of their district.”\textsuperscript{1257} Wemyss, who was still in the High Hills of Santee, was to “[sweep] the country entirely from Kings Tree Bridge to Pedee and returning by the Cheraws.” He was to disarm the inhabitants “in the most rigid manner,” and “punish the concealment of arms and ammunition with a total

\textsuperscript{1255} Even when he recognized that the rebels were focusing their efforts on dispersing parties of Loyalists, Cornwallis dismissed it as plundering rather than a legitimate military objective. He told Balfour, referring to a rebel militia officer, “I can easily conceive him guilty of plundering as the sole object of the militia is to break up, as they call it, their neighbours of the opposite party.” Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 6 September 1780 (Addendum to 3 September 1780), TNA, PRO 30/11/80.

\textsuperscript{1256} Marion and Peter Horry, with about two hundred militia, had been destroying ferryboats over the Black and Santee Rivers to impede British communication with Charleston. They learned of a British escort taking prisoners from Camden to Charleston, and mounted an ambush that freed some of the rebels and resulted in the British soldiers taken prisoner. Tarleton, A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, 157; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 29 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.

\textsuperscript{1257} Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 31 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
demolition of the plantation” where they are found.” He was also to find any of William Henry Mills’ former militia who had fled to the rebels and captured the sick soldiers of the 71st regiment being sent to Georgetown. He was to hang any such person he seized, unless there were too many of them, in which case he was to make an example of a handful of them.1258 Cornwallis gave similar orders to Major James Moncrief, who was to act in the vicinity of Georgetown.

In mid-September, however, Marion, with about 1,000 men, defeated and dispersed a large party of Loyalist militia at Black Mingo Creek outside Georgetown, forcing the British and Loyalists to abandon Georgetown. By the end of September, following the Loyalist defeat at Black Mingo, Wemyss reported that he had “done everything in my power to get at Mr Merrion,” but that he “never could come up with them.” He told Cornwallis he had succeeded in “push[ing] them so hard as in a great measure to break them up.” He also “burnt and laid waste about 50 houses and plantations” belonging to those who had broken their paroles or oaths of allegiance.1259 Moncrief also reported, “I have now done all I can to punish the people in the lower parts of the country.”1260

Many historians criticize these punitive raids for their violence as antithetical to winning hearts and minds of the inhabitants.1261 Ian Saberton defends Wemyss
and Moncrieff, arguing they “did not overstep the rules of warfare of their day.” He argues these measures “had to be tried,” and “may have prevented or deterred quite a few there from presenting a threat in the shorter term.”

The debate over whether the British were too harsh or too lenient, however, misses the point that the rebels still maintained control over the inhabitants of the region and neither indiscriminate violence nor leniency would affect that control. Only by understanding their adversary’s strategy and targeting the use of military force to prevent them from implementing it would the British have been able to give inhabitants of loyal inclinations a real choice.

**Militia and Provincials**

Instead of making the organization of Loyalist support his primary effort, Cornwallis was losing faith in the Loyalist militia. His men had repeatedly noted that they had no reliable means for determining the identity of friend and foe, but he nevertheless blamed militia commanders for enlisting former rebels. When the militia in the High Hills of Santee assembled on Cornwallis’s orders, the British

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**References**


1262 Saberton, *The Cornwallis Papers*, II, 27. Even this argument is debatable, since ten days after telling Cornwallis he had dispersed Marion’s men and they were in retreat, Wemyss reported that Marion and “other leading men are assembl’d at Drowning Creek with about 400 men and are increasing daily.” The Wickwires share Saberton’s interpretation, arguing that tales of British atrocities were overstated and exaggerated “almost gleefully” by the rebels. The Wickwires believe the British were not punitive enough, and if they wanted to suppress the rebellion they would have to “use terror, oppression, confiscation, and brutality on a grand scale.” Wickwire and Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, 172-173, 178. See also James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 30 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.

1263 On Cornwallis’s orders, Wemyss offered pardons to those who had broken their paroles, though he possessed no advantage over the rebels that would make such an offer attractive. Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 26 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80; James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 30 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.

1264 Cornwallis claimed that the collapse of the Cheraw militia was “entirely owing to an inattention to my instructions.” Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson, 5 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
learned that “not a third that assembled had arms.” The remainder of the men “were men to be trusted,” but had been “disarmed by [Cornwallis] and my Lord Rawdon” on their “march to Camden.” Despite the adverse effect his own policies had on raising Loyalist militia there, Cornwallis blamed the regiment’s commander, calling him “weak” if “well intended.” Cornwallis also learned from Balfour that the militia in the Congarees district had been “unfortunately managed,” and the militia commander “never has been in the district himself to arrange his regiment,” and was instead “imposed upon by the worst people in the district.”

When Cornwallis dispatched Wemyss on his punitive raid, he provided little in the way of instructions for raising, organizing, training, or otherwise assisting the Loyalists on what was primarily a mission meant to punish in a region that was quickly slipping out of control for the British. He was not to “stay longer in that country than was “absolutely necessary to do your business effectually.” He did instruct a Loyalist provincial, Abraham De Peyster, to join Wemyss and “endeavour if possible to establish some trusty militia under Colonel Mills at the Cheraws.” Mills, however, had given up on trying to raise a militia, resigned his commission, and moved with his family to Savannah. Command passed to Lieutenant Colonel

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1265 Frederick De Peyster to Charles Cornwallis, 5 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
1266 Charles Cornwallis to Frederick De Peyster, 31 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
1267 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 1 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
1268 Cornwallis instead described the purpose of these raids as punishment for the rebels. Charles Cornwallis to John Hamilton, 28 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 29 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
1269 Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, 28 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
1270 Charles Cornwallis to Frederick De Peyster, 31 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/79.
Robert Gray, but he did not have any better luck than Mills. Gray told Cornwallis nearly three quarters of the inhabitants on the Pee Dee River had joined the rebels, including “almost every person of influence or popularity.” Those who remained were so few in number, “they were able to effect nothing.” The area of the Little Pee Dee River was one of the “only well affected part[s] of the district,” but the British got little support from them since “by coming so far from their homes they exposed their families and property to the resentment of the rebels...who have been indefatigable in persecuting them upon every occasion.” Likewise, Moncrief was to establish militia at Georgetown under Colonels John Ball and John Wigfall, who were to defend ferries across the Black River. Within weeks, however, Marion had defeated Ball’s regiment at Black Mingo.

Cornwallis initially resisted building provincial corps of Loyalists in South Carolina not only because of their expense compared to militia, but because he learned that recruiting for these corps depleted the militia of the best recruits in a district. After experiencing what he called “the gross misbehavior of the militia of this province,” however, he revisited the idea of raising provincial corps instead. He

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1271 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 5 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1272 Robert Gray to Charles Cornwallis, 30 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
1273 Cornwallis told Turnbull that he suspected that the militia near Georgetown “will meet with some serious disaster,” and therefore sent eighty provincial forces “to prevent the enemy from undertaking any thing against our militia posts,” but dismissed Balfour’s suggestion to retake Georgetown using militia. Turnbull responded, “Colonel Balfour’s ideas of militia, I am afraid, goes too high” and that while “Balfour talks of retaking possession of Georgetown...if he sends all militia, I doubt very much his success.” Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, 2 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81; George Turnbull to Charles Cornwallis, 4 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1274 Cornwallis initially allowed Robert Cunningham to raise a corps of provincials in Ninety Six, but changed his mind when he saw that this left the militia with few reliable leaders. He instead gave Cunningham command of a militia regiment in that district. Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 6 September 1780, Addendum to 3 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
decided once he entered North Carolina he would “try raising corps only,” and stated, “I wish I had tried it more at first” in South Carolina.\footnote{Charles Cornwallis to Archibald Campbell, 20 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.} He told Cruger, “From the experience I have lately had of the militia I am convinced we must try to raise Provincial Corps,” and ordered Cruger to allow recruiting for a provincial corps in Ninety Six under the command of Robert Cunningham.\footnote{Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 6 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81.} This was five months into the occupation, however, and by then the British had lost many of the Loyalists to the rebels. They had difficulty recruiting for the provincial corps, and those they did recruit were of limited utility. Major John Harrison, for example, enlisted men in the region between the Pee Dee and Wateree Rivers, but Wemyss complained to Cornwallis this corps was, “if possible worse than militia, their whole desire being to plunder and steal, and, when they have got as much as their horses will carry, to run home.”\footnote{James Wemyss to Charles Cornwallis, 30 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.} Furthermore, it consisted of “but fifty [men]...and are all dispersed.”\footnote{George Turnbull to Charles Cornwallis, 4 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.}

Cornwallis had advocated a plan of building militia without understanding how to use the militia or what kind of support they would need. Instead he expected a fighting force that would be immediately effective without the need for training or proper leadership.\footnote{Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, 16 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/77. Cornwallis “A very plain man with a good character and tolerable understanding will do,” even if they did not have any military experience.} The level of Cornwallis’s frustration with the defecting militia is evident in his policies for dealing with prisoners captured in arms, which became even more confused and counterproductive. Cornwallis had ordered that anyone who had taken the oath of allegiance and fought with the Loyalist militia but then
fled to the rebels should be hanged if recaptured by the British. Cornwallis had previously insisted that the oath of allegiance be given only to stalwart Loyalists, and yet his new policy did not consider the reasons why someone of such strong loyal inclinations might eventually feel compelled to support the rebels. The result was a set of policies that punished the most loyal more harshly than those who had always been in arms against the British. Likewise, for all of the complaints from British officers about Clinton’s proclamation of 3 June forcing the rebels to take a side, Cornwallis and his subordinates grew increasingly less tolerant of neutrality among the inhabitants. In early September, Cornwallis told Cruger, ”[I]n a civil war there is no admitting of neutral characters and that those who are not clearly with us must be so far considered against us as to be disarmed and every measure taken to prevent their being able to do mischief.”

Cornwallis likely would have had more success giving priority to provincial corps from the beginning, even if they were more expensive. The more problematic aspect of forming provincial corps from Cornwallis’s perspective, however, was that they would take time to organize and train to a more professional standard. Given his predilection for moving quickly from one province to the next, however, and his assumption that Loyalists would come from all around and fall in line behind the marching army, it was more convenient for Cornwallis to rely on militia that he assumed would be immediately battle ready and effective against the enemy. Several of Cornwallis’s subordinates, however, believed provincial corps were necessary. Alexander Innes, who commanded the South Carolina Royalists, told

1280 Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 4 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
Cornwallis that while the militia “will ever prove a useless, disorderly, destructive banditti,” based on his experience with his corps, “the same people of which the militia are composed” became “such different men in a regular Provincial corps.” Tarleton made a similar argument in his memoirs. Though known more for his support for punishment and punitive measures to make the rebels submit, he astutely noted that gaining active and effective support from the Loyalists would be a long-term effort. Recognizing the militia were not prepared to act on their own against the rebels, Tarleton argued, “The only probable way to reap advantages from the [Loyalists] in Carolina, would have been to incorporate the young men as they were raised in the established provincial corps, where they could be properly trained, and formed under officers of experience.” As a result, “all the British regulars would have been saved, the King’s troops in general would have been augmented, and considerable service might have been derived from their additional numbers.”

Patrick Ferguson

Another junior officer serving in South Carolina advocated for giving more attention to organizing and training Loyalists. With the fall of Charleston, Clinton appointed Major Patrick Ferguson to be Inspector of Militia in the Carolinas. Like Tarleton, Ferguson had been an outspoken supporter of a punitive response to coerce submission from the rebels, but his tenure as Inspector of Militia tempered

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1281 Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, 5 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
1282 Tarleton, A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, 98.
these opinions somewhat.\textsuperscript{1283} He developed a better understanding of what it would take to raise Loyalist militia, and this led him to focus his attentions on measures most conducive to developing Loyalist support rather than merely punishing the rebels. Ferguson received his appointment from Clinton, and was not well regarded by Cornwallis or his officers commanding in South Carolina, and historians have generally echoed their criticisms. Ferguson was brash, impulsive, and his operational acumen was debatable, particularly given the circumstances by which he met defeat and death at King's Mountain in early October 1780. Nevertheless, he was particularly adept at raising and organizing Loyalists. John Pancake, who argues Ferguson was “ill-suited” to his position, writes, “His only qualification was an admitted talent for recruiting Loyalists.”\textsuperscript{1284} This, however, was precisely the most critical skill for the success of the southern strategy, and what the British desperately needed in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Ferguson acknowledged more explicitly than other officers that many of loyal principles had in fact been “compelled or seduced to act with” the rebels, and by making no effort to identify those individuals the British were handicapping their

\textsuperscript{1283} After the defense of Savannah in late 1779, Ferguson suggested to Clinton that having regained the initiative, the British should enact a policy of “distressing the Country, doing justice on the rebel Inhabitants, subsisting at their Expence, and destroying what ever may be of use to their Troops.” This would cause the population to “lose all hope,” forcing the “Continental Army [to] either advance and commit itself without reserve in a General Action, or lose all confidence in itself and credit with the People.” The result of the latter option would force “the Currency [to] sink below all Value so as to leave the Congress with no visible means of keeping an Army together or maintaining any certain Authority.” Soldiers would desert in great numbers, “...and all the people seeing no end of their fruitless sufferings, dispirited and harass’d and in Danger of want from the bad Crop and waste of both Armys [would be] incline[d] to a Speedy Settlement.” Patrick Ferguson to Henry Clinton, 22 November 1779 in Howard Peckham, ed. \textit{Sources of American Independence: Selected Manuscripts from the Collections of the William L. Clements Library} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 350-352.

\textsuperscript{1284} Pancake, \textit{This Destructive War}, 69. See also Smith, \textit{Loyalists and Redcoats}, 138-139; Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis, 182-184; Buchanan, \textit{The Road to Guilford Courthouse}, 202-204.
efforts from the start. He had militia “protect from molestation and injury those unhappy men” who would “shew themselves by their future conduct worthy of being again received with confidence into this free, happy and loyal community.”\(^\text{1285}\)

He told Cornwallis of two officers at Orangeburgh who served in the state assembly under the rebel government, but investigated further and explained to Cornwallis that the were “steady friends of Government,” and that “it has been a scheme of policy among the people of that quarter as their last resource to vote in members and procure magistrates favorable to them in order in some degree to protect them in the Assembly.” They would “slurr over” the objectionable parts of the oath the rebels had force them to take. As a result, Ferguson argued, they should not be excluded from the militia simply because they had served in the rebel government.\(^\text{1286}\) He showed an in depth understanding as well of other “various and artfull methods” the rebels had used against Loyalists, including “suppressing the liberty of the press, punishing men for reporting bad news altho true, or examining freely into their conduct,” thereby “keeping them in total ignorance of the truth.”\(^\text{1287}\)

His efforts to gain intelligence on the population of the districts in which he raised militia exceeded those of other officers. He had his men “get a return, from every inhabitant within the bounds of their company,” as well as the arms and ammunition they possessed.\(^\text{1288}\) Other British officers made returns of the militia only once they had mustered, operating on the assumption that all who assembled

\(^{1285}\) Articles of Association (Enclosure) in Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
\(^{1286}\) Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 14 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
\(^{1287}\) Patrick Ferguson to Officers Commanding the Militia, 23 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
\(^{1288}\) Patrick Ferguson Instructions to the Orangeburgh Militia, 13 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
were loyal and all who did not had been rebels. Ferguson also went further than other officers in investigating the background of individuals accused of being rebels. He instructed commanding officers of the militia regiments he organized to consider as rebels those who had been “guilty of blood or rapine” or “from inclination...willingly contributed to the support of the rebel government.”

If an individual “continued under the rebel government from necessity alone,” or “only comply'd with what they were ordered to do to avoid being fined or otherwise molested,” they were to be considered “Quiet People” rather than rebels. While most British officers assumed that individuals on parole could be safely ignored, Ferguson instructed that the militia “observe [the] conduct” of the Quiet People to determine their loyalties. If Quiet People were to be admitted into the militia, it was to be a ratio of no more than one for every three Loyalists to ensure they “prove faithfull.” Even many of those “included in the Rebel column” who “see their error,” could “be by degrees received without suspicion into the militia” if they were “men in other respects of moral character.” The Loyalists were therefore “to avoid insulting or molesting such of their neighbours as have been disaffected” and to “discourage and prevent others from injuring them or irritating them.” If they were not responsible for the death of Loyalists, Ferguson’s intention was that “their daily experience and the knowledge they will acquire of their true interests will open the eyes of such as are not convinced.”

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1289 Patrick Ferguson to Officers Commanding the Militia, 23 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1290 Ibid.
Ferguson also attempted to counter the self-defeating elements of Cornwallis’s policies for prisoners and Loyalists who deserted or attempted to flee to the enemy. While he recognized the problems with desertion, he argued, “if every lad who left camp when the whim struck him was to be turn’d out, the militia would soon become very thin.” Ferguson believed the militia, with the proper training, could be of inestimable service to the British, as the men were “very fit for rough and irregular war” since they were “all excellent woods men, unerring shots, carefull to a degree to prevent waste or damage to their ammunition, patient of hunger and hardship, and almost regardless of blanketts, cloathing, rum, and the other indulgences essential to our soldiers.” When his men captured two Loyalists suspected of deserting, he responded to their protestations of loyalty in a manner more reminiscent of rebel policy in previous years. He told the two men “the only proof they could give was to stand forth...in defence of their country,” or he would send them to jail at Ninety Six. Under Cornwallis’s militia policy these men, despite an underlying “principle of loyalty and fidelity,” would have been treated more harshly than rebels captured in arms. They likely would not have been allowed to enlist in the militia, and may even have been subject to execution as Loyalists suspected of fleeing to rebel-held territory. Ferguson believed his own policies for dealing with the militia “would not only enable us to assemble four times the

1291 Patrick Ferguson to Lord Rawdon, Undated, TNA, PRO 30/11/63. Ferguson recognized that “it is almost impossible to assemble any number of [militia] on a sudden call of danger or to keep them many days together,” and attempted to make the men “sensible of the ruinous consequence of this backwardness of assembling.”
number of men twice as soon but to make them really fit for service and in half the

Ferguson’s death, however, would put a premature end to these promising
methods of securing the support of Loyalists, and raising and drilling Loyalist militia
so they could be of use to the British. In September 1780, Ferguson entered Tryon
County in North Carolina to act as the left flank to Cornwallis’s advancing army,
protecting them from rebel strongholds near the mountains. Unlike other British
officers who had called on Loyalists to rise and assemble on their own and make a
dangerous journey to find the main rebel army, Ferguson had told Loyalists in Tryon
County to remain quiet until they army arrived and they could be properly
supported. In the meantime they were to keep their eyes and ears open and acquire
what information they could about the rebels, as “intelligence is even of more
importance to our success than a reinforcement of men.”1293 While in North Carolina
he attempted unsuccessfully to capture Elijah Clarke and his men, who were
returning from the attack against Augusta. He then remained at Gilbertown where
he began training the Tryon County militia he had collected. He learned that his
presence in western North Carolina had alerted the “overmountain men,” as well as
North Carolinians and Virginians on the eastern side of the mountains, who were
assembling against him under the command of Colonels Isaac Shelby, John Sevier,
Charles McDowell, Benjamin Cleveland, and William Campbell. Ferguson moved
towards Charlotte and Cornwallis dispatched McArthur with part of the 71st

1292 Ibid.
1293 Patrick Ferguson to Loyalists in Tryon County, Undated (Enclosure) in Patrick Ferguson to
Charles Cornwallis, 14 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64.
regiment to Armer’s Ford on the Catawba River to meet and reinforce Ferguson before determining the enemy’s situation. Before he received Cornwallis’s instructions, however, Ferguson arrived and took a position at the top of King’s Mountain, where the combined rebel forces routed Ferguson’s men and killed him on 7 October.\textsuperscript{1294}

**The Significance of Kings Mountain**

Clinton retrospectively marked King’s Mountain as a turning point in the southern campaign, after which began their difficulties in recruiting Loyalist support.\textsuperscript{1295} Historians have also pointed to the battle as the turning point of the war, and for the same reason.\textsuperscript{1296} Both from their own mistakes and from a rebel strategy that survived a number of apparent setbacks, however, the British had had significant difficulties recruiting and maintaining Loyalist support within weeks of entering the South Carolina backcountry in May 1780. King’s Mountain was a turning point, but not because it caused the challenges in recruiting Loyalist support. Instead, it was the point at which Cornwallis began to give up on the southern

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\textsuperscript{1294} Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 28 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64; Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 30 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64; Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 1 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 3 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 5 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81; Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson, 5 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson, 6 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81; Patrick Ferguson to Charles Cornwallis, 6 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Samuel C. Williams, ed., “General Richard Winn’s Notes – 1780,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 44 (January 1943): 2.

\textsuperscript{1295} Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 226. Clinton wrote that King’s Mountain “unhappily proved the first link in a chain of evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America.”

strategy, believing the Loyalists to be less numerous than assumed, feckless, and even cowardly.

Franklin and Mary Wickwire argue that “Cornwallis erred in judgment several times during the Revolution but not in his arrangements for marching into North Carolina,” and that the failure of that campaign was “no fault of his own.”

Even discounting the challenges Cornwallis had raising Loyalist support, and the questionable assumption underlying the entire expedition, that pacifying North Carolina would pacify South Carolina and Georgia, the North Carolina campaign quickly fell apart. Even before Ferguson’s defeat, the rebels were making it increasingly difficult for Cornwallis to maintain his position at Charlotte, let alone leave only a post there and move to Cross Creek. Lord Rawdon, handling the correspondence for an ill Cornwallis, informed Balfour “The inveteracy of the inhabitants of Mecklenburg County was so great...that we were totally ignorant of the situation of any of our posts” when rebels intercepted nearly all of their messengers. To make their position more perilous, the British, including Cornwallis at Charlotte and Balfour in Charleston, could not obtain any information about proceedings in the North, particularly whether a rumored French fleet in the vicinity would take Cape Fear and threaten British efforts to establish a post at Cross Creek. From fear the rebels at King’s Mountain intended to attack Ninety Six, the British retreated from Charlotte to Winnsboro in South Carolina. Even in their

1297 Wickwire and Wickwire, Cornwallis and the War of Independence (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 229.
1298 Lord Rawdon to Nisbet Balfour, 21 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 25 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/64; Cornwallis to Balfour, 27 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.
retreat, they were “still ignorant of all that was passing in any other part of the province.”

As the British were preparing to move into North Carolina in August, Cornwallis requested a diversion in the Chesapeake to occupy Virginia forces and keep them from reinforcing the rebels in North Carolina. Clinton approved this request, in part because Germain had long advocated for activity in the Chesapeake, and sent Major General Alexander Leslie. In October, however, with the British retreating from Charlotte, Rawdon canceled the diversion with a letter to Leslie that was equal parts disingenuous and self-aware. He told Leslie that when Cornwallis requested the diversion, “it was imagined that the tranquility of South Carolina was assured” and that the Loyalists in North Carolina were telling the truth when they spoke of their numbers and readiness to support the British. Despite the deteriorating situation in South Carolina when the British moved into North Carolina, Rawdon claimed only on their retreat did they learn of the true state of South Carolina as they “received the first intelligence respecting the different posts in this province which had reached us for near three weeks, every express from Camden having been waylaid.” He requested Leslie instead proceed to Cape Fear. Eventually Cornwallis would order Leslie to Charleston to reinforce his own men in South Carolina. Rawdon sent a similar message to Clinton, adding that the Loyalists in North Carolina had “not given evidence enough, either of their number or their

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1299 Lord Rawdon to Nisbet Balfour, 21 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1300 Lord Rawdon to Alexander Leslie, 24 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
activity.”\footnote{1301 Lord Rawdon to Henry Clinton, 29 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3. \footnote{1302 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 5 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4. \footnote{1303 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 13 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; George Turnbull to Lord Rawdon, 20 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Lord Rawdon to John Harris Cruger, 28 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; As Balfour explained to Rawdon, "[Cruger] has got a stockade made round the town at Ninety Six with block houses and redoubts and has been very active in strengthening his post, so that I would hope there will be but little fear of his being forced by any militia force." Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 26 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3. \footnote{1304 Lord Rawdon to John Hamilton, 15 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Lord Rawdon to Nisbet Balfour, 21 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; John Harris Cruger to Nisbet Balfour, 22 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Cruger also had Moses Kirkland raise militia to fortify other posts. Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 29 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.} After having left South Carolina dangerously exposed to the rebels by leaving it and moving to North Carolina, the British now blamed the Loyalists in North Carolina for their defeat in that province. Balfour attempted to make this point to Cornwallis, noting that leaving South Carolina in its current situation risked both North and South Carolina. Balfour noted after the fact, however, that “The most earnest desire for a forward movement and an offensive war prevented my mentioning any sort of obstructions.”\footnote{1302}

Upon returning to South Carolina, Cornwallis learned of the perilous situation the British faced throughout the province. Rather than patrolling their districts to clear out the rebels, isolate them from the Loyalist population and organize Loyalist support, the British now had little choice but to fortify their posts, controlling little territory beyond those positions.\footnote{1303} Thomas Brown, still in command at Augusta, called on the Cherokee to conduct raids on the frontier to draw the attention of rebel forces operating there away from Ninety Six as Cruger fortified that post and Rawdon dispatched Wemyss to reinforce him.\footnote{1304} The militia in that district had almost entirely dissolved, however, as Cruger reported “It is now above a week since I have been using every argument in my power to get them
together to save their country, themselves and their families.” Moses Kirkland likewise told Cornwallis that unless he sent immediate reinforcements to the upper district between the Broad and Saluda River, they would lose the support of the entire Loyalist militia. To make the situation worse, Cornwallis learned that Robert Cunningham had failed to raise a provincial corps. Cornwallis concluded, “raising men is now impossible,” and that they would have to “make the most of the militia.”

The British again reoccupied Georgetown, but Balfour noted, “The Pedee, I fear, is totally in the enemy’s possession, and indeed they make inroads into the very banks of the Santee,” threatening communication between Camden and the coast. A week later, he reported that the rebels “having increased considerably...crossed the Santee...in small but many partys.” As in Ninety Six, the militia was also collapsing in the eastern region of the province, and the British could no longer “expect the smallest service” from them. In later October the rebels defeated and dispersed Loyalist militia in the High Hills of Santee near the Black River, which left the British exposed “to the east and north” and “will prevent

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1305 John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 13 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3; Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 27 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1306 Moses Kirkland to Charles Cornwallis, 31 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1307 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 1 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 5 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4.
1308 Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 26 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3. Balfour told Rawdon, "The country betwixt Pedee and Santee is in a truly miserable situation, and I humbly conceive that now is the time to take some intermediate post betwixt Camden and George Town.”
1309 Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 1 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4.
1310 Nisbet Balfour to Lord Rawdon, 26 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
our collecting provisions in these quarters.” All of these factors led Balfour to recommend a post between Camden and Georgetown, suggesting Kingstree on the Black River. Tarleton was sent to “destroy the country” from Kingstree to Nelson’s Ferry, even though Cornwallis believed it unnecessary as “The enemy...is in no great force” in that area, only “parties of ten or twelve rebels” which he believed were “nothing but plundering parties.” He was therefore not inclined to support Balfour’s suggestion for a post at Kingstree, even though Balfour again tried to convince him of its necessity since, after Talreton left, “nothing will remain safe, however it may be for a time.”

As the British retracted their posts at the end of 1780, and attempted to instead seek out and destroy rebel armies, they suffered one setback after another. In early November, at Fishdam Ford, on the Broad River north of Winnsboro, Sumter defeated the 63rd Regiment and part of the British Legion sent to capture him, injuring and capturing Wemyss in the process. After the battle, Cornwallis recalled Tarleton from his punitive raid through the eastern part of the state to track and defeat Sumter. On 20 November, two weeks after the battle at Fishdam Ford,

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1311 George Turnbull to Lord Rawdon, 29 October 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/3.
1312 Tarleton to Turnbull, 5 November 1780; Cornwallis to Tarleton, 8 November 1780; Cornwallis to Tarleton, 1 November 1780
1313 Charles Cornwallis to Banastre Tarleton, 2 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Banastre Tarleton to George Turnbull, 5 November 1780 (Enclosure) in George Turnbull to Charles Cornwallis, 8 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Charles Cornwallis to Banastre Tarleton, 8 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 10 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 12 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 14 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 15 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 16 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 16 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82. Balfour ignored Cornwallis’s opposition and sent the 64th Regiment to Kingstree Bridge, which Cornwallis retroactively supported. Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 17 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82; Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 17 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.
Tarleton located Sumter at a farm on the Tyger River owned by a William Blackstock. For the second time in two weeks, the rebel militia defeated British regulars and provincials, though Sumter was wounded in the battle, which would remove him from action for several weeks. After the battle Tarleton misled Cornwallis as to the outcome of the battle, claiming he had routed the rebels and Sumter was dead. Based on Tarleton’s assurances, Cornwallis assured Cruger, “the fork [between Broad and Saluda Rivers] is by this time pretty well cleared of rebel parties.”

In early December, at the site of mills owned by Colonel Henry Rugeley, militia under Rugeley's command abandoned their position north of Camden without firing a shot. Left on the front lines without any support from the army, the Loyalist militia fled upon the advance of rebels under the command of Brigadier General Daniel Morgan and cavalry commanded by Colonel William Washington. This was the first attack by elements of the Continental Army into South Carolina since Camden, and the British thereafter turned almost all of their attention to the main rebel army in North Carolina. Their lack of success developing Loyalist support

\[1314\] Banastre Tarleton to Charles Cornwallis, 21 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Banastre Tarleton to Charles Cornwallis, 22 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Banastre Tarleton to Charles Cornwallis, 24 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Banastre Tarleton to Charles Cornwallis, 25 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 23 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.

\[1315\] Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 23 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82. The effect of Tarleton's mischaracterizations on Cornwallis's statement is made clear by the fact that just three days before the battle he had called “The situation of things in the 96 District...very unpleasant and distressing,” and noted how the Loyalists were “submitting tamely” to the rebels. Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 17 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.

\[1316\] George Turnbull to Charles Cornwallis, 12 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 1 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Henry Rugeley to Lord Rawdon, 1 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 1 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 2 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/83; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 2 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4; Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 3 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72; Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 3 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4.
over much of the previous year, however, meant they had a great deal of difficulty determining the enemy's location and movements. Encapsulating much of his attitude towards the Loyalists during his time in command, Cornwallis expressed his frustration about his lack of accurate information, telling Tarleton, “the friends hereabouts are so timid and so stupid that I can get no intelligence.”

The Southern Strategy in Tatters

In early December 1780, shortly after the rebel success at Rugeley’s Mill, Major General Nathanael Greene arrived at Charlotte to take command of the Southern Department from Gates. Among Greene’s greatest achievements was to rebuild an army that he described as “better calculated to excite the pity of its friends, than alarm the fears of its enemies.” He successfully sustained what was “a Shadow of an Army without Clothing, Tents and Provisions[,] except what is provided by daily Collections.” Such measures were critical at this point given the weakened position of the British in South Carolina. As they lost Loyalist support, retreated into newly fortified posts and relinquished control over much of the rest of the province, the British feared the main Continental Army in North Carolina more than at anytime since the fall of Charleston.

Historians have, however, overemphasized the extent to which Greene was responsible for the strategy that defeated the British in the South. Greene supported

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1317 Charles Cornwallis to Banastre Tarleton, 18 December 1780, TNA PRO 30/11/83. Cruger made a similar complaint from Ninety Six, noting, “As our friends abandon the country where the rebels go, our intelligence is very bad.” John Harris Cruger to Charles Cornwallis, 9 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/4.

the activities of militia commanders like Marion, Sumter, and Andrew Pickens.\textsuperscript{1319}

He was also highly critical of militia, however, including their reliability and discipline, and the resources necessary to sustain militia in the field. He rarely conceded the critical role they had played since the beginning of the war, and particularly in the previous two years, as three separate Continental Armies met defeat by the British. John Rutledge, who was still governor of South Carolina after fleeing Charleston before it fell in May to ensure continuity of government, referred ironically to the criticisms of militia in October 1780 when he wrote to the South Carolina delegates in Congress criticizing the support the southern states were receiving. Rutledge concluded his complaints by noting, “if any thing material is done for our poor State in any reasonable Time, it will probably be by the despised shabby Militia.”\textsuperscript{1320}

Greene largely continued the same rebel strategy that had been in place for more than five years, targeting Loyalists to prevent them from supporting the British. More importantly, however, Greene was now able to turn his attention to the regular British army precisely because the rebel strategy had been so successful to that point in weakening the British position in South Carolina. No longer did the rebels have to follow Davidson’s advice of avoiding a general action in favor of disbanding and disarming Loyalists. In January 1781, Greene sent Morgan and

\textsuperscript{1319} Andrew Pickens broke his parole, or decided the British had violated the terms of the parole, in December 1780 when Loyalist forces burned his property in the Long Cane settlement as they tried to stop a rebel attack there led by Elijah Clarke. Alice Noble Waring, \textit{The Fighting Elder: Andrew Pickens} (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 41-42.

Washington into South Carolina to consolidate rebel control over the region between the Pacolet and Broad Rivers.\footnote{Greene’s orders were a variation of a plan first proposed by Davidson in November to Alexander Martin, the head of the North Carolina Board of War, to send a force under Morgan’s command “immediately to 96 and possess ourselves of the western parts of South Carolina.” Davidson hoped this would “oblige the Enemy to divide ... or vacate the present Posts & collect to one point, in which Case we can command the country, cut off their supplies, and force them to retreat.” William Lee Davidson to Alexander Martin, 27 November 1780, William Lee Davidson Papers, Davidson College.} This move surprised Cornwallis, who at the time was making plans for another march into North Carolina.\footnote{The news of Greene detaching Morgan surprised Cornwallis not only because the Continental commander had divided his force, but because only days before Cornwallis insisted that he could not “conceive it possible that Green will attempt any thing materially offensive,” and that it was not possible “for him to strike any blow that would materially affect my movements.” He believed his move into North Carolina would “oblige Morgan and Washington absolutely to quit the country before me.” Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 28 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/83; Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 30 December 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/83.} This time his focus was less on building Loyalist support than on reaching Cross Creek, opening the Cape Fear River, and cutting off the flow of provisions to rebels in South Carolina and Georgia. After Cornwallis diverted Alexander Leslie from his diversionary expedition in the Chesapeake to South Carolina, Clinton had sent two additional forces into Virginia, under the commands of Brigadier General Benedict Arnold and Major General William Phillips respectively. Cornwallis and Rawdon believed together with Phillips, they could conquer North Carolina and subdue Virginia, thereby pacifying South Carolina and Georgia without overwhelming support from the Loyalists.

**Cornwallis believed Ninety Six to be Morgan’s target, and detached Tarleton with more than 1,100 men, including the Legion and regular infantry, to reinforce Cruger, now largely barricaded in a fortified post at Ninety Six. Once he learned Ninety Six was not Morgan’s target, Tarleton sought out the rebel army.** The result
was the overwhelming defeat of Tarleton’s force at Cowpens. Cornwallis still hoped to capture North Carolina, and though he had received reinforcement when Leslie arrived at Charleston, with the southern strategy of organizing Loyalist support in shambles, Cornwallis needed to recapture the more then hundreds of prisoners that the rebels had taken. Greene moved quickly to meet Morgan’s army as it fell back from South Carolina, while Cornwallis hoped to get between Morgan and the rest of the rebel army, or failing that to force battle before the rebel army could cross the Dan River to the safety of Virginia. Despite the British destroying excess baggage and equipment to increase speed, the rebels beat the British across the Catawba, Yadkin, and Dan Rivers, often with the help of heavy rains that flooded rivers dividing the British and the rebels. Greene, following a Fabian strategy of strategic retreat as the rebels had done before him during the British marches from Savannah to Augusta and Charleston in 1779, decided with the counsel of his officers to cross into Virginia even though it meant abandoning North Carolina for a time.

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1323 Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 17 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5; Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 25 January 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/84.
While Cornwallis was in North Carolina, Balfour again tried to warn him about the state of South Carolina. Cornwallis, however, showed little interest in attending to the security concerns in South Carolina, and claimed he was leaving “the provinces of South Carolina and Georgia in perfect security.” To appease Balfour’s concerns about Ninety Six, Cornwallis detached the 7th Regiment, which he believed would “ease the despondency which prevails in those parts.” 1326 Balfour agreed it would “put 96 out of all real hazard.” 1327 Cornwallis privately admitted to Rawdon, however, that the 7th Regiment consisted of “not...above 230 men,” most of whom were of too ill to make the planned march into North Carolina. 1328 Cornwallis told Balfour to instead focus on securing the Cape Fear River to supply the army once it reached Cross Creek. He ordered Balfour to send a detachment from Charleston to Cape Fear to “establish some Post for the Protection of the Victuallers and Vessels in the River.” Balfour sent Major James Craig, who arrived with about 450 regulars, at the end of January. They faced almost immediate challenges when Craig was unable to take and hold Wilmington with the size of his force. He established a fortified position below the town, but this left him “at a loss how to accomplish” the task of securing the river unless he could “dissipate the collection in my front.” He issued paroles without requiring oaths of allegiance because, “I cannot protect them from the troubles to which they would be expos’d.” With the British

1326 Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, 1 January 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/84.
1327 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 7 January 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
1328 Cornwallis to Rawdon, 1 January 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/84. Balfour had told him he would have to send at least 500 men to such a distant post unless he intended for them to only hold the fortified post at Ninety Six and “leave the possession of the country to the banditti.” Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 2 January 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/70.
able to control little more than their fortified position, however, the paroles had no effect. He reported to Balfour that the rebels were growing in strength, and that Loyalists were joining the rebels only because of “apprehensions of my not being able to protect them.” He claimed, “The more sanguine affirm they would join me,” but that counted for little in practice.1329

After Greene took his army into Virginia, Cornwallis proceeded to Hillsborough where he made one last attempt to raise Loyalists.1330 Numbers of Loyalists did come into the British camp, but few showed any willingness to remain and fight with the British. In his memoirs Tarleton argues that this effort at recruiting Loyalists was at best half-hearted. He noted that while Greene had been “chased out of the province,” the Loyalists “declared, they soon expected them to return, and the dread of violence and persecution prevented their taking a decided part.” More importantly, according to Tarleton, “the King’s troops had never made any serious effort to assist the well affected in North Carolina since the commencement of the war,” and this had “not only reduced their numbers and weakened their attachment, but had confirmed the power and superiority” of the rebels. Indeed, even with Greene in Virginia, the rebels still managed to target and disperse many Loyalists in North Carolina.1331 Furthermore, Cornwallis’s last-ditch

1329 James Craig to Nisbet Balfour, 10 February 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5. The Rebels established a camp at Heron’s Bridge, north of Wilmington on the Northeast Cape Fear River. James Craig to Nisbet Balfour, 12 February 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
1330 Like previous British commanders, Cornwallis interpreted the rebels’ measured, strategic retreat as fleeing “with the utmost precipitation,” and believed this would result in a large turnout of Loyalist support. Charles Cornwallis to Benedict Arnold, 21 February 1781, TNA, PRO 3/11/85.
1331 Greene dispatched cavalry under Colonel Henry Lee to harass and disperse Loyalists, and “alarm the enemy by night, and...harass them by day.” On one occasion Lee dispersed a group of Loyalists who were looking for Tarleton and mistook Lee’s men for Tarleton’s. Shortly thereafter, Tarleton
attempt to raise Loyalist support was short-lived. When Greene returned to North Carolina at the end of February, Cornwallis left Hillsborough and moved west to the Haw River. Tarleton notes that while this move was supposedly for “the protection of a body of the King’s friends, supposed to reside in that district,” Cornwallis plainly preferred to force battle with Greene instead. In abandoning Hillsborough less than a week after calling for Loyalists to show themselves, Tarleton argues Cornwallis “relinquished his claim to the superiority of British arms.”

Cornwallis believed that only by defeating Greene’s army could he convince Loyalists to rise and support the British, despite the aftermath of the victory at Camden disputing this assumption. He decided that he would have to forego collecting and assembling Loyalists to instead defeat Greene, forcing the Loyalists to come to him. The two armies met on 15 March at Guilford Courthouse, where the British held the field only at the cost of significant casualties. Cornwallis attempted to spin the outcome in his favor, claiming a “complete victory...over the Rebel forces,” and issued a summons for “the friends to the true constitution of their country...to stand forth and assist in securing their ancient rights and liberties.” He received little response, and after deciding he would not have a second opportunity to bring Greene to battle, and with the army desperate for provisions, decided to march to

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1332 Tarleton, A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, 234. See also Charles Cornwallis to James Craig, 5 March 1781 (Addendum to 21 February 1781), TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
1333 Charles Cornwallis to James Craig, 5 March 1781, Addendum to 21 February 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
1334 Charles Cornwallis Proclamation, 18 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5; Charles Cornwallis Proclamation, 18 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/101.
Cross Creek where he expected to be supplied from Wilmington. Only then did he learn from Craig that the rebels near Wilmington “prevent all communication” with Cross Creek, that along the river between Wilmington and Cross Creek, “the Inhabitants on each side [are] almost universally hostile,” and that it would be impossible to send any supplies to Cross Creek “‘till the country is more settled.” Cornwllis instead marched for Wilmington, where he arrived at the beginning of April.

The End

Cornwallis had made few serious attempts to recruit Loyalist support after Ferguson’s defeat at King’s Mountain, and this did not change during his second invasion of North Carolina. At the same time, he blamed a lack of Loyalist support for his inability to soundly defeat Greene’s army at Guilford Courthouse. Cornwallis argued the Loyalists were not as numerous as he had been led to believe, and “their friendship was only passive.” He claimed, “‘The idea of our friends rising in any number and to any purpose totally failed, as I expected.” He called the Loyalists “timid,” and in the previous months, cursing their “supineness and pusillanimity,” declared, “If they will allow themselves to be plundered, and their families ruined, by a banditti not a third of their numbers, there is no possibility of our protecting

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1335 James Craig to Charles Cornwallis, 22 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/69. Craig managed to capture Cornelius Harnett, a key leader in the revolutionary movement in Wilmington since the start of the war, but as with the arrest of so many other individual leaders, this had no effect on the rebels throughout the province. James Craig to Charles Cornwallis, 12 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
1336 Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 18 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
1337 Charles Cornwallis to William Phillips, 10 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
them.” Cornwallis letters and actions suggest he did not understand the rebels or their strategy of population control. He instructed the Loyalists to make their way across hundreds of miles of terrain to find his army, and believed their capabilities would be the same as those of his regular forces immediately upon formation, that they would require little in the way of formal organization or training, and that they could be effective under officers of steadfast loyalty but little military capability. When he learned that nearly every one of these assumptions was faulty, he chose to ignore the reality or blame the militia and accuse them of treason.

Now, in April 1781, he declared the strategy, which he had misunderstood from the start and had often erred in implementation, a failure. When he learned that Major General William Phillips had arrived in the Chesapeake, he decided to abandon the Carolinas and Georgia altogether and move into Virginia. Cornwallis wanted an offensive war, noting he was “tired of marching about the country in quest of adventures.” He argued, “If we mean an offensive war in America, we must abandon New York, and bring our whole force into Virginia.” Only then would they “have a stake to fight for,” and he argued, “a successful battle may give us America.” On 10 April he informed Phillips that since he had received no orders to the contrary he would join Phillips in Virginia.1339

1338 Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 17 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5; Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 11 November 1780. He similarly argued, “If our militia are so timid and supine to suffer themselves to be plundered by a force so much inferior to what they could raise, it is certainly their fault.” Charles Cornwallis to Moses Kirkland, 11 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.
1339 Charles Cornwallis to William Phillips, 10 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85. In justifying his decision to move into Virginia to Germain and Clinton, Cornwallis cited a memorandum written by Hector MacAlester, a Scottish Loyalist from Virginia, who argued that rivers running from north to south from the James and Roanoke Rivers in Virginia into North Carolina meant “the point of communication from which the operations of war in North Carolina should originate is from
At about the same time he made his decision to go to Virginia, Cornwallis told Balfour that he would keep appraised of Greene’s movements, and “will run all hazards if he attempts any serious move towards South Carolina.”\textsuperscript{1340} When he learned that Greene had returned to South Carolina, he warned Rawdon to be “compact and on your guard.” He spent much of the next two weeks professing concern for Rawdon’s position but doing nothing to alter his plans for moving to Virginia. He admitted to Germain, “if we are so unlucky as to suffer a severe blow in South Carolina, the spirit of Revolt in that Province, would become very general,” which would encourage the rebels in North Carolina “to be more than ever active & violent.”\textsuperscript{1341} The situation worsened as the rebels prevented his letters warning of Greene’s movements from reaching Rawdon.\textsuperscript{1342} He admitted feeling anxiety for South Carolina, but continued with his plans to join Phillips in Virginia.\textsuperscript{1343}

More than a week after making his decision to go to Virginia, Cornwallis still claimed he would return to South Carolina if needed, telling Balfour he could not decide whether he would return via Georgetown or pass by the head of the Waccamaw River through the Cheraw district.\textsuperscript{1344} Balfour suggested it would only be safe to march via Georgetown and asked whether he should send ahead supplies

\textsuperscript{1340} Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 6 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
\textsuperscript{1341} Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 23 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
\textsuperscript{1342} Charles Cornwallis to George Germain, 23 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5; Charles Cornwallis to William Phillips, 24 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/76.
\textsuperscript{1343} Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 23 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
\textsuperscript{1344} Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 22 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
to be available upon Cornwallis’s return to South Carolina. Cornwallis made clear that he never intended to return to South Carolina by telling Balfour not to send any supplies. By 24 April, more than two weeks after he first learned of Greene’s return to South Carolina, and almost three weeks after making a promise to return at all costs to South Carolina if Greene returned, Cornwallis was still in Wilmington lamenting the threat Rawdon faced, and his inability to get reinforcements to South Carolina in time. Even as he departed for Virginia he still suggested to Balfour he might return to South Carolina, and that he should have vessels ready to send to Wilmington to bring the troops to Charleston. On 25 April, the army marched from Wilmington, headed north to Virginia, where he’d find upon his arrival at Petersburg that Phillips had become ill and died six days earlier.

Cornwallis’s abandonment of South Carolina left Rawdon on the strategic defensive. He insisted to Cornwallis he was on the verge of success against Marion near the Pee Dee River when “Ninety Six recalled me.” He learned Sumter was assembling men near Fishing Creek and elsewhere along the Broad River. The rebels had already issued a proclamation to the inhabitants to join them, “offering to all such as would take part with [Sumter] a full pardon for their former attachment to [the British].” Unlike the unsuccessful British attempts to offer pardons, Sumter had the coercive capability to make the pardon seem an attractive alternative. When Rawdon learned Marion and Sumter had successfully joined their forces, he became

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1345 Nisbet Balfour to Charles Cornwallis, 20 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
1346 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 22 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
1347 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 24 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 30 April 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/85.
1348 Lord Rawdon to Charles Cornwallis, 7 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/69.
concerned for the security of Camden. Upon Greene’s return to South Carolina, in early April these fears mounted, and upon learning Sumter, Marion, and Henry Lee were about to reinforce Greene, Rawdon decided to strike first before this junction could occur. The result was a tactical victory over Greene at Hobkirk’s Hill near Camden, the news of which Cornwallis used to convince himself, “South Carolina is safe.” Rawdon, however, used the momentary reprieve provided by the battle to remove his forces to Charleston. The British posts at Ninety Six and Augusta fell only weeks later following simultaneous sieges conducted by Greene, Pickens, Lee, and Elijah Clarke.

**Georgia**

The situation in Georgia after the fall of Charleston remained as precarious as it had been in 1779. Governor James Wright was again one of the few voices arguing that the British rethink the assumptions behind their move into South Carolina and advocating for a new approach to the southern strategy. Wright argued that the British had the advantage following the successful defense of Savannah in October 1779, and should have used that opportunity to first establish “Peace and Good order…in this Province.” He had to again postpone elections for an Assembly when troops he expected would be sent to Augusta were instead diverted to Charleston to assist in the siege of that city. Loyalist inhabitants throughout the state petitioned the government in March and April 1780 for protection from the rebels, and support in the way of mounted troops to clear the rebels from their

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1349 Charles Cornwallis to William Phillips, 8 May 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/86.
1350 James Wright to George Germain, 24 March 1780, TNA, CO 5/665.
settlements. The Governor's Council decided “something further should be done without Delay for the Protection of the Settlements,” but suggested “as the Mode of Protection is a Matter of a Military Nature, the Council are not competent to give an Opinion in that way that Duty may be best effected.” It proposed instead that the question of how to defend the settlements should be put before the military commanders. Wright asked Clinton for permission to “[embody] a corps of horse of at least 150 for the particular service and protection of this province.” Clinton “was extremely willing and desirous to comply with my wishes,” and told Wright to work out the details with Augustine Prevost. Lieutenant Colonel Alured Clarke, who took command in May of British forces in Georgia, received the same reply from Clinton.

When Cornwallis took command of forces in the South, however, and Clinton returned to New York, Cornwallis refused to even admit that Georgia was in trouble, and claimed the situation had changed since Wright requested Clinton’s approval for cavalry. Since the British were “now thoroughly masters of South Carolina,” with posts in that province, particularly at Ninety Six, “the upper part of Georgia [is]

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1351 Petition from Inhabitants of Ebenezer, Undated (Enclosure) in James Wright to Charles Cornwallis, 9 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2. The Georgia Commons House of Assembly also received a Memorial from the Reverend James Brown, who was sent to Savannah by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to serve in St. George’s Parish. Wright informed him “that it would be impossible for him to repair immediately to the Parish of St. George, it being then in the power of the Rebels.” Wright instead named him Officiating Minister for the Parish of Christ Church. Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 26 June 1780 in Allen D. Candler, ed., The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia (CRG), XV (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1907), 604-605.
1352 Minutes of His Majesty’s Council in Georgia, 5 April 1780, TNA, CO 5/665.
1353 James Wright to Charles Cornwallis, 3 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1354 Alured Clarke to Charles Cornwallis, 10 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
perfectly secure.” Wright argued that the posts at Savannah and Augusta were 140 miles apart, with “Nothing to Protect the Loyal Inhabitants or to Check any Party of Rebels who may get in between.” In addition to raising cavalry, he suggested re-establishing posts they had held the previous year along the frontier with South Carolina and at Sunbury, Cornwallis refused, claiming they were unnecessary, that any troops there would get sick, and that requests for such posts were only the result of “the groundless terrors of the inhabitants.” Despite the Governor’s Council appealing to the military command for ways to secure the province, Cornwallis insisted that since civil government had been restored there, this “must be an affair of the province.” Wright and the Council would have to find ways to “defray that expence without coming upon the military chest.”

Cornwallis was also not entirely convinced of the importance of the post at Augusta, despite Wright’s insistence that it was “key [to]...the command of all the Back Country...and what is called the Ceded Lands.” When Cornwallis learned Brown was “raising some cavalry to be added to his corps,” he asked Alured Clarke to “put an immediate stop to it.” He accused Brown and the son of the governor, Major James Wright, Jr., who commanded a provincial corps, of recruiting

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1355 Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 4 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 2 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78.
1356 James Wright to Charles Cornwallis, 28 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1357 Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 4 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78
1358 Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 17 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78
1359 James Wright to Charles Cornwallis, 3 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.
1360 Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 4 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78
irregularities, and ordered their withdrawal from Augusta.\textsuperscript{1361} He allowed Brown to remain there to carry out his responsibilities as Indian Commissioner, but ordered that he send his rangers to Savannah and “not keep any military command.”\textsuperscript{1362} Cornwallis let Brown’s regiment remain at Augusta only when Balfour told him it was necessary given the threat of rebels in the Ceded Lands.\textsuperscript{1363}

Wright grew even more frustrated when Cornwallis moved into North Carolina in September 1780, leaving not just Georgia but also South Carolina “without sufficient strength to support the King’s Authority & Government.” Cornwallis eventually stopped replying to Wright altogether, leaving the responsibility to Balfour instead. When he instructed Balfour in January 1781 to respond to one of Wright’s letters, he told him to “represent to him the great force

\textsuperscript{1361} Cornwallis accused the younger Wright of recruiting in South Carolina for corps in Georgia and enlisting rebel prisoners in his corps in Charleston and Savannah. Major Wright insisted he had Clinton’s permission to recruit in South Carolina, though he said Major John Andre, who served as aid de camp to Clinton during the siege, told him not to ask for written orders to this effect as it would lead other corps to ask for the same permission. Likewise, he told Cornwallis that he initially refrained from enlisting rebel prisoners, but “on seeing other corps admit them,” he asked for and received permission from Prevost for permission to recruit rebel prisoners in Savannah. He later found that one of his recruiting officers had, allegedly without his knowledge, also recruited prisoners in Charleston. Cornwallis admitted, “I am convinced his officers have deceived him,” but nevertheless still ordered his withdrawal from Augusta. Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 2 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 3 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; James Wright, Jr. to Charles Cornwallis, 15 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to James Wright, Jr., 21 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; James Wright, Jr. to Charles Cornwallis, 20 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/63; Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 5 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80.

\textsuperscript{1362} Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 3 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78; When Brown told Cornwallis that his men were highly experienced and particularly well suited to fighting on the frontiers from “a knowledge of the Indians, inhabitants and country.” They were also often necessary for “curb[ing] [the Indians’] natural ferocity and prevent any acts of wanton barbarity or indiscriminate outrage.” Cornwallis dismissed his request to leave the rangers there, telling Brown, “I do not think my self bound to give my reasons to any person but the Commander in Chief.” Thomas Brown to Charles Cornwallis, 16 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to Thomas Brown, 21 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78.

\textsuperscript{1363} Charles Cornwallis, 12 September 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/80. Cornwallis also conceded the value of Brown’s rangers and the Indians in defending Augusta against the surprise attack in September by Elijah Clarke’s men. Charles Cornwallis to John Harris Cruger, 5 August 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/81.
stationed at 96.” He weakened the British position further in the summer and autumn of 1780 by ordering Alured Clarke to take command in Saint Augustine. The Spanish had threatened Pensacola in West Florida, and Cornwallis feared Saint Augustine would be Spain’s next objective. Cornwallis ordered several detachments of the 60th Regiment to replace the forces in Savannah, though he believed “there can be no great dependence on those detachments.” He again insisted, “it is not probable that Georgia can be an object to a foreign Enemy,” discounting the real threat coming from within the provinces of Georgia and South Carolina. Wright knew that Cornwallis was no longer responding to his letters, and to Germain accused him of “wholly declin[ing] to give us any assistance.”

Wright made his own mistakes, which included mounting an even more vehement opposition than Cornwallis to the proclamations issued by Clinton after the fall of Charleston. Nevertheless, he offered a number of astute reflections on why the southern strategy failed. In January 1781, Wright told Germain that Cornwallis’s actions in South Carolina “have fallen far short of...expectations.” South Carolina and Georgia were not secured, and Wright presciently predicted that if

1364 Cornwallis was primarily referencing the 7th Regiment, which he had detached to Ninety Six largely because they were too ill to march into North Carolina. Wright knew that the 7th Regiment would be able to provide little service at Ninety Six, and told Germain the regiment “was unfortunately disabled & Prevented from going there, being the whole of them either killed or taken by the Rebels.” James Wright to George Germain, 5 March 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1365 Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 14 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/72.
1366 James Wright to George Germain, 5 March 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1367 On a number of occasions, he overturned the paroles of rebels captured in South Carolina who had returned home to Savannah, ordering them to be imprisoned. See for example the case of James Houstoun. James Houstoun to Alured Clarke, 21 June 1780 (Enclosure) Alured Clarke to Charles Cornwallis, 23 June 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2.; James Robertson to James Wright, 22 January 1780 (Enclosure) Alured Clarke to Charles Cornwallis, 23 January 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/2; Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, 4 July 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/78
Cornwallis moved into North Carolina, “I shall expect a Rebel Army will come in behind him & throw us into the utmost confusion & danger.”1368 Wright insisted there were many Loyalists in Georgia, and most had “Exerted beyond what could have been Expected” even as they “begin to think they have not had that Assistance Necessary and deserved.”1369 By not providing sufficient attention to recruiting Loyalist support, the British left them to be dispersed by the rebels and “drove from the Back Country.”1370 Wright argued that focusing instead on punishing rebels, however deserved, was unproductive.1371 Eventually he decided he had to act on his own, as the weakness of the British position in Georgia and South Carolina “give[s] great Encouragement to all Rebels & disaffected Persons to Collect & attempt to Disturb & Break up the Settlements.” He had the Assembly pass a law enabling the arrest, or even banishment from the province, of anyone found supporting or harboring rebels, or giving them intelligence.1372 He also selected from the militia “some of the most active and best Men” to act as cavalry, though they had to use their own horses and weapons. He knew this was a temporary substitute at best, but necessary for assembling Loyalist support.1373

Wright was bewildered by Germain’s eagerness to believe the optimistic accounts he received from Cornwallis. Wright told Germain in May 1781, “Things

1369 James Wright to George Germain, 1 May 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1370 James Wright to George Germain, 5 March 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1371 James Wright to George Germain, 25 January 1781, TNA, CO 5/176. Wright argued Cornwallis’s battlefield victories had no effect on rebel control, nor did Wright see “that the punishment so deservedly inflicted on those who had taken Arms again, against His Majesty in breach of their Prahles, or any other Measures yet pursued, have quell’d the Spirit of Rebellion.”
1372 James Wright to George Germain, 9 March 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1373 James Wright to George Germain, 5 March 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
are by no means in that Peaceable & Secure State that your Lordship Supposes and
Expects, indeed I may say quite the Reverse.” The rebels had pushed much of the
British army back towards the confines of Charleston, and were only weeks away
from investing both Augusta and Ninety Six. He resented that despite “frequently
giving...the best & Clearest Information I possibly could of the Situation of affairs
here,” his “Representations have had so little weight.”1374 In another letter, he had to
inform Germain that contrary to what he had been told, Georgia was not “well
Settled & full of inhabitants.” The rebels had control of the backcountry, and “this
Province is weakened & in danger of being lost.”1375 After Augusta fell, Wright
turned his attention to the defense of Savannah, arming those who fled there and
putting them “on duty with some Regulars to Garrison the Redoubts at Ebenezer &
keep the Rebels from Destroying & Laying Waste, quite to the Town.” So many of the
Loyalists, however, had “taken to the Swamps to hide themselves for a time.”1376

Wright told Germain that all of the “Laurels & much Honor” acquired by the
army in its performance on the battlefield mattered little, as the British position in
Georgia and South Carolina was reduced to toeholds at Charleston and Savannah.
He argued that while he was not a military man, “I always thought & still do that it
would have been more for His Majesty’s Service to have secured Effectually what
was Reduced & to have made these Provinces usefull & serviceable to the Mother
Country.” If the British had focused on securing Georgia before moving into South
Carolina, or even on securing South Carolina before invading North Carolina, they

1374 James Wright to George Germain, 1 May 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1375 James Wright to George Germain, 5 May 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1376 James Wright to George Germain, 14 June 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
would have had a better opportunity to mobilize, organize, and train Loyalists to
“[Contribute] towards the General Expence of the British Empire.” After
Cornwallis’s defeat at Yorktown, Wright again noted “the Consequences of not
Protecting & Holding these two Provinces,” and that together with Cornwallis’s
surrender, it “Ruined the King’s Cause in America.” By that time he was concerned
that “without immediate assistance,” the rebels would attempt to attack Savannah
and “we shall not be able to Stand it.” If Savannah were to fall, moreover, “I much
fear that St. Augustine & Charles Town will Soon Follow.” None of those three
cities fell to the rebels in battle, though skirmishing between the two sides
continued for several more months before the British evacuated Savannah in July
1782 and Charleston five months later in December.

Conclusion

The seeds of rebel success in the South were sown in the period between
1774 and 1776 with the formation and implementation of the rebel strategy of
population control, rather than late 1780 and early 1781 as most historians suggest.
However, the British southern strategy was by no means a hopeless cause. The roots
of British failure, however, were not in their unwillingness to appease the
inhabitants or their predilection for punitive and coercive measures, even if the
rebels were adept at exploiting relatively mild punitive measures for outsized
propaganda value. Instead, British failure was the consequence of the near total lack
of appreciation for the dynamics of the rebel strategy, a failure which began in

1377 James Wright to George Germain, 5 May 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
1378 James Wright to George Germain, 18 December 1781, TNA, CO 5/176.
Georgia in 1779 and became more marked the following year as they moved into South Carolina. Their greatest chance for success in the South therefore came in 1779 rather than with the fall of Charleston in 1780, even though the latter had a greater immediate impact on both sides. Even then, however, the failure of British strategy was more the result of implementation than it was flaws inherent in the strategy itself. These problems with implementation began almost immediately after the British moved into the backcountry, even if few wanted to recognize them as such at the time.

The British policy for handling former rebels was confused, contradictory and unevenly implemented without consideration of any purpose other than removing individuals from the fight. The rebels sought to involve Loyalists who signed their oaths of allegiance, thereby forcing continued participation, but at the same time remained vigilant over suspected persons. The British policy was to not allow any former rebels into the militia, but in practice they had little idea of who anyone was among the population, and allowed former rebels to infiltrate the militia without realizing they were doing so. They vacillated between emphasizing the development of local militia and forming provincial corps, initially choosing the former, but giving the militia little of the support it needed. Cornwallis, and thereby his inner circle of officers, disliked the man who showed the most initiative in organizing Loyalist support, and when Patrick Ferguson died at King’s Mountain, so too did any realistic plan for raising militia. When the British instead tried to form provincial corps, it was too late and the rebels ensured they had limited success.
The rebels, meanwhile, continued the strategy that had served them from the beginning of the war. As William Lee Davidson described it, the rebels could not risk a frontal confrontation with the British army, but there was always something they could do to disperse parties of Loyalists before they could assemble and provide service to the British. The British referred to the militia who implemented this strategy as mere “plunderers,” and Cornwallis would often refuse to believe that they were much of a threat. He proceeded with the invasion of North Carolina before he had control of South Carolina or Georgia, but did not get far before Ferguson’s regiment was decimated at King’s Mountain. These events destroyed most of Cornwallis’s faith in the value of the Loyalists, and he instead spent the next three months trying to capture Thomas Sumter and Francis Marion. When this failed, he planned another expedition to conquer North Carolina, but the loss at Cowpens changed his calculus. He spent the next two months chasing Greene’s army through North Carolina hoping without good reason that its destruction would do what the destruction of another Continental Army at Camden had not. When these hopes fell apart, he gave up on the Carolinas entirely, moving into Virginia to destroy supply depots he believed were vital for sustaining all rebel activity in the Carolinas and Georgia. He misled his subordinates and his superiors about his intention to return to South Carolina if needed, and almost immediately upon his departure for Virginia the British position in South Carolina and Georgia collapsed.

There were, throughout the course of the southern strategy, individual voices who warned of British missteps in implementation. Clinton occasionally warned of the particular challenge of obtaining active support from Loyalists, and the
proclamations he issued reflected his realization that many rebels were going to break their paroles in any case, and so it was best that the British had a clear understanding of friend and foe. After Cornwallis left North Carolina for Virginia, Clinton also told Germain that he hoped Cornwallis would return to South Carolina. Continuing to Virginia to join Phillips, Clinton argued, would be “replete with the worst consequences to our southern possessions, in their present state.”

Nevertheless Clinton always saw the northern states as the more strategically important theater of operations, and defeating Washington’s army as the key to British victory, and so did not always provide much of an argument when he believed Cornwallis was making a mistake. Others agreed with Clinton, with one officer arguing the inhabitants needed to be forced “to take an active part for Government.” He claimed, “it has always been a principle of mine to force men to take that marked kind of part which should cut off from them a return to the other side and make them, tho’ against their inclinations, and in all changes, ours.”

Others disapproved of raids against the rebels, which achieved little and did nothing to raise Loyalist support. Balfour, who supported Cornwallis even as he sometimes pushed back against his optimistic outlook, suggested Tarleton’s raids in the eastern part of the province after King’s Mountain were enormously expensive and accomplished little, as the rebels always reformed once the British Legion departed the area. Cornwallis could only insist that while those raids had no long-

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1379 Henry Clinton to George Germain, 22 May 1781, DAR, XX, 147.
1380 Henry Barry to James Craig, 30 March 1781, TNA, PRO 30/11/5.
term benefits for the British, Tarleton’s “visit has not been ineffectual.” More
than anyone else, however, the most vocal opponent of British implementation of
the strategy was Governor James Wright of Georgia. He argued the British moved
too quickly through the southern provinces, fought conventional battles that
achieved little, and failed to remember that the core purpose of the southern
strategy was to build Loyalist support. Instead he argued they wasted too much time
chasing rebel armies that would either dissipate upon approach, or retreat until the
British were exhausted, harassed, without supplies, and fighting under
disadvantageous circumstances. It is noteworthy that Wright learned how to
counter the rebels’ strategy in only a few short years, after making many of the same
mistakes as other British officials in the first year of the war. Wright showed it was
by no means impossible for the British to have learned from their experience in
1775 and 1776 how to successfully implement the southern strategy

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1381 Charles Cornwallis to Nisbet Balfour, 22 November 1780, TNA, PRO 30/11/82.
Conclusion

In his history of the Revolution in the American South, John Richard Alden describes the events of 1775 as they occurred in South Carolina, after reports of Lexington and Concord arrived in Charleston:

The colonial Assembly, lingering on through the summer, gradually disappeared, and the Provincial Congress, in session after June 1, seized all authority. A Council of Safety composed of its leading lights was entrusted with executive powers. The patriots raised three regiments of troops, seized Forts Johnson and Charlotte, and voted large sums for the defense of the colony, especially of Charleston, an obvious target for British attack. They even sent out an armed vessel under Captain Clement Lempriere to seize gunpowder.\footnote{1382}

Other historians since Alden have described these events in greater detail, but it would be easy to overlook these four sentences, and not give them a second thought. These events, however, and the decisions made as early as 1774 that brought them about, were critical to the rebels’ success in overthrowing British authority in the southern provinces, establishing control over the colonies and the population therein, and maintaining that control even through seemingly catastrophic defeats. Furthermore, while historians have described these events, no one has explained their importance in the context of the rebels’ strategy and the rest of the conflict, particularly the failure of the British attempt to retake the province in 1780 and

\footnote{1382 John Richard Alden, The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 198-199.}
1781. To understand the dynamics of violence in the Revolution, one must view the war in its entirety, particularly the ways in which the decisions and proactive policies from early on affected the outcome of later events. The key to this argument is the ways in which both the rebels and the British conceptualized the role of the Loyalists, a group whose potential many historians have since dismissed.

Contrary to the later conclusion of British officials, there were large numbers of loyal inhabitants in the southern provinces. Thousands of Loyalists departed Charleston and Savannah during the British evacuation of those cities in 1782. Many more remained in the southern provinces, appealing to the General Assemblies of the respective states for clemency and citizenship. There were even more who through the course of the war had sided with the rebels despite sentiments of loyalty to the Crown. The British, however, never understood how to leverage Loyalist support. Several years of indecisive military activity in the northern theater convinced many British officials that building Loyalist support required military considerations to take a backseat to political measures, including the restoration of civil government. Some of the political officials assigned

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1384 Petitions to the South Carolina General Assembly, 1782-1783, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
responsibility for restoring civil government, however, recognized the critical need for military force to enable them to carry out that task, even if it did not mean using the military in the way it had been used until then. Most military commanders were uncomfortable with the requirements of using force to pacify a population, and preferred instead to search out the main rebel army, capturing or destroying it no fewer than three times in less than two years, to little avail. The rebels, meanwhile, recognized their strategic situation, and though they endured a number of major defeats and other significant setbacks, they maintained strategic continuity throughout the war.

**Striking a Balance**

The rebel strategy was by no means pleasant, and was not always in keeping with the liberal, constitutional values associated with the war. It did not depend, however, on the unmeasured brutality that many recent historians suggest in attempting to rehabilitate the image of the Loyalists. Nor were the rebels ignorant of the contradictions in their strategy. They were pragmatists who understood their strategic situation and attempted to achieve their objectives with the available resources. Writing in 1777 to Thomas Burke, at the time a delegate to the Continental Congress, Samuel Johnston, the president of the North Carolina Provincial Congress in 1775, lamented the increasing belief that, with the signing of the Declaration of Independence the previous year many believed the colonies had
already achieved their objective and that the urgency of the situation had passed. Johnston told Burke, “I am perfectly...[in agreement with] your opinion, that the only object of importance at present, is the Defence of the Country. Until that is effectually secured, leagues, Confederacies, and Constitutions are premature, except as temporary expedients.” Johnston continued, “I wish that sentiment prevailed more generally, and that it was not already too confidently believed by those, at a distance from the scene of action, that every thing was done, and that we should every one live quietly under his own Vine and Fig-tree.”

William Moultrie shared Johnston’s sentiments in 1779, following the fall of Savannah to the British. Moultrie was attempting to order militia to Purrysburg to cut off the British approach from Savannah towards Charleston or into the Georgia backcountry. He learned in February 1779 that the enlistments of the Charleston artillery regiment were set to expire on the first day of March, and that they would refuse to remain in Purrysburg beyond that date. Frustrated with the state’s militia law that made it difficult to secure the enlistments he needed, Moultrie vented his anger to Charles Pinckney, the president of the South Carolina Senate. He claimed the militia law “will ruin our country,” and that “in contending too much for the liberties of the people, you will enslave them at last.” He implored Pinckney, “remember, my friend, it has always been the maxim of all communities, to abridge

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1385 Samuel Johnston to Thomas Burke, 19 April 1777, Thomas Burke Papers, University of South Carolina Southern Historical Collection.
the people of some of those liberties for a time, the better to secure the whole to them in future.”

Recent historians have revisited the role of Loyalists in the war, particularly in the South. They have correctly questioned the self-serving 18th century British officials like Cornwallis, the triumphalist 19th century consensus historians, and the excellent Vietnam-era historians of the war, all of whom, for different reasons, make the same argument that the Loyalists were fewer in number and weaker than the British policymakers were led to believe. Nevertheless, in attempting to give more of a role to the Loyalists, some historians have gone too far in the other direction, suggesting “An objective analysis of the sources permits no other interpretation” than an “unflattering portrayal of the Whigs” and the a “more favorable” depiction of the Loyalists. In attempting to correct the interpretation of Loyalists as villains guilty of “unmitigated perfidy,” these historians run the risk of unduly casting the rebels as villains with a single-minded objective of destroying the Loyalists. Nothing is owed to either side except for an objective, dispassionate effort to explain what happened, and advocacy for either side obscures the role and function of violence in the war.

1387 Jim Piecuch, Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782 (The University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 12.
Many historians and other analysts have described the Revolutionary War in the South as a “civil war,” and in a very loose sense of the term, it applies since two groups within the same country, the rebels and the Loyalists, fought against one another.\footnote{See for example Russell Weigley, \textit{The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782} (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 69; Nash, \textit{The Unknown Revolution}, 392; Clyde R. Ferguson, “Carolina and Georgia Patriot and Loyalist Militia in Action, 1778-1783,” Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., \textit{The Southern Experience in the American Revolution} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 175; Jeffrey J. Crow, “Liberty Men and Loyalists: Disorder and Disaffection in the North Carolina Backcountry,” Ronald Hoffman, et al, eds., \textit{An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution} (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1985), 126-127; Ronald Hoffman, “The ‘Disaffected’ in the Revolutionary South,” Alfred F. Young, ed., \textit{The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism} (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 293-295.} Borrowing from the definitions many political scientists use for civil war, however, suggests this interpretation of the conflict in the South as a civil war is flawed. Furthermore, its continued use contributes to some of the mistaken assumptions about the dynamics of violence in this conflict. James Fearon, for example, defines a civil war as “a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region, or to change government policies.”\footnote{James D. Fearon, “Iraq’s Civil War,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 86 (March/April 2007): 2-15.} The Loyalists, however, were not fighting to take power themselves, but to maintain British imperial rule from the periphery in London. The rebels, meanwhile, were not fighting Loyalists to prevent them from taking power, but instead to prevent them from supporting the British strategy to reestablish that same imperial rule.
The two primary actors in this conflict were the rebels and the British government, both of whom competed for control of the population. The greatest threat to the rebels’ political authority was the British government and army, not the Loyalists as the literature would suggest. Formulating and implementing a policy to arrest or destroy every Loyalist would have necessitated significant logistical requirements that would have been detracted attention and resources from the more important threat. It was more than sufficient for the rebels to meet their objectives by instead controlling the Loyalists and preventing them from aiding the British army.

**North vs. South**

Many of the structures that constituted the rebels’ shadow governments were not unique to the South. In many instances, rebels in the northern provinces established similar shadow governments even before their counterparts in the South. What was in many ways unique to the South, however, was the all-encompassing focus on controlling Loyalists, whereas the emphasis for the committee system in the North was, by necessity, often more focused on mobilization. Writing about the community of Peterborough, New Hampshire, John Shy argues that the militia’s primary function was not to subdue Loyalists and control the population as it was in the South. Instead, its role “might be described as a hybrid of draft board and modern reserve unit – a modicum of military training
combined with a mechanism to find and enlist individuals where they were needed."\textsuperscript{1390} In Massachusetts there was even less of an opportunity to focus on anything other than organizing a conventional army to meet the British army in the field. After the battles at Lexington and Concord, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety sent a letter to nearby towns, as well as New Hampshire and Connecticut pleading, “by all that is sacred,” to “give assistance in forming an army.” The committee made clear the immediacy of this requirement by promising “Death and devastation are the certain consequences of delay.”\textsuperscript{1391}

Some northern colonies did see extremely bitter fighting between rebels and Loyalists, particularly New Jersey and New York. As Sung Bok Kim has noted in his study of political allegiance in Westchester County, New York, the rebels often had difficulty establishing control over the population, and certainly were not as effective as their counterparts in the South. After overthrowing the provincial governments and before the British launched their southern strategy in late 1778, the rebels in the South had greater opportunity to consolidate their control of the population. Furthermore, in the southern colonies, many Loyalists tended to be recent settlers in those provinces and in some cases recent immigrants to North

\textsuperscript{1391} Proceedings of the Committee of Safety, 20 April 1775, \textit{The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775 and of the Committee of Safety} (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 518.
America. Since the rebel supporters were natives of the colonies or lived there for a number of years before the war, they were in a better position to build professional and personal networks that gave them an information and resource advantage over the less well-connected Loyalists. While the rebels in New York and New Jersey still had an advantage over Loyalists in forming networks that would facilitate the process of population control, their edge was much smaller than it was for their counterparts in the South.

Moreover, the constant back-and-forth movement of regular armies from both sides across New Jersey and New York beginning in 1776 ensured that neither side would be able to establish lasting control over the population. Loyalists in those provinces were much more active in countering the rebels than southern Loyalists, and they therefore offered a viable alternative to the rebels for northern inhabitants. In the South, however, many Loyalists supported the new revolutionary governments by necessity. Neither Loyalists nor the rebels in New York and New Jersey ever gained the same advantage enjoyed by rebels in the South, and the resulting violence often reflected this absence of strategic direction.\footnote{Sung Bok Kim, “The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, New York” in \textit{The Journal of American History} 80 (December 1993): 875-883.}

In addition to these differences the British had a distinct strategy for the South that they had not pursued in the North. The British did not articulate the same central role for Loyalists in their political-military strategy in the North, and as a
result fighting in the North did not have the same strategic logic that it did in the South. Instead, British attention in the North remained on defeating Washington’s army. There is a clear shift in the writings of British military and government officials in 1778, as the war moved south, regarding the role of Loyalists and the political elements of the conflict that were largely absent from their thinking about the northern theater. Despite bitter conflict between Loyalists and rebels, the Loyalists were much more ancillary to the British strategy in the North than they would be in the South. Circumstances therefore allowed the southern rebels to implement a strategy of population control that would best counter the British strategy in the region. Both sides understood the central role

\[1393\] Shy, 150-151. Shy shows that Charles Lee was an exception that proved the rule about the conflict in New Jersey and New York, in that he understood the need for coercion in support of political requirements. During Washington’s retreat through New Jersey in 1776, Lee proposed using the militias to resist the British and prevent them from consolidating their gains in the province. One element of this proposal included preventing Loyalists from “coming out of hiding everywhere” and giving their support to the British. While this was one of Lee’s more moderate proposals for incorporating political violence into the war in the North, he received little support from Washington or other army officers.

\[1394\] The stark contrast between British strategy before and after 1778, for the northern theater compared to the southern theater, is best illustrated by a letter from William Howe to Lord George Germain in January 1778, three months after Howe submitted his resignation as Commander in Chief of British forces in North America and three months before it was accepted. Germain had asked Howe, in the aftermath of the defeat at Saratoga, about considering an expedition to the South and a change in strategy to one focused on appealing to Loyalist support. Howe disagreed strongly, arguing that the Loyalists were unreliable and the British could only expect “equivocal neutrality” from them. Instead, he argued for “the expediency of keeping the troops collected, that they may be in a situation to act against the enemy’s main army when the season permits.” William Howe to George Germain, 16 January 1778 in K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution* (DAR), XV (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1976), 29.
Loyalists would have in British strategy in the South, and control of that group was the central focus for the rebels’ shadow governments.

This interpretation of the war in the South suggests that the Loyalists were a means to an end. It argues rebel violence was both more common and less virtuous than the consensus school would allow, but also more targeted and strategic, and less single-minded and villainous than many recent historians contend. This revised view of the war also recognizes that the elite exercised far greater control over the ultimately successful rebel strategy than many recent historians would be comfortable admitting. All of this points to the need for new interpretations of the American Revolution that dissociates the southern and northern theaters, and avoids conflating the latter with the war in general. The general absence of regular armies in the South for much of the war does not mean the region was in a period of political-military stasis until the fall of Charleston in 1780. The strategy for both sides was very different in the South than in the North, and the former merits more attention than studies limited to the military campaign at the tail end of that conflict.
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**Dissertations**


