BRITISH VIEWS OF AMERICA AND
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1774-1783

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It would be natural to assume that King George III and the government of Lord North enjoyed universal public support for their aggressive wartime policies in America. A vocal minority of Englishmen, however, maintained a constant campaign to redress American grievances. These outspoken critics included prominent members of Parliament such as Edmund Burke and the Earl of Chatham (William Pitt); London merchants, whose business interests were hurt by the war; and even some clergymen like Bishop Shipley, a friend of Benjamin Franklin.

A vivid reflection of the attitudes of the British towards America and the American Revolution can be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, a scholarly journal published in London from 1731 to 1868. The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania owns a complete series of the magazine up to the year 1837, which is part of the bequest of the former director of the Society, John W. Harpster. The magazine, a phenomenally successful monthly publication with a circulation of 10,000 by 1739,1 was a literary, historical, and scientific compendium. Its contents included: a historical chronicle, that is, a digest of the most important events of the previous month, culled from newspapers; parliamentary speeches and debates, often printed in installments months after they occurred; poetry; book reviews; an assortment of literary, scientific, and other scholarly articles; and much miscellaneous information, such as meteorological tables, and lists of births, deaths, and marriages. Almost from its beginning, the magazine included reports on America, both its natural history and its political system. In August 1774 the magazine introduced a special section, "Proceedings of the American Colonists, since the Passing of the Boston Port-Bill," which consisted of items already published in the official government newspaper, letters from British officials in America, and items from American newspapers and other sources. The

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1 Dictionary of National Biography, 3: 1247-49 (hereafter cited as DNB). For a history of the magazine from 1731 to 1754, see C. Lennart Carlson, The First Magazine (Providence, 1938).
magazine also published unsolicited communications in the form of letters to the editor, which provide the reader with a sampling of the opinions of private citizens on the American war.

The magazine's journalistic coverage of the war was as complete as the restraints of the time permitted. To be sure, it had to rely in large part on the information which the government chose to release, having no independent news-gathering organization of its own, but the fact that it also had access to the vigorous parliamentary debates which accompanied the war gave it and its readers almost as much information about the war as was available to members of Parliament, except for the ministers themselves.

What follows is a study of the British view of the American conflict from 1774 to 1783, based on the reporting of the war by the Gentleman's Magazine. From a reading of the Gentleman's Magazine during the war years, one can delineate at least four points of view: those of the editors of the magazine itself; of private contributors to the magazine; of the government of Lord North; and of the parliamentary opposition. The Gentleman's Magazine, functioning as a reporting, rather than a propaganda agency, which performed valuable service in informing the public on American issues, was almost a neutral observer of the war. While it reported the war as a tragedy and consistently favored a course of reconciliation rather than the extremes of war or independence, it was not overtly critical of the government, except when it believed that the government was not releasing sufficient information for the news-hungry press. Only during one brief period, in the autumn of 1775, when the editor² believed that negotiations could still avert a full-scale war in America, did editorial comment appear to parallel opposition sentiment.

The views of private citizens printed in the magazine reflected, for the most part, the dichotomy within Parliament, and the debates there. Many writers contributed anonymously, or under pen names. While some certainly had parliamentary connections, it cannot be said that their views significantly influenced Parliament; the influence was undoubtedly in the other direction. An exception would be the ideas of writers of the stature of Dr. Richard Price, a nonconformist clergyman and political radical who was patronized by Lord Shelburne, a member of the House of Lords. Since Price's books were reviewed in the magazine, he has been classified as a private contributor.

² For the period in question the editor was David Henry, brother-in-law of the founder of the magazine, Edward Cave. In 1778 he was joined by John Nichols, a noted printer and scholar.
For the reader of the Gentleman's Magazine by far the best-developed views on the war came from the printed parliamentary debates between the government and the opposition. Before commenting on the debates, however, it would be well to review briefly the historical and political background in Great Britain. Perhaps the most important single event which shaped eighteenth-century political thinking in Great Britain was the Revolution of 1688, or the Glorious Revolution, a nonviolent revolution in which Englishmen, in order to preserve their liberties, deposed their Scottish Stuart king, James II, and put in his place the Dutch Protestant king, William III. The transfer of sovereignty was accompanied by a Bill of Rights which William granted, guaranteeing, in effect, constitutional rights for his subjects and a monarchy limited by its accountability to Parliament. Early in the eighteenth century, the crown passed to the German Protestant Hanoverian line, of which George III was the third member to rule over England.

In 1774 Englishmen looking back on the Glorious Revolution saw in it the culmination of a long struggle for liberty from royal tyranny — a struggle that had begun with the signing of Magna Charta and that had involved, in the earlier seventeenth century, opposition, and even war against James II's predecessors. James's father, Charles I, had been beheaded for refusing to recognize the claims of English liberties, but that execution had led to the possibly greater evil of a military dictatorship under Oliver Cromwell. From this brief experience without a king, the English had come to believe that while royal tyranny was unbearable, the tyranny of a republican leader such as Cromwell was even worse. And so they believed that they had developed by painful experience a near-perfect constitution in which king and Parliament provided mutual limits to the exercise of power.

As the American war began, the relationship between king and Parliament was fairly clear. The king ruled through a minister (Lord North) who had both the king's personal confidence and the confidence of a majority of his colleagues in Parliament. The organization of Parliament itself, however, was anything but clear. There were no political parties in the modern sense, since everyone considered himself a Whig, that is, one who believed in the principles of the 1688 Revolution. Yet there were political groupings in Parliament; for ex-

ample, allegiances to particular leaders were formed through family or regional connections. In another category were the "placemen" who owed their parliamentary seats to royal or ministerial patronage, and who could be relied upon to vote with the government.

Although there was no party structure, a well-established tradition of opposition to the government did exist. The opposition had been particularly active during the 1760s, when, in concert with political pressure both from America and from the London merchant community, it had forced both the repeal of the hated Stamp Act (1766) and a quick succession of ministries which had tried to solve the American problem. In the 1770s, however, the opposition was ineffective, and while it had vocal representatives, it was unable to force changes in government policy or to remove Lord North, who held office from 1770 to 1782.

The opposition held little more than 10 percent of the five hundred-plus seats in the House of Commons. The main reason for its weakness during the 1770s was that its members could not coordinate strategy and were divided in their loyalties to two leaders, Chatham and Rockingham. William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, was well known to Americans for his leadership during the French and Indian War, and for his sympathy for the American viewpoint. Until his death in 1778, he continued to be an active spokesman for America, but he was in poor health and not interested in organizing or unifying the opposition. His followers numbered perhaps half a dozen in the House of Commons; his chief disciple, Lord Shelburne, became prime minister briefly in 1782 and 1783. The other opposition leader, the Marquis of Rockingham, was not himself an outstanding figure like Chatham, but he had a larger following, including the great orator Edmund Burke, the brilliant Charles James Fox, and David Hartley, a close friend to Benjamin Franklin. Besides Chathamites and Rockinghamites, there was a scattering of independent opposition members like John Wilkes, mayor of London in 1774, who was too radical for either of the other groups.4

On two points which concern us the opposition disagreed with the government: the need for domestic reforms, and the correct policy towards America. The two points were interrelated, for dissatisfaction with politics in Great Britain conditioned the opposition's interpretation of events in America. For the government spokesmen, the American problem was relatively simple. It was a clear case of rebellion

4 Donoughue, British Politics, 127-61, 291-93.
against authority, and in particular against the legislative and taxing authority of Parliament. It was in a similar class with the rebellion of Scotland in 1745, though that rebellion had been against the legitimacy of the Hanoverian dynasty rather than against the Parliament. Still, the methods used so successfully against Scottish rebels could be applied to American rebels. The nation must send troops, both to show America the full force of British power and to demonstrate determination and a united front.

For the dissenting minority, the situation was not so simple. The American problem was not just an internal rebellion as was the 1745 Scottish rising. Nor was it a simple case of war against an enemy as the conflicts with France had been. Rather, the American protest was a legitimate continuation of the struggle for liberty, in the tradition of the Glorious Revolution. Then, Englishmen had struggled against the tyranny exercised by Stuart kings; now, Englishmen in America, descended from those seventeenth-century heroes, were struggling against the tyranny exercised by Parliament. Ever since the Glorious Revolution, freedom in Great Britain had suffered a gradual decline because of the corruption of Parliament; as long as the king and his ministers bought the votes of the placemen in Parliament, free government could not exist, for the balance between king and Parliament had been destroyed. The government must therefore be reformed. The opposition often spoke of a government conspiracy to deprive Englishmen of their rights, to undo the 1688 Revolution, and saw the attempts to coerce America as merely part of a grand design to establish tyranny throughout the empire. Once America was subdued, they predicted, arbitrary government would be established at home, and thus Americans and Englishmen alike would be enslaved. The defense of American rights, therefore, was for them a first line of defense of their own freedoms.

The parliamentary debates printed in the Gentleman's Magazine reflected these disagreements between government hawks and opposition doves. A study of the debates suggests that as the war progressed, the government became less realistic about America, and the opposition less naive. At the beginning of the war, the government adopted a tough policy towards America, and despite mistakes and vacillations in London and America, it appeared to think in more practical terms than the opposition about how to win the war. It was willing to try conciliation if America would recognize British supremacy, but independence was unthinkable because it meant one of two things. One prediction was that an independent America would
break up into small squabbling states, which could be united only by a military dictator on the order of Oliver Cromwell. If that happened, Great Britain would be called in to rescue America from tyranny. The only other alternative the ministers visualized was that America would be independent of Britain, only to become dependent on France, which would prove dangerous to Britain. They could not believe that a completely independent and united republic with a constitutional government would succeed without a cohesive force like the British crown to hold it together. True, the "united states" of Holland functioned well enough as a republic, but the very size of America mitigated against her following the Dutch example. As the war proceeded disastrously, this realistic approach developed into a very real fear that neither America nor Britain could survive without the other, that American independence would mean the end of the British Empire, and that therefore any cost could be borne in order to preserve both the empire and the national honor.

As to the opposition, while they had a thorough understanding of American frustrations at the beginning of the war, they failed to understand (perhaps to their credit) the impatience of the British government and public with the Americans. Since they idealized the Americans, and blamed all problems on the British government, they appeared to be both naive and unpatriotic. Because of their sympathy with America, they were inconsistent in their attitude towards the war, being equally unhappy with both British victories and defeats. On the question of independence, they were also ambivalent. On the one hand, they could justify the American declaration, and some did envision the growth of a great, free republican state on the American continent. Yet others, like Chatham, did not believe that, given the right incentives, the Americans would continue to insist on complete separation from Britain. As the government continued to wage a losing war, and as it lost the support of independents in Parliament, particularly after the election of 1780, the opposition appeared less naive, and their arguments for ending the war began to take on the aura of conventional wisdom. In the end, the high cost of the war and the national exhaustion convinced hawk and dove alike that Britain must go to the bargaining table.

*Prewar period, 1774-1775*

During 1774 and 1775 there was sharp disagreement in Parliament over the answers to the questions, What is wrong with America?
and, How did the situation deteriorate to its present state? For example, on the twin questions of taxation and supremacy, the government’s position, based on the Declaratory Act of 1766, was that Great Britain had the right to pass legislation, including tax legislation, for the colonies, and the right to “bind in all cases whatsoever.” The government believed that the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766, carried out under pressure from America and her friends in Great Britain, the merchants, was a major cause of the subsequent trouble over taxes. Great Britain had been wrong to give in at that time, but would not make the same mistake twice. If Britain stood firm now, America would be forced to submit.

Opposition members agreed with the government on two points: that Britain should abandon neither the idea of obtaining revenue from America, nor the principle of the Declaratory Act. However, they believed that Britain would get better results by acting in what was called a “constitutional manner,” that is, by requesting, rather than legislating, revenues from America. The trouble with America was twofold: Great Britain had acted both arbitrarily and inconsistently. Edmund Burke, for example, in a speech in April 1774, argued that the Stamp Act had been arbitrary, that is, it had been imposed without consulting America. After its repeal, Britain had experimented with other types of taxes, culminating in the tea tax, and the result was much confusion in America about British intentions. If Britain intended to tax America, then she should proceed systematically; better yet, she should insist on enforcing the Declaratory Act only if America refused to tax herself, a contingency which Burke did not anticipate.5

George Johnstone, former governor of West Florida and a friend of America, likewise pointed out the inconsistency of British policy over taxation. Americans had successfully resisted the Stamp Tax, had then seen Lord Chatham and Lord Camden, who had advocated its repeal, rewarded politically, and had therefore consistently opposed later taxes.6

The discussion over taxation and supremacy indicated the nature of the disagreements about the American problem, but even more profound differences were revealed in debates in February 1775, when the government, in a proposed address to the king, declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion, a declaration intended to provide

6 Ibid., 45(1775) : 159-60, 211-15.
the foundation for a request for financial aid and military support against America. The opposition quarreled with the use of the term rebellion. John Wilkes, mayor of London, and known throughout America for his well-publicized campaign for personal liberties during the 1760s, argued that when a people's rights had been invaded, resistance was a virtue, and successful resistance was not a rebellion but a revolution. Confident of the success of American resistance, Wilkes predicted that in future years America might well celebrate the "glorious Aera of the Revolution of 1775" just as the British celebrate the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Governor Johnstone also criticized the use of the term rebellion, for to him it meant a number of men organized militarily to commit treason. While it was true that General Gage in Boston reported that the Americans were so organized, he for one did not place much confidence in General Gage's reports. Edmund Burke in his customary style ridiculed the government's definition of rebellion as the destruction of tea at Boston. He pointed out that the government did not consider the burning of tea to be rebellious, for this had occurred in other colonies, nor was the storing of tea in damp vaults where it would rot, rebellious. The official definition of the term was simply the drowning of tea at Boston.

If the government and opposition disagreed about the definition of the American problem, it was natural that their proposed solutions should also be in conflict. The government had a threefold approach: punitive legislation, military force, and conciliatory proposals. In the wake of the Boston Tea Party, the government proposed a series of measures to punish Boston and Massachusetts, which came to be known as the Intolerable Acts. Despite sympathy for the Americans, there was little parliamentary debate on these measures in 1774. Colonel Isaac Barré, one of Chatham's followers, argued strenuously against the provision of the Impartial Administration of Justice Act that would allow moving trials out of Massachusetts to other colonies, or even to England, since he believed such a provision would remove a necessary restraint on British troops in Boston, and thus provoke

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7 Ibid., 45(1775):100.
8 Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, was named for him and another pro-American member of Parliament, Colonel Isaac Barré. They were cited as "distinguished advocates for liberty and the rights of the colonies." H. C. Bradsky, ed., History of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania (Chicago, 1893), 212.
9 Gentleman's Magazine 45(1775):75.
10 Ibid., 45(1775):159-60, 211-15.
11 Ibid., 45(1775):215.
them to irresponsible acts, with reaction in kind from the citizens. Thus the British government would create the very rebellion it was trying to control.12

In response to this punitive legislation, Jonathan Shipley, the Bishop of St. Asaph and another of Benjamin Franklin's British friends, published a passionate defense of American liberty, entitled, *A Speech intended to have been spoken on the Bill for altering the Charters of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*. In it Shipley condemned the tea tax, the riots which attended it, and the British plan to alter Massachusetts government in punishment. The question in America was not, he argued, what rights Britain had, but what methods would best recover American affection. Obviously force would not achieve the desired end, and Shipley pleaded with the government not to tamper with the government of Massachusetts, but to let the Americans enjoy "a little longer that short period of public integrity and domestic happiness, which seems to be the portion allotted by Providence to young rising states." After noting the decline or disappearance of freedom in several European states, including England, Shipley looked hopefully across the Atlantic to North America, "the only great nursery of freedom left upon the face of the earth," and stated that no matter what happened to Great Britain in the future, her greatest glory was to have created and nourished the American colonies in freedom.13

The Intolerable Acts constituted only part of Lord North's program. During the winter of 1775 the government proposed an act to restrain trade with the New England colonies, in retaliation for the American nonimportation agreement, legislation which was later extended to include the mid-Atlantic colonies as well. The trade bill received much more attention in Parliament than had the Intolerable Acts of the previous year, perhaps because many opposition members, still in shock over the Tea Party in 1774, were worried about the imminence of war in 1775. Whatever the reason, they voiced numerous objections to the bill.

For one thing, the measure punished the innocent with the guilty, lumping together with Massachusetts all the New England colonies, which the government itself had stated were not in a state of rebellion, but merely in a state of "anarchy and confusion."14 Moreover, the bill would unite all Americans against the British and turn moderates

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into radicals. Burke saw it as an extension of the Intolerable Acts and predicted similar treatment of the other colonies. He noted that the government was continuing on its absurd course of destroying the North American empire in order to preserve it.\footnote{15 \textit{Ibid.}, 45(1775): 615-16, 627.}

Economic objections were raised as well; the measure took away the colonies' means of subsistence and would reduce them to starvation. One member, in opposing the bill, compared Great Britain to a ruffian entering a house with dagger and pistol, threatening the householder's life unless he gave up his property. In such a case, if the householder (America) resisted the ruffian, he could hardly be said to rebel, he was merely defending his property and freedom.\footnote{16 \textit{Ibid.}, 45(1775): 614-16, 618-20, 627.}

The London merchant community believed the effects of the bill on British commerce would be disastrous, a point they stressed in a petition to Parliament, and repeated in a second petition to the king. In the second petition they warned of the dangers both of a civil war in America, and of the French moving into the American markets which Great Britain would lose. They painted a heroic picture of the Americans, whose ancestors had left England and suffered hardships in the new land for the sake of freedom. Receiving no satisfactory response from the king, they lodged an even stronger protest, accusing the government of attempting to establish arbitrary power in America and denying Americans their just rights of political representation and trial by jury. America's only recourse was to resist by following the precedent of the Glorious Revolution, when the British crown had passed from, in their language, a popish and tyrannical, to a Protestant and illustrious dynasty. The petitioners asked the king, as a first step towards reconciliation with America, to dismiss the ministers who had originated the bill secretly, against the interests of both king and people, and in violation of the constitution.\footnote{17 \textit{Ibid.}, 45(1775): 146, 150, 197, 199-200, 609.}

Such protests were ineffective, as were opposition objections to the second part of the government's American solution — namely the use of military force in America. Military operations were criticized on two grounds, moral and practical. The moral argument was that it was wrong to use force against a people who were defending their freedom. The practical argument was that because they were fighting a righteous cause, the Americans would prevail, but even if they did not, Great Britain would have to send more and more troops to hold America by military occupation, a situation repugnant to Great Britain
and also extremely expensive. In the long run, the cost of the troops would offset any commercial advantages accruing to England from the possession of America, and a permanent standing army in America would eventually threaten the liberties of Englishmen at home.\textsuperscript{18}

The final feature of the government's American policy was conciliation, and in presenting his official proposal to Parliament in February 1775, Lord North neatly sidestepped the issue of taxation by offering to refrain from taxing any colony which itself voted taxes for the defense of the empire and for the expenses of running its own government. The opposition argued against this plan on the grounds that it would bind the colonies more closely together against Great Britain, and that the government was treating the colonists like prisoners of war, who were held up for ransom, i.e., taxation.\textsuperscript{19}

Even before North's proposal was made public, the Earl of Chatham had suggested his own solution: recognition of the Philadelphia Congress, which he believed would grant revenues to the king once Great Britain denounced the use of force. While Chatham did not ask Great Britain to relinquish its legislative rights in America, she must recognize the American right to consent to taxation and must suspend the Intolerable Acts. Burke, too, made a proposal: repeal the Intolerable Acts and allow colonial assemblies to grant aid to the king. Yet another idea came from David Hartley: in place of taxation, Great Britain should substitute a system of requisitions, or formal requests, for aid from the colonies.\textsuperscript{20} Although differing in details, these plans were not substantially different from the government proposal, since none of them gave up the idea of obtaining revenues from America, and all, like the government proposal, made some provision for obtaining American consent to paying those revenues. It was, of course, North's plan which Parliament adopted and offered to the Americans, who rejected it in July 1775.\textsuperscript{21}

During this prewar period, the opinions of private persons, as well as members of Parliament, received generous attention in the pages of the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}. One commentary on America came in the form of a review of Dr. Samuel Johnson's book, \textit{Taxation no Tyranny: An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, 45(1775): 159-60, 211-15.

\textsuperscript{19} Donoughue, \textit{British Politics}, 241n. 2; \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} 45(1775): 411.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} 45(1775): 71-73, 622-25; Donoughue, \textit{British Politics}, 235-36.

\textsuperscript{21} Richard W. Van Alstyne, \textit{Empire and Independence} (New York, 1965), 57-64.
American Congress. The thrust of Johnson's argument was that as long as the Americans were prospering, it was ridiculous for them to complain of oppression from taxation. Any suffering in America was the result of their disobeying the law, and if they wanted representation in Parliament, they should buy estates in England. A refutation of Johnson's arguments appeared in another book, Taxation, Tyranny, also reviewed in the magazine, which showed that the English struggle for liberties from the time of Magna Charta to the Bill of Rights was directed towards the same goal espoused by the Americans, no taxation without representation.

Beginning of War, 1775-1776

Since news from America took at least four weeks to reach England, Parliament was not sitting when dispatches telling of the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord arrived in London in late May 1775. Hence no parliamentary debate on the war took place until October 1775, when Parliament reconvened for its fall session. In the meantime, however, the Gentleman's Magazine took full advantage of its monthly feature, "Proceedings of the American Colonists," to inform the public of events, and, beginning in the autumn of 1775, to express its own opinions about the war. When this feature was introduced in 1774, the magazine had merely printed news, and in early 1775, the editor had made a point of the absence of editorial comment. But as the year wore on, editorial opinion began to appear in these accounts.

In reporting the war — for example, the American expedition to Ticonderoga and the Battle of Bunker Hill — the magazine praised the spirit of the British troops, yet noted that American accounts of engagements differed from those of the British in various details. When Washington was appointed commander in chief of the American forces, the magazine remarked that in similar circumstances in the seventeenth century Oliver Cromwell had made himself master of the government; that perhaps to guard against such an occurrence in America, the New York assembly had sought and received assurances from Washington that he would resign as soon as an accommodation with Great Britain was reached.

In September the magazine began its report of American affairs

22 Gentleman's Magazine 45 (1775): 133-36.
24 Ibid., 45 (1775): 253.
with an extensive analysis in which it observed that both the British ministers and the American Congress would find it difficult to become reconciled, that leaders on both sides had a "spirit of malignancy," and that each side was making preparations for war, not peace. The editor brushed aside the "outrages of the multitude" in America as unimportant in comparison to the resolution of the American leaders and the support given them by substantial citizens and landholders. Congress had the strength of unity.26 The overall impression from these reports is that the Gentleman's Magazine did not regard the Americans as cowards, as did some of the British, did not underestimate their strength, nor show bitterness against them. The analysis of the situation was almost as clinical as though it had been published in a neutral country.

In the later months of 1775, the reports from America were accompanied by commentary which alternated between optimism about a speedy reconciliation and fear of a nasty civil war. After a pessimistic report in September, the Gentleman's Magazine observed that nothing decisive had happened militarily, probably because both sides hoped Parliament would find a solution. In November the editor gave advice to both parties. He advised the Americans that they were not serving their own cause by expanding the war to Canada, for if their intention was merely to maintain American liberties, then they should limit themselves to a defensive war within the thirteen colonies. Since he believed that the Americans were in fact contending for their legitimate rights as Englishmen, he warned Parliament to act consistently towards America, not to give today and take away tomorrow. Believing that war could still be averted, he suggested that America seek a permanent constitution from Britain to guarantee her rights. In place of the traditional image of the mother country surrendering to the demands of rebellious subjects, he pictured two parties to a contract where differences could be discussed rationally without loss of dignity to either side.

To erase further the image of Americans as rebels, the magazine suggested the analogy of a tenant-landlord relationship, in which a tenant complained against the landlord's steward for attempting to extort additional rent. If the landlord, without investigating, arbitrarily evicted his tenant for complaining of grievances, then all his other tenants would fear for their rights. If the tenant had increased the productivity of the land, then it might be fair for him to offer more

rent, but not right for it to be extorted from him. The parallel with America was obvious, if not perfect. The magazine concluded that a fair examination of the revenue question would reveal that the original reason which led America to pay customs duties, for example, was to provide revenues for the king’s household and civil lists. It was therefore only logical for America to increase payments proportionately to increases elsewhere in the empire, for which America would be rewarded in the long run by increased trade. Assuming that there was a reservoir of good will and rationality on both sides, the magazine was optimistic about chances for a peaceful settlement.27

The next month, however, this optimism had subsided because of the government’s declared intention of employing a huge force in America in order to “extort their submission.” The magazine, observing that many British citizens welcomed decisive measures in the belief that America could easily be subdued, warned that the distances involved and the nature of the contest might make the task difficult.28

The outburst of fighting signaled a change in neither government policy nor opposition attitudes. When Parliament assembled in October 1775, the government explained that the Americans were now carrying on a rebellious war “for the purpose of establishing an independent empire.” In order to quell the rebellion the government reinforced the army and also entertained offers of foreign assistance. The military force at Boston was to be more than tripled, but before employing force, the government would appoint peace commissioners to negotiate a settlement.29

The provisions for appointing commissioners were included in a measure, known as the Prohibitory Bill, which also called for the restraint of American trade by the seizure of American shipping. The introduction of this bill occasioned a very full debate on the American war. A remarkable protest against the bill by the Rockinghamites in the House of Lords claimed that by treating Americans as a separate nation, the bill was an outright declaration of war. The protesters objected both to the fact that the bill made the contest a war of spoils by allowing British officers and sailors to keep the American property they seized — a fact which would prolong the war because of greed — and to the fact that disputed cases arising from such seizures were to be tried in the Admiralty courts, where the property rights of British
civilians (i.e., Americans) would not be adequately protected since trial by jury was not available there.  

Similar objections were raised in the lower house. Charles James Fox, an ally of Rockingham, labeled the bill tantamount to a declaration of war. He opposed it on both humanitarian grounds and for the practical reason that in order to enforce the bill and prevent American trade with Europe Britain would become involved in a European war. One member described the bill as an act of revenge by the ministers, who were frustrated by the failure of their previous policy. In their anger, “Earth and seas are to be ransacked for foreign mercenaries to cut the throats of natural-born, loyal subjects.” It was also suggested that the ministers were promoting the war for the profit it brought to their friends, while others pointed out the reluctance of many British soldiers to fight against their brothers in America. The inconsistency of ministerial policy was a constant theme. First, Lord North had insisted on the right of taxation, then he had agreed not to exercise the right, and now he demanded that Americans, like slaves, acknowledge an unlimited obedience to Great Britain.

Several members observed that even if Great Britain won a war against America, it would prove a Pyrrhic victory. Burke, the most eloquent spokesman of this view, said that whichever side won, the war would spell the end of the British Empire. He believed that because of the vastness of the American continent, conquest was impossible, and that a predatory war, as projected in the trade bill, would stimulate the colonies to unite. Britain must therefore consider what she was ready to give up for the sake of peace. She ought to give up taxation, a power not essential to the exercise of authority, as witness the position of British kings.  

In the fall of 1775, the opposition vacillated between condemning measures such as the Prohibitory Bill, which they believed would make a continuation of war and the failure of negotiations inevitable, and wishing the war to be fought quickly and humanely. Throughout the war they directed their harshest criticism against the government in London, not against the army in the field. When the military failed to win or to take advantage of victories, the opposition sometimes applauded, but more often attacked the ministry for mishandling the war. They stressed that if the war was to be fought at all, it should be done quickly and efficiently, so that friendly relations with the colonies

30 Ibid., 45(1775) : 557-60; 46(1776) : 9-11.
could resume. They suspected the government of using the war as a means of staying in power and rewarding its friends with positions and profits. In early 1776, frustration at not winning a quick victory was evident when Fox moved for an inquiry into the reasons for the failure of British troops.\textsuperscript{32} It was the first of many such motions during the war, all intended to test the government's willingness to allow investigations into policies, investigations which would inevitably result in further criticism and which were therefore invariably vetoed.

The opposition also condemned specific war measures, such as the employment of German troops against fellow Englishmen in America. The government proposed to use the Germans both because of difficulties in recruiting at home and because the foreigners could be hired at bargain prices. The objection to hiring mercenaries was primarily that it was a barbarous practice. But it was also pointed out that the employment of troops not subject to either royal or parliamentary control posed a danger to British constitutional government. An interesting prediction by one member of Parliament was that since parts of America had been settled by Germans seeking freedom, the German soldiers would desert the army and, following the example of their fellow countrymen, settle down in America and join the struggle against British tyranny in order to protect their new-found freedom and property rights.\textsuperscript{33}

The parliamentary debate over the merits of the war found its counterpart in private contributions to the Gentleman's Magazine during the early months of 1776. The views of two prominent clergymen appeared in the February 1776 issue. Both the Reverend Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, and the Reverend Richard Price, a dissenting minister and political radical, opposed the American war, but for very different reasons. In his book, entitled An Humble Address and Earnest Appeal, Dr. Tucker, an expert on trade, and an anti-imperialist, argued the advantages of severing the American connection. He minimized the profitability of American commerce, noted the constant weakening of Great Britain due to the emigration of laborers and sailors to America, and pointed out that America had involved Britain in two expensive wars. The conclusion was obvious: Great Britain should rid itself of "an onerous, dangerous, and expensive connection," lest the "sound parts of our constitution . . . [become] tainted by the gangrene of American republicism."\textsuperscript{34}

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\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 46(1776) : 339.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 46(1776) : 391-94.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 46(1776) : 78-79; DNB, 19 : 1209-11.
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Price's opposition to the war was based on very different principles. His tract, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, received a favorable review from the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In the section on the American war, Dr. Price argued that the question of whether the American war was just turned on whether the power which Great Britain exercised in America was just. He believed that the language of the Declaratory Act, to legislate for and bind the colonies "in all cases whatsoever," created slavery in America. On what grounds did Britain base her claim to superiority over America? Certainly not her wealth, her population, nor her virtue. Nor was the fact of parentage a convincing argument, for after all, Germany was the parent country of the Anglo-Saxon race, but this did not give Germany the right to tax England. Nor was it fair to argue that America should be content with an unrepresentative Parliament, just because England was. Instead, Englishmen ought to support the American striving for liberty, to wish for one free country on earth, to which Englishmen could escape when "venality, luxury, and vice, have completed the ruin of liberty here." 35

Although the *Gentleman's Magazine* commented favorably on Price's tract, it also published opposing views. One writer rejected Price's contention that liberty was lost in Great Britain. Was not the freedom of the press proved by the fact that many people publicly defended the Americans' disobedience to British laws? The writer predicted that liberty would not survive in America if British officials and troops were withdrawn, for soon an Oliver Cromwell would set himself up as king in the colonies, and Britain would be called upon to rescue America from tyranny. Moreover, withdrawal by Great Britain, when her honor was involved, "would cast a stain on our present aera of British history." 36

In addition, several poems on America appeared in early 1776. One, entitled, "America," and addressed to Dean Tucker, compared America in its desire for liberty, to "mad horses" which are loosed from their chaise (England) and run wild. Finally,

*With bellies full of liberty  
But void of oats and hay,  
They both sneak back, their folly see,  
And run no more away.* 37

35 *Gentleman's Magazine* 46(1776) : 82-85.  
36 Ibid., 46(1776) : 125-29.  
37 Ibid., 46(1776) : 133.
Another, “On the Expedition to America,” praised General Howe and his brave British troops and spoke of the “ungrateful shore” and the “rebel-hordes.” 38 One poem, entitled “Boston in Distress,” painted a vivid picture of American suffering:

While pleasure reigns unrival’d on this shore,
The streets of Boston stream with British gore;
While like fall’n Romans for new joys we sigh,
Our friends drop breathless, or for mercy cry . . .

The poem ended with a prayer that the “cruel carnage” would cease and that British hearts would feel the “balm of peace.” 39

Declaration of Independence, 1776-1777

Although it might be thought that the British would regard the publication of the Declaration of Independence as an event of major importance, it did not in fact make nearly the impression as other events, such as the Boston Tea Party in 1773, or the surrender of General Burgoyne in 1777. Indeed, the government, which had a year earlier spoken of the American desire for independence as an accepted fact, received the news of the American declaration almost with relief. The official view was expressed in the king’s speech which opened Parliament in October 1776. Publication of the declaration, rather than being a setback, would have the beneficial result of producing unanimous support in Parliament for the war. The government, noting the British victory on Long Island in August, asked members to support the war and stated that the British aim in the war was to restore “law and liberty” to America.40

The reaction of the opposition to the declaration was not so calm. Their major concern was that in the wake of the declaration, France and Spain might be tempted into the war, an eventuality for which Britain was not prepared. Because of the European situation, it was now essential to conciliate America, and the victory on Long Island provided an excellent opportunity for negotiations. The opposition was also quick to defend the declaration. They denied the belief, expressed by many, that the Americans had been republicans from the beginning and had picked a quarrel with Great Britain in order to rid themselves of the king. On the contrary, maintained the opposition,

38 Ibid., 46(1776) : 178.
39 Ibid., 46(1776) : 135.
40 Ibid., 46(1776) : 487-88.
the Americans had been loyal to Great Britain and to the king even up to the time the war began, but they were driven towards independence by Britain’s intransigence.

Two things in particular were responsible for the declaration. First, the ministry’s refusal to consider the American petition in 1775 left the Americans feeling hopeless. Second, the government’s failure to expedite the peace commission of the Howe brothers, Richard and William, made the declaration inevitable. The decision to appoint the Howes as peace commissioners had been made in early 1776, when Richard Howe was named commander in chief in North America, but was not carried out until May, and Richard had not arrived in America with the commission until after the declaration had been published. The opposition suggested that the government deliberately delayed the arrival of the commission in America in order to guarantee the failure of negotiations.41

Such was the immediate reaction to the declaration. In the year that followed, each side elaborated its arguments, the opposition persisting in its defense of America, asking for peace, with various members proposing inquiries into the ministerial conduct of the war, and going so far as to suggest that the colonies already were or should be recognized as separate or federated states. In late 1776, the Duke of Richmond recommended a treaty with America as separate states to form a buffer against the French and Spanish. He denied that Britain needed America as colonies in order to maintain her strength in Europe, and in the early months of 1777 various members of Parliament, including Chatham, spoke of America as being already lost. By the fall of 1777, even before they had learned of the defeat of Burgoyne, members called on the government to face the reality of American independence, and Richmond repeated his earlier suggestion for an American alliance, which would guarantee their commerce and eliminate the “ministerial influence derived from their dependence.” Burke pointed out that recognition of American independence was an academic question, since America already had de facto independence, and Great Britain ought to treat with her as a federal union.42

Thomas Pownall, a former governor of Massachusetts, and a self-proclaimed neutral in Parliament, said that British sovereignty over America was gone forever, that the parliamentary acts dealing with

America were irrelevant, and that Britain could not even expect to get exclusive trading rights with America. The best she could hope for was a commercial or federal treaty. The Secretary for the American Department, Lord George Germain, perhaps the most hawkish of North's colleagues, rejected such an idea. He admitted that he was beginning to despair of reducing America to obedience if she remained united. Yet Britain must either exert her maximum effort or let America go. Germain believed that the Americans were almost exhausted by the war and that Britain still had a chance if she could prevent secret assistance from Europe.43

In reporting on the Declaration of Independence, the Gentleman's Magazine, maintaining a neutral stance, portrayed the war as a family quarrel, rather than as a struggle against an enemy. When the magazine printed the declaration in August 1776, the editor made a point of the fact that he was withholding comment since he would not "presume to decide" whether the grievances stated were real or imaginary, or whether they deserved a parliamentary inquiry. The magazine continued to hope for negotiations in place of fighting, since the Americans lacked neither courage, discipline, experience, commanders, nor engineers. In October, Washington's defeat on Long Island was reported not as a triumph for Britain, but as an unfortunate outcome of the failure of negotiations.44

Private reactions to the Declaration of Independence were less discreet. "An Englishman" writing in the September issue severely criticized both the language and the logic of the declaration; for example, the statement that it is self-evident that all men are created equal, and the notion that all men have an inalienable right to liberty. The obvious inequalities of all men, and the very existence of slavery in America, were sufficient refutation of these statements. Besides, if liberty were inalienable, then there could be no government at all, for every law ever made, whether human or divine, had been an encroachment upon human liberty. An answer to these arguments by "Philander" appeared the following month. Equality, Philander explained, meant simply that any person "A" had as much right to rule over another person "B," as "B" had to rule over "A." And inalienable rights did not mean that the rights could not be transferred (to the government, for example), but that they could not be taken away. As to liberty, the fact that slaves in America did not enjoy it did not

44 Ibid., 46(1776) : 377, 429-30, 476.
mean that they had lost their right to it: laws may take away liberty, but not the right to liberty.\textsuperscript{45}

How long the Americans had been planning to declare independence was still being debated in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1777, as it was in Parliament itself. Richard Price, who a year earlier had published a defense of the Americans, continued to argue in their behalf. Excerpts from his Additional Observations on Civil Liberty appeared in the magazine. Among other things, Price cited evidence that the Americans had begun to seek independence only recently, namely, statements of loyalty to Great Britain by assemblies in Boston and Pennsylvania in 1774 and 1775, and the petition to the king from the Second Continental Congress in May 1775. The fact that the Americans were unprepared for war when it came confirmed the sincerity of these statements. British actions were responsible for the American declaration: the rejection of the congressional petition; the Prohibitory Bill, which confiscated American ships; and the use of foreign troops in America. Unless America had already formed an alliance with France, however, she might still be recovered if Britain offered security for property and guaranteed her charters. "Patriomastix," a frequent contributor to the magazine, answered Price. The evidence mustered by Price, he countered, could be used to prove the contrary theory which he favored, namely, that all the American statements of loyalty were cleverly published in order to deceive Great Britain, and that when war began, America was as prepared as she could be without betraying her ultimate plan to declare independence.\textsuperscript{46}

Concern about possible French intervention in the war was a theme of Peace the Best Policy, a book by Matthew Robinson, reviewed in February 1777. Robinson could see no advantages from the American war, whether Britain won or lost, for France was sure to enter the war, and Britain, by sending her soldiers and sailors to America, would be left defenseless. He urged Britain to make peace, and while he did not recommend specific terms, he pointed out the failures of the current policy: the commission to the Howes did not restore the charter of Massachusetts, and the proposal to revise legislation was inadequate since the original authors of the legislation would be responsible for its revision.\textsuperscript{47}

Another blast against the conduct of the war came from Burke's

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 46(1776): 403-4, 450-51.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 47(1777): 75-76, 167-68.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 47(1777): 80-81.
pen in a letter written ostensibly to the Sheriffs of Bristol, Burke's parliamentary constituency. The letter contained Burke's thoughts not only on two pieces of legislation affecting America, but also a condemnation of the war. It reiterated previous attacks on the use of German mercenaries, for example, and defended the opposition to the war. Burke believed that it was important for the cause of eventual reconciliation that the Americans be made to feel that they had friends in England. The absolute hostility of all Englishmen towards America, which some people thought a patriotic duty, would not win the war. He did not believe, as did the ministry, that once war began, all ties with America were severed, and that past misconduct of the government would be forgotten. Burke went on to outline the evolution of his own ideas about America. Although he had once believed in insisting on Britain's unlimited legislative power over the colonies, he had learned that rather than insisting on abstract rights, it was more effective to adapt government to the circumstances and character of the people governed. The British should realize that America would not accept anything but a free government, and he then gave this startling definition of a free government: "for any practical purpose, it is what the people think so." Debates about the abstract definition of freedom were fruitless, since freedom was a matter of "moral prudence and natural feeling." 48

Surrender of Burgoyne and Franco-American alliance, 1777-1781

On December 3, 1777, the House of Commons was stunned to learn of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga in October. In the course of a debate on the army estimates, Secretary Germain revealed casually in answer to a question that Burgoyne had surrendered his army and had been given safe conduct out of the country. This announcement evoked from the opposition a chorus of condemnation for the ministers, and praise for the Americans. Colonel Barré, for example, blamed bad planning in London for the disaster and accused Lord Germain of criminal behavior. Other members, expressing shock at Germain's nonchalance in reporting the news, spoke of his ignorance, obstinacy, and incapacity. All the scorn of the opposition was reserved for the ministers, and Burgoyne received very little attention in the debate. The Americans were extolled both because of their military victory and their humane treatment of Burgoyne and his army. They had been pictured by the government as cowards, yet they were in fact "men of the

most exalted sentiments; inspired by that genius of liberty . . . which it is impossible to conquer.” The reason they could not be conquered was that while the British had plenty of troops and resources, they lacked the one thing the Americans had — a just cause. The fact that the Americans allowed safe conduct for the British troops proved their nobility and their continued affection for Great Britain. While the Americans might lack clothing and equipment, their “souls . . . are unreduced.”

In the following week, the shock over Burgoyne’s fate provoked another general debate on the war. While old arguments about the cause of the war were rehashed, division within the opposition ranks about the value of the Declaratory Act became apparent. Nor did the opposition have a unified alternative to the ministerial policy to propose. Various ideas were thrown out, none of them new: to grant the Americans guarantees on taxes and charters; to repeal obnoxious legislation; to recognize their independence; or to arrange a treaty with them as federated states. In defense of the government, North explained that he intended to renew negotiations, and denied the charge that he had ever insisted on unconditional surrender for America.

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance which the British attached to the defeat of Burgoyne. Within four months of Saratoga, the French concluded formal treaties with the Americans, but in the meantime, in order to forestall such a Franco-American combination, the British government set about to reassess its policy. The result was another conciliatory proposal for America, presented by Lord North to Parliament in the form of a bill in February 1778, two months after the news of Saratoga became public. North explained that at the beginning of the war, the government, assuming that the conflict would end quickly, had planned to offer concessions once British victory was assured. In view of the duration of the war and the lack of a decisive outcome, however, Britain was now faced with three options: to continue the war as at present, which was too expensive; to recall the army from America, which meant granting independence; or to offer terms of conciliation, which was the best choice.

The danger to Britain in independence was that America might

49 Ibid., 48(1778) : 293-96.
50 Ibid., 48(1778) : 395-99, 443-45.
51 See Van Alstyne, Empire and Independence, 133, for the view that even before Saratoga the French had decided to enter the war. However, the British did not know this.
join Britain's enemy, France. Nor would independence be beneficial to America, for it entailed heavy burdens such as high prices, of which the war itself had already provided a foretaste. On the other hand, if America remained with Great Britain, her economic situation would be eased and her liberty guaranteed. North therefore proposed an act of Parliament authorizing commissioners to treat with any persons or parties in America authorized to treat with them, whether Congress, rebels, persons in arms, or colonies. They could negotiate on any topic — grievances, laws, constitutions — and would have the power to repeal acts of Parliament.52

There was no opposition to the government's idea of conciliating America, but rather criticism of the timing and of the details. Fox, for example, sarcastically complimented North for proposing something that Burke had proposed three years earlier, and he could not refrain from noting North's vacillations. He worried that it was already too late to prevent a Franco-American treaty, in which case the gesture of conciliation would only prove humiliating to Great Britain. There was questioning of the relationship of the commissioners to Parliament. Who was to appoint them, and how much freedom would they have with respect to repealing acts of Parliament? Would the Americans negotiate with any commissioners sent out by the present ministry? How could Britain negotiate with Congress without recognizing American independence? To those who were pessimistic about the chances for successful negotiations, one member had a positive answer, for he believed that the majority of Americans did not wish independence, and that once they saw proof of British reasonableness, their memory of happier times under mild British rule, and their residual affection for the mother country would bring them around. Moreover, an American alliance with France was unnatural. Such a connection between a "free people" and "a despotick government," between the simple-mannered Americans and the "high-polished and luxurious" French, could not succeed.53

The conciliatory bill was passed in March, and the commissioners were sent to America in the spring. By that time, however, the British had received official notification of the Franco-American agreement. The immediate reaction of the opposition to this news was predictable: a series of outbursts against the stupidity, the ignorance, and the naiveté of the British government. In the House of Lords,

52 Gentleman's Magazine 48(1778) : 51-55, 93.
53 Ibid., 48(1778) : 614-17.
talk of impeaching the ministers was combined with discussion of how Great Britain was to fight a two-front war without allies. The Duke of Richmond questioned whether the costs of such a war were worth it, "merely to keep a weak and wicked set of men" in power. The way to avoid such a dangerous war was immediately to withdraw British forces from America and to recognize American independence. Another peer, Lord Shelburne, said that the answer to British preparedness was internal reform. If corruption were ended, and the government lived up to the spirit of the constitution, then a successful prosecution of the war would be possible.54

In the House of Commons, no lengthy debate on the war with France was reported until the opening of the new session in November 1778. At that time the thrust of the argument against the ministry was the same as that expressed by the Lords the previous spring: that Great Britain without allies was not prepared to fight France and America, that her fleet was not strong enough and had failed to prevent the French fleet from sailing to America, and that the best solution was to give up the American war and concentrate on the real enemy, France. As Fox put it, "America must be conquered in France; France can never be conquered in America." 55

The opposition also berated the government for the failure of the peace commission, which had arrived in Philadelphia in June 1778, just as the British army was evacuating that city. The commissioners had followed the army to New York, where in October they issued a manifesto granting pardon to anyone, promising redress of grievances, accusing Congress of preventing peace, and warning those who insisted on independence that if the war continued Great Britain would follow the "laws of self-preservation." Like the earlier efforts of negotiation, the commission failed to bring peace, partly because of American confidence in the new alliance with France. The Gentleman's Magazine, however, attributed the failure to the refusal of Congress to allow the commissioners to inform the American public of the good will of the British government.56

What most upset the opposition about the peace commission was the implied threat in the manifesto that if America did not accept British terms, the British would wage all-out war on America, or, as a protest in the House of Lords interpreted it, Britain would move

54 Ibid., 48(1778) : 99-105.
55 Ibid., 49(1779) : 6.
56 Ibid., 48(1778) : 364-68, 412-14, 489-92, 629-33; Van Alstyne, Empire and Independence, 151-53.
"from a qualified and mitigated war to a war of extremity and desolation." Why should Britain wage war inhumanely, simply because she had been unable to hold the colonies? Such an announced policy would alarm Europe and provoke a response in kind from the enemy. But the government justified the manifesto, claiming that it promised vigor, not cruelty, in prosecuting the war, and that the methods which were contemplated, such as burning towns, were acceptable under international law. The opposition kept up its pressure for an end to the American war, for withdrawal of troops, and for recognition of American independence, and dismissed the assurance of one of the peace commissioners, Governor George Johnstone, that Great Britain could rely on support from the loyalists, who were 30,000 strong in Pennsylvania alone.57

Yorktown and the end of war, 1781-1783

When Spain entered the war in June 1779, the attention of the government became fixed even more firmly than in 1778, on the navy and on European affairs, which took precedence over the land war in America. The neglect of the colonial war prompted the opposition to seek specific information from the government about its intentions in America, whether it was waging an offensive or a defensive war. During 1780 Parliament was also preoccupied with domestic politics, for Burke introduced a comprehensive reform bill, which distracted attention from the American war. Nonetheless, during the debates on reform, the war was discussed in the context of the abuse of ministerial power. The opposition also made repeated motions for conciliation in America and for ending the war, which were rejected by the government on the grounds that it was impossible to separate the American from the European war; if Great Britain gave up America, France would enter the power vacuum thus created. Moreover, the government was not yet ready to declare America lost. Secretary Germain declared ambiguously in November 1780 that though Britain might not be able to subdue America, she could somehow still regain America.58

Then came the news in late 1781 of Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, news published in London by the time Parliament convened at the end of November. The Cornwallis tragedy provoked a renewed indictment of government policy and was the immediate cause

57 Gentleman's Magazine 48(1778) : 605, 634-36; 49(1779) : 163-68, 275-80. 58 Ibid., 50(1780) : 501-2; 51(1781) : 7-8, 51-56, 409-12, 457, 460.
for the opposition's successful campaign to remove Lord North — a goal finally attained in March 1782 with the help of the independent members of Parliament.59

The king's speech, opening Parliament in November 1781, asked for support in ending the rebellion, without specifying whether this meant a renewed offensive or merely a speedy end to the war on the best possible terms. In reply, opposition members complained bitterly about the inadequacy of war measures and ministers, the staggering national debt, and the exhaustion of the entire British nation. To the pointed question of what exactly were its intentions in America, the government replied that a full explanation would be forthcoming when the government requested more troops. It assured the members that promising support to the king did not necessarily commit Great Britain to the American war, but did demonstrate for Europe's benefit the continued firmness of Great Britain. Hence the need for unanimity at home.

While the ministers admitted that the aim of securing revenues from America was impractical, and agreed that the war could not be prosecuted on the same scale as previously, they nevertheless argued that it was not safe to withdraw abruptly all troops from America, that they must continue to occupy the American ports still held. Secretary Germain refused to consider independence for America; it would spell the end of the British Empire. Yet by mid-December, Lord North was probably ready to consider the possibility of independence, and however slowly, the government was moving towards peace, just as the momentum for the government's removal began to build. In February a motion for peace by a private member was passed despite North's objections that an outright declaration for peace would weaken Great Britain's hand vis-à-vis France and Spain. By the end of February the attorney general had prepared a bill allowing Britain to make peace with America, but Fox and other members, believing that real peace could come about only under a new government, would have none of it. Three weeks later, North, no longer able to command the confidence of the House of Commons, resigned, and a new ministry, led by Rockingham in the House of Lords and Fox in the House of Commons, prepared to make the peace.60

Under the new government, Great Britain began to negotiate with

60 Gentleman's Magazine 51 (1781) : 540, 605-8; 52 (1782) : 4-7, 51-55, 142-47, 163-64, 200, 214, 620-27; Christie, End of North's Ministry, 276.
the American colonies on the only basis that America would accept, namely, independence. The preliminary treaty was ready by the time Parliament assembled at the end of December 1782, and almost everyone recognized the inevitability of American independence. Lord Shelburne, who had become prime minister after the death of Rockingham in July, called it "the bitterest pill he ever swallowed in his life," while Viscount William Howe pointed out that the greatness of Great Britain did not rest on her American empire, but on her national industry, her commerce, and courage. There was some uncertainty about whether the recognition of American independence was unconditional, or whether it rested on the outcome of future negotiations with France. This uncertainty led some members to wonder whether the war was really over, and to demand fuller information on the terms of the treaty. Ex-minister North, however, spoke for most when he stated that it was not proper for the government to reveal the details of the negotiations, and urged the need for unanimous support of the government.

Nevertheless, full-scale debate on the treaty in February 1783 revealed serious weaknesses in the government's position. The most devastating attack came from Lord John Cavendish, who believed that Britain had been in too much of a hurry to make peace, and had therefore bargained ineffectively. He was supported by Lord North, who made these points: the negotiators had given away too much territory; had granted fishing rights without reciprocity; had secured no real protection for loyalists; and had obtained only a hollow promise of navigational rights on the Mississippi, inasmuch as America did not control the banks of the river.61

Shelburne responded that the boundary between Canada and America was not worth quibbling over, and that it was better to grant America fishing rights than to have America fish without British consent. As to the loyalists, their rights were not entirely overlooked, yet Britain could not continue the war merely for their sake, and had gotten the best peace possible. Shelburne's defense was not effective. Cavendish introduced a series of resolutions, tantamount to a censure of the government, which brought an end to Shelburne's administration. Yet the terms of the final treaty with America, ratified in September 1783, under a coalition government of the former enemies, Fox and North, differed little from the treaty negotiated by Shelburne.62

Thus by 1782 all parties in Great Britain, including the king and Lord North, who had been responsible for prosecuting the war, had come to accept the fact that the only way to end the exhausting and unprofitable American war was to recognize America's independence. The official acceptance of independence completed the revolution in British opinion about America which can be traced in the Gentleman's Magazine throughout the war period.

In 1774 and 1775 the aim of the government's American policy was to quell rebellion and to secure American recognition of British supremacy. It was also willing to make compromises on the issue of taxation and to offer conciliation. Supremacy and conciliation remained the twin bases of policy until the disaster at Yorktown, when military and political reality forced the government to consider the hitherto unthinkable solution of separation.

For the opposition, which came into power in 1782 in time to make the peace, separation was not a new idea. From the outset of the war, they had condemned British policies, and after 1776, they argued that these policies had driven the Americans to declare independence. Yet while they defended American actions, some believed that America could still be conciliated if she were granted a less subservient status within the empire. And as late as 1782, some doves, such as Lord Shelburne, America's longtime friend, regarded independence as a necessary evil, as witness his statement that it was the bitterest pill he had ever swallowed. Others, however, like the Duke of Richmond, suggested as early as 1776 that Britain accept the fact that the colonies were lost, and negotiate with them as separate states.

British thinking on a related matter was also divided during the war. This was the danger posed to British security by her traditional enemy, France. The war in America was not simply an internal British affair, but a conflict which invited intervention from other European powers. Until 1778 the doves continually warned of the increasing risk of French involvement, the longer the war continued, while the official position of the government was to trust French assurances of her peaceful intentions. In 1778, when the French did form an alliance with America, the opposition urged the necessity of making peace with America immediately in order to avoid the strain of a two-front war. Despite disagreements on policy, both parties, being imperialists, regarded the colonial question not only on its own merits, but as part of the larger question of Franco-British rivalry, which dominated Britain's foreign policy.
These two fundamental and related issues of American independence and Franco-American friendship, then, were the subject of considerable controversy, but the events of the war forced both hawks and doves to modify their views so that British negotiators were able to conclude peace on terms acceptable to all sides.