

THE FAILURE OF LOYALISM IN ALBANY COUNTY DURING
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

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In order to understand the failure of the Loyalist movement within Albany County, notice must be given first of all to the early history, the early nature of that county. Long before the Revolution, it clearly demonstrated a staunch anti-British spirit, first given impetus from its Dutch inhabitants and its economic conflict of interest with the British Empire. All of this may have proven insignificant, had the leadership of the county been supporters of the King in 1773, as they had been prior to 1768, but they were not. The Livingstons, the Van Renssalaers, and Philip Schuyler, by this time, ousted from power by the rival DeLancey faction, had tied their fortunes to the extra-legal committees and activities that characterized the period, moving with them toward the dissolution of British rule in the thirteen colonies. Unfortunately, a number of the eventual Loyalists were helping them along by also sitting in on these various extra-legal bodies in the hope of acting as a moderate influence upon them. By the time they realized that this was an impossible task, they found themselves at the mercy of the very bodies in which they sat. They had done nothing about setting up their own organization to combat the Rebel influence. All their hopes by this time rested with

the British army. The campaign of Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne gave them hope, and brought Loyalist activity in the county to its zenith. However, with his defeat, the Loyalists were in their worst position to date. Dispirited, many of them now fully exposed, they were left virtually alone to face the Rebel anti-Loyalist machinery, which by this time had reached its most effective state in the Albany Commissioners. Under their careful observation, Loyalism in Albany County became a non-entity in the British struggle to restore His Majesty's government to the rebellious colonies.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEMS OF STUDYING LOYALISM

Introduction

No other event in United States' history has attained, nor probably ever will attain, the glorious status of the American Revolution. Through the years the entire conflict has taken on the image of a holy struggle for liberty. The fortitude of Washington at Valley Forge, the courageous decision of the Continental Congress in the summer of 1776, even acts of criminal destruction such as the Boston Tea Party have not just evoked feelings of pride and patriotism from the American people, they have become events to be venerated. As a consequence, each aspect and event of the Revolutionary Period has received a heavy coat of white wash in order to make it perfectly presentable. While some believe this may prove beneficial to the health of the American nation, it has been extremely detrimental to historical analysis. One aspect which has been especially ill-treated as a result of this practice has been the story of the American Loyalists. While there can be some excuse given for the British who opposed the American Colonies out of interest in their own country's welfare, no such excuse can be made for the Americans who turned their backs on their land in its most urgent hour. These people are the greatest villains to emerge from the conflict. To find decency in any of them would be to detract from the purity of the Revolution. As a result, it was over a century following the Peace of Paris of 1783 before American historians found

themselves capable of coming to grips with the issue of the Loyalists. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that their treatment has become comparatively objective. In light of these studies, the picture of the Loyalists that develops is one far more complex than traditionally imagined. Contrary to the popular belief that all the Loyalists were wealthy colonists who looked to Britain to maintain their favored position in society, scholarly studies of this group of Americans show that such generalizations in this area are extremely dangerous.

In many instances pure self-interest may have been the major reason for loyalty. Royal placemen seemingly lend themselves perfectly to this supposition. Their wealth, their power, and their social position were all directly dependent on the British government. Nevertheless, even among this group, men like James Wright, Thomas Hutchinson, and Cadwallader Colden firmly believed that the colonists had neither legal, nor constitutional, nor historical right to disobey the dictates of the Parliament, even if it did infringe on certain colonial liberties.¹ Principle in many cases was just as strong a motivating force of loyalty as self-interest.²

Outside of the placemen, the view that wealth, political power, and social position were standard pre-requisites for loyalty falls through. An Act of Banishment passed by the Massachusetts Assembly in 1783 listed three hundred Loyalists. Of this number, a third fit

¹Robert M. Calhoun, The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781, (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc., 1965, 1969, 1973), p.x.

²Catherine S. Crary, The Price of Loyalty: Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era, (New York, St. Louis, San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 3 of the Forward.

the traditional view. However, the other two thirds proved to be simple farmers, artisans, laborers, and small shop keepers.³ In order to discover motives for loyalty other factors such as time, place, and circumstance must be looked at, both separately and in various combinations.

A number of eventual Loyalists were at one time considered staunch Patriots. Among this group, referred to as Whig-Loyalists, was Robert Alexander. As late as January 1776 he was vigorously assisting in the colonists military resistance to Britain.⁴ As early as February 1776, he was flirting with the idea of independence.⁵ However, once the Declaration of Independence became a fact, he and others like William Smith Jr. and Andrew Allen found the situation unacceptable. With a change in the time and circumstance of the struggle, so followed a change in their attitude. Once the fight became one for independence rather than reform, these men switched from being active Rebels to supporters of the King.

Backcountry loyalism was very prominent throughout a good portion of the conflict. William Nelson claims that one of the main areas of Loyalist strength was along the thinly settled Western frontier running all the way from Georgia to Vermont.⁶ There was a

³William H. Nelson, The American Tory, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p.86.

⁴William A. Benton, Whig-Loyalism: An Aspect of Political Ideology in the American Revolutionary Era, (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), pp. 147-148.

⁵Ibid., p. 163.

⁶Nelson, The American Tory, p. 87.

very strong belief among the people of that part of the country, including many of the Indian tribes, that the British government was the only force capable of preventing the westward advance of large scale settlements.⁷ It is interesting to note that not all of the Indian tribes remained loyal. The Delawares supported the Rebels because their traditional rival, the Iroquois had already pledged themselves to support the British.⁸

This example of the Delawares demonstrates how easy it is to disprove a generalization. By adding the element of circumstance, the generalization that would usually be derived from simply considering location has been invalidated. Add to time, place, and circumstance a personal element and an immense variety of motives can be uncovered. This personal element is far more important as a motivating factor than anything else. In fact, when analyzing Loyalty what is being examined is something that is "essentially personal."⁹ Thus the final decision of loyalty rested with the individual, and would be dependent on such factors as his own political preference, his own self-interest, his own conscience, emotional make-up, and other intangible qualities that are unique to each separate person. Closely related to this, or having a direct bearing on this are such outside factors as the proximity of either American or British military forces, the strength

⁷Ibid.

⁸Crary, The Price of Loyalty, p. 252.

⁹Wallace Brown, The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 52.

of the local revolutionary committees, and also the general tide of the war.¹⁰

The myriad of motivating factors available, especially those of a very intimate, personal nature, makes it very apparent that generalizations as to the reasons for remaining loyal will very likely prove inadequate. Outside of the placemen, it is very hard to determine who is apt to be a Loyalist, nor can a typical Loyalist be pointed out. Some attempt the inclusive statement that they were characterized by a very conservative nature, supportive always of the status quo, or at least a slow, legal process of change. William Nelson argues that with the emigration of the Loyalist, America lost its "organic Conservatism."¹¹ While this view of the Loyalists as conservatives in some cases may be valid, it does not clearly separate them from many of the rebel leaders. It would be very difficult to classify John Dickinson as being other than conservative. Thus while conservative may fit the Loyalists, it is not a distinctive generalization. Being only partially descriptive, is is also insufficient.

Even the consideration of the numerical strength of the Loyalists must be carefully qualified. As shown with the case of Robert Alexander, different events at different times altered notions on loyalty. For some, the only event that forced the decision of loyalty was the Declaration of Independence. This forced them to decide once and for all whether they were Englishmen or Americans.¹²

¹⁰Crary, The Price of Loyalty, p. 3.

¹¹Nelson, The American Tory, p. 190.

¹²Benton, Whig-Loyalism, p. 155.

However, for others, the First Continental Congress which set up the extra-legal Continental Associations also "crystallized the crisis of allegiance."¹³ Just as William Smith, Jr., Andrew Allen, and Robert Alexander were added to the Loyalists numbers following the Declaration of Independence, resentments aroused by the Associations' activities, such as enforcing the boycott, turned many a prospective Patriot into a staunch supporter of the British government long before July 4, 1776.¹⁴

As a consequence, when speaking of the numerical strength of the Loyalists it is important to designate time periods. Before the First Continental Congress is one period, before and after the Declaration of Independence are two others. Another event which should also be considered is the out-break of armed conflict at Lexington and Concord. This too appears to have the quality necessary for creating a crisis of allegiance. If each of these events simply added to the numbers of the Loyalists, the task of determining numerical strength would not be overwhelming. However, at the same time people were joining Loyalist ranks, others were leaving to join the Rebels. There are a number of reasons for this shifting. Paradoxically enough, it could often be due to either the presence or the absence of the British troops. When they were present, they were supercilious, and, like most armies, destructive of friends' as well as foes' property. While the Associations made many Patriots loyal,

¹³Crary, The Price of Loyalty, p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 56.

British troops by their actions made many British sympathizers Patriots.¹⁵ Likewise, the absence of British troops prevented many from embracing the Loyalist cause. To pledge allegiance to Britain, as many discovered, without the nearby support of the King's soldiers would be an open invitation for patriotic neighbors to convince these people that they were in error. The viciousness of their persuasive techniques often proved to these unfortunate Loyalists that it was in their best interest to renig on their pledge. Others who had not yet announced their position, after seeing various examples of Patriot vengeance, chose to remain silent. This was the problem that seriously hampered General Cornwallis' Southern Campaign in 1780. Counting heavily on Loyalist support, he found that very few would answer his call for aid. Since British pledges affording the Loyalists military protection had been "repeatedly exposed as idle promises," there were not too many people willing to be exposed to the angry Rebels.¹⁶ Thus on the whole, the number of Loyalists did not grow or decline at a steady rate. Instead, they fluctuated in a manner that was closely tied to the motivational factors present. In the words of Wallace Brown, they often "waxed and waned with the fortunes of war."¹⁷

¹⁵Brown, The Good Americans, p. 120. Paul H. Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 140-141.

¹⁶Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, p. 143.

¹⁷Brown, The Good Americans, p. 127.

When Paul H. Smith gives his estimate of the total number of Loyalists during the Revolutionary Period as 523,000,¹⁸ he is projecting this number from a numerical basis of professed Loyalists. Unfortunately, as has been pointed out, a number of people never let their true loyalty be known. Besides the fear of punishment at the hands of local Patriots, which could also include a loss of property, some people who were Loyalists at heart may have been simply quiet individuals who never felt the need to profess views on anything. Others, even though their opinions differed with their neighbors, may have been appalled by the thought of taking up arms against them.¹⁹ The combined effect of fluctuating Loyalists, along with those who refused to proclaim themselves as such will make the knowledge of precise numbers an impossibility. Probably the only way they could be closely tabulated would be through numerous microcosmic studies of the Loyalists.

These studies would not only allow for an intensive examination of the forces that would effect the numbers of the Loyalists, but they would also afford a very intimate look at the functions that the Loyalist performed during this period. These would not be just the functions of the political leaders or the elite Loyalists, about whom an overwhelming majority of the material has been done already. These microcosmic studies should be able to uncover the roles played by the Loyalists of common rank. Catherine Crary's book The Price of Loyalty

¹⁸Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organization and Numerical Strength, William and Mary Quarterly, XXV (1968), p. 269.

¹⁹Mary Beth Norton, The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789, (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), p. 7.

hits upon this, but it is lacking in both intensity and interpretation, and is far too fragmented a study to adequately fill this need.

As a result, when the fighting of the Loyalists is viewed, it is often seen through the eyes of the commanders, including those who are British, and usually limited to major battles in which they were involved. In most studies this means a recounting of King's Mountain, or various engagements involving Tarleton, or possibly William Cunningham. Since Wallace Brown claims that the most significant aspect of Loyalist military action was that it turned the war into a civil conflict, in the strictest sense of the word,²⁰ it would be very enlightening to analyze the reactions of people from different areas to the necessity of taking up arms against their neighbors. Apparently the people in the South welcomed it as a means of vengeance on old rivals or others that had done them wrong. Here Loyalist military action was brutal under Tarleton and Thomas Browne. Eventually the actions of Loyalists bands became so arbitrary that the word "Tory", which meant Loyalist, became synonymous with outlaw.²¹ There was little that distinguished their activities from one another.

The general consensus is that the effect of the Loyalists activity during the war was negligible, if not in fact negative. Subordinated to British officers, provincial or militia commanders were seldom in a position to issue orders of any real consequence.²² Outside of the South, Loyalist military action consisted almost

²⁰Brown, The Good Americans, p. 102.

²¹Nelson, The American Tory, p. 149.

²²Brown, The Good Americans, p. 124.

exclusively of partisan fighting and small raids. This was "peripheral to the main action, and more likely to irk than really hurt the enemy."²³ Eventually a big opportunity did arrive for the Loyalists to be a major part of British military strategy. However, they failed to live up to the expectations of the British government.

This was following the capture of 6,000 regulars under General Burgoyne at Saratoga in 1777, and the subsequent entry of the French into the war. Substantially weakened in America, and unable to re-enforce because of the French threat in Europe, the British government was forced to make heavy use of the Loyalists. Wrongly convinced that they were in the majority, and lacking any understanding of the Loyalist situation the British ministry continuously overestimated the number of Loyalists it expected to raise.²⁴ When the expected Loyalist support failed to materialize during the Southern Campaign of Cornwallis, Parliament decided to quit the war in the colonies.²⁵

There were many reasons behind the failure of the Loyalists to rise at what could have been their finest hour. As pointed out before, the British officers had a detrimental habit of moving into areas of which they did not maintain control. While there they encouraged Loyalists to stand up and be counted only to leave them to the devices of their hostile patriot neighbors. The more basic problem however

²³Ibid., p. 101.

²⁴Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, p. 66.

²⁵Ibid., p. 121.

was that British policy towards the Loyalists was allowed to "drift with the fortunes of war."²⁶ This meant that the ministry was never able to formulate a comprehensive plan for the use of these Americans.²⁷

Before 1776 brought great numbers of British regulars to the colonies, the Loyalists were seen as important. They were all the British could count on to put down local disturbances. Once the regulars arrived, the Loyalists were pushed into obscurity. ~~For about two years~~

Loyalists looking for military action were given menial, if not degrading tasks, such as foraging, and carrying supplies. In short, it meant activities that were only indirectly military. There was only contempt among the British regulars for these colonials. While these provincials received the same pay as regulars of corresponding rank, they were denied numerous benefits. They did not receive "sick pay" for being wounded, nor did officers receive the type of "hospitalization" that was available to the regulars.²⁸ Besides being ranked as a junior officer to regulars one grade below their own commission, when provincial units served with regulars, officers of the provincial units were also refused permanent rank in the army, as well as half pay when his unit was reduced.²⁹

After Saratoga this situation was rectified, but the damage had already been done. There was a great deal of animosity between the Loyalists and the British troops do to the regulars haughty attitude

²⁶Ibid., p. 78.

²⁷Ibid., p. 11.

²⁸Ibid., p. 64.

²⁹Ibid.

and their abuse of any type of American, regardless of their political stance. At the same time Saratoga, Trenton, and Princeton had raised some doubts in the minds of many Loyalists as to the claim that Britain's army would be invincible.³⁰ Their sympathies may have remained with Britain, but the attitude of the regulars supplemented by the destruction of the myth that the King's forces were unbeatable cooled much of the Loyalist ardour to join in the fight.

Unfortunately at the very time the enthusiasm of the Loyalists was waning, the British ministry was finding itself becoming more and more dependent upon them. After 1778, with the mounting costs of the war taking its toll on government finances, and the opposition in Parliament becoming more urgent in their demands for a cessation of the colonial conflict, the only justification North's government could touch upon to continue the war was the plight of the Loyalists.

Fortunately for North's administration they were able to convince enough members of Parliament that there were great numbers of Loyalists in America that placed all their hopes in an eventual British victory in the colonies. To abandon them, it contended, would be dishonorable. Furthermore, it proclaimed its intention of making use of the "relatively untapped reservoir of man power," thus lessening the expense while increasing the size of the army.³¹ Thus the government of Lord North tied itself directly to a "chimera of loyalist support" that had been overestimated from the beginning, and eroded in the years 1776 and 1777. Britain's dependence on the Loyalists was a bit

³⁰Ibid., p. 42.

³¹Ibid., p. 97.

too much and a bit too late to be beneficial. It was the final mistake that resulted from an unwillingness on the part of the British government to carefully look into the potential use of the Loyalists, and consequently, to employ them wisely. As it stands this resource was both ignored and abused, only to be made the last hope when its strength and spirit had been drained.

While Paul H. Smith's Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy throws a great deal of light on the Loyalists' place in British military policy during the war, there have not been comparable studies done on other Loyalist functions. Since the American Revolution was the first rebellion in modern history to affect a large, literate population,³² propoganda was a very important aspect of it. Loyalists who attempted to present their view through newspapers faced violence and boycott. Only where British protection was especially strong could Loyalist newspapers flourish. In New York, which held the greatest number of Loyalists, there was the most famous of Loyalist newspapers, James Rivington's Royal Gaqette. Other prominent presses were run by Hugh Gaine, who published the New York Mercury, and James Humphrey, who put out Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Ledger.

Despite the efforts of these newspaper publishers, and of such pamphleteers as Samuel Seabury, Thomas Chandler, Charles Inglis and Myles Cooper, it appears as if both the written and spoken propaganda of the Loyalists went relatively unheeded. Wallace Brown believes that the Rebels were able to dominate the propaganda war because

³²Brown, The Good Americans, p. 91.

they "were able to present Independence, religious and civil liberties as easily grasped, exciting concepts sanctioned by God, law, tradition, and clear self-interest," where as the Loyalists always centered their arguments on "vague or dull, complicated, legalistic schemes."³³ In a sense, there is an almost elitist bent to Loyalist propaganda. It is almost as if there is a fear among them to bring their ideas down to the level of the general public. This led to the inability to "cultivate public opinion" of which William Nelson speaks.³⁴ Thus in the final analysis, Loyalist propaganda, or at least a great deal of it, was more of an exercise in self-justification or rationalization of the writers stand, for his and others of his level's benefit. This placed a definite restriction on its effectiveness. Combined with a large number of people refusing to listen to their side at all out of a sense of patriotism,³⁵ there should be little doubt as to the reasons behind the Loyalists' lack of success in this area. But the question still remains as to why so many of these obviously able writers refrained from using their talents to shape public opinion as did those who were Patriots? The answers may prove to be as numerous as the writers themselves.

A couple of slightly more successful activities in which the Loyalists were employed were counterfeiting and espionage. Of the counterfeiting, it is believed that it was little more than an irritant.

³³Ibid., p. 94.

³⁴Nelson, The American Tory, p. 19.

³⁵Brown, The Good Americans, p. 94

Even if it had not been practiced colonial currency would still have depreciated.³⁶ The practice did not create financial problems for the Congress, it just added to them. However, it must have been especially irritating, since the penalty for a conviction of counterfeiting was usually the death penalty.³⁷ Spying also carried this sentence. Like counterfeiting the extent of its practice remains unknown. Nevertheless, considering the ease with which it could be carried out, since the war generally lacked language or nationality barriers, there can be little doubt of its extensive practice on both sides. At times it involved people of great importance. The revelation that the supposedly staunch patriot Dr. Benjamin Church was spying for the British shocked many people on both sides. Still in the final analysis, as in most conflicts, espionage was comparatively irrelevant to the final disposition of the war.³⁸

Generally speaking it appears as if the Loyalist activities during the Revolutionary Period were a failure. This goes beyond their military involvement, their propaganda style, or the inconsequential effect of their espionage or counterfeiting operation. Their failure can be traced to the very beginning of the struggle, a time when they were truly caught in the middle. Just like most of the Patriots, many an eventual Loyalist, even the likes of Thomas Hutchinson,

³⁶Ibid., p. 89.

³⁷Ibid., p. 138.

³⁸Ibid., p. 80.

felt that the Parliamentary actions following 1763 were wrong.³⁹ This distaste felt by the future Loyalists for British policies prevented them from the early establishment of organizations comparable to the rebel Associations.⁴⁰ In fact there were many future Loyalists who were actively participating in these patriotic groups. Their purpose was to seek reform. However, when the Patriots' goal became independence, and not reform, these men found themselves in a bind. Their Loyalist tendencies had been incapacitated by their sincere belief in the injustice of Parliament's new colonial policy. What is worse, even as they witnessed the increasing ardour of the Americans reach the revolutionary pitch, they did not act "boldly or decisively."⁴¹ They clung to the belief that these emotions would simply run their course.⁴² Thus they never took action to counter it. They did not suggest a reasonable alternative to rebellious activities during the early years when such suggestions may have been heeded,⁴³ nor did they ever really attempt to communicate with each other.⁴⁴ Valuable information on what to expect, or ideas on how to rectify the situation were rarely if ever passed between Loyalists from different colonies. They lacked both the direction and the organization of those who rose in rebellion. They also lacked the identity that

³⁹Nelson, The American Tory, p. 5.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 18.

⁴¹Brown, The Good Americans, p. 223.

⁴²Nelson, The American Tory, p. 18.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 19.

the Patriots had. They knew they were Americans. Too many Loyalists had to agonize over who they were. By the time they had chosen to be Englishmen, it was really too late. They could not compete with the Patriots. As William Nelson points out, even in districts where they were in a superior position, Loyalists were intimidated, disarmed, and defeated.⁴⁵

The decision of the Loyalists that they were Englishmen cost them dearly. Physical harassment was common place. In New England the favorite pastime was tarring and feathering Loyalists, possibly even forcing some of them to sit straddling a rail while they conducted these unfortunates on rides that assuredly proved to be the bumpiest of their lives. Of course before such action was taken the victim was usually offered the opportunity to forego the ordeal by simply renigging on his oath of Loyalty.⁴⁶ To remain loyal often led to death at the hands of Rebel vigilantes. In some cases a council of safety demanded the death penalty. Following the Declaration of Independence, many colonies ordered trials of Loyalists for treason. Those convicted of recruiting for the British, accepting a British commission, or giving information or aid to the enemy were liable to be sentenced to death.⁴⁷ While the severity and frequency of punishments varied from colony to colony, usually the rate and degree was in direct proportion to the strength of the Loyalists in that area.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁶Norton, The British-Americans, p. 28.

⁴⁷Crary, The Price of Loyalty, p. 224.

⁴⁸Brown, The Good Americans, p. 129.

In some places a mere profession of allegiance to the King carried the death penalty.⁴⁹ Others simply requisitioned horses and supplies from the Loyalists rather than fellow Patriots. At times the "requisitioning" was just a euphemism for looting. Nevertheless, the goal was the same, to finance the war as much as possible from the "traitors" wealth.⁵⁰

An excellent means of financing came from the confiscation of whole Loyalist estates, both landed as well as commercial property. In Georgia, where the conflict between Loyalists and Patriots was very intense, confiscated estates served other functions besides the prosecution of the war. It gained a measure of revenge for the Patriots for certain, but more important than this, it placed money in the coffers that hopefully would begin the building of state finances in the years after the war.⁵¹ Many Patriots whose lands were partially or totally destroyed in the fighting also found this as a means of recuperation.⁵² In Massachusetts, where the Loyalists "do not seem to have been as deeply hated or widely feared,"⁵³ the whole practice of confiscation took on a different atmosphere. While it did provide

⁴⁹Crary, The Price of Loyalty, p. 224.

⁵⁰Brown, The Good Americans, pp. 127-128.

⁵¹Robert S. Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia," William and Mary Quarterly, XX (1963), p. 80.

⁵²Ibid., p. 92.

⁵³Richard D. Brown, "The Confiscation and Disposition of Loyalists' Estates in Suffolk County, Massachusetts," William and Mary Quarterly, XXI (1964), p. 538.

Patriots with a method of revenge, it was done more righteously.⁵⁴ In the first place, the whole idea of confiscation was distasteful, not only because there were a number of people who sympathized with the Loyalists plight, but more importantly, because they felt such a practice was "an attack on private property."⁵⁵ For a long period before confiscation was legalized, sequestration was practiced instead. This "preserved for the owners virtually all that was rightfully theirs and would enable them to return and resume their property whenever popular opinion or the return of peace should permit."⁵⁶ Of course it must be noted that those whose estates were sequestered in Massachusetts were merely absentees who could return. In Georgia, at least 277 of those whose estates were confiscated were banned from the state forever. Death would be the penalty if they returned.⁵⁷ However, once the Act of Confiscation was passed in Massachusetts, it also affected simple absentees as well.⁵⁸ Massachusetts also hoped to use money from confiscated estates for recruiting soldiers.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the revenue gained from the confiscations proved to be a small addition to the state's treasury.⁶⁰

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 550.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 536.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia," p.82.

⁵⁸Brown, "The Confiscation and Disposition of Loyalists' Estates in Suffolk County, Massachusetts," p. 538.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 541.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 546.

The estates were divided up too many ways to be worthwhile to the state. The Confiscation Act itself was first of all intended to pay off the creditors of the Loyalists. Only if the return of the sale proved to be in excess of the debts, did the state receive anything at all.⁶¹ On the other hand, in Georgia payments for debts due to British citizens or merchants from the banned or absentee Loyalist's estate were automatically deposited to the credit of the state.⁶² In order to insure against a collection of this debt, an extremely complicated procedure was set up by Georgia for the British to even attempt to lay claim to the debts that were owed them.⁶³ While Georgia was making the most out of their confiscations, Massachusetts was returning a third of the estate that was left, after all the debts had been taken care of, to the wives and widows of Loyalists.⁶⁴ Since the auction of the estates usually brought a very low price in the first place, and since the initiative for the confiscation usually rested with the creditors,⁶⁵ the whole practice gained little for Massachusetts. Another problem was that most of the land confiscated was never sold.⁶⁶ The greatest concern was to protect the creditors, thus the state's finances were never sufficiently increased, nor was

⁶¹Ibid., p. 543.

⁶²Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia," p. 82.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Brown, "The Confiscation and Disposition of Loyalists' Estates in Suffolk County, Massachusetts," p. 540.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 544.

⁶⁶Ibid.

it a thoroughly efficient mean of gaining revenge for the Patriots.⁶⁷
 In Georgia, while confiscation proved more profitable than in
 Massachusetts, it also failed to provide the "fiscal panacea" that
 the people had expected of it.⁶⁸

In practically every case, the estates confiscated were
 provided by the Loyalists who either fled or were banned from the
 states. Altogether between 80,000 and 100,000 people left the
 United States.⁶⁹ They went to England, Canada, and the Caribbean
 Islands.⁷⁰ On the whole, it appears as if the experience of this
 "Diaspora" was less than enjoyable. At times it proved to be
 traumatic. They had to put up with an unfavorable climate in both
 Canada and the Carribean. The northern one was generally described
 as "the most inhospitable clime that ever mortal set foot on."
 This was especially painful to the Southerners who moved there.⁷¹
 Those who fled south may have escaped the cold but they ran headlong
 into hurricanes and famine during their initial five years there.⁷²
 However those who persevered in both of these areas eventually found
 some satisfaction. In Canada, they have become the objects of

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 550.

⁶⁸Lambert, "The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia,"
 p: 91.

⁶⁹Brown, The Good Americans, p. 192.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 204.

⁷²Ibid., p. 217.

eneration, seen almost as the founding fathers.⁷³ They rose quickly to prominence in the Caribbean as well. The most important people in the Bahamas at this time are usually found to be somehow descended from Loyalists.⁷⁴

Possibly the greatest suffering was experienced by the Loyalists who fled to Great Britain. Only in a few cases could it have proved to be physical suffering. Rather it was the acute pain of disillusionment. As Mary Beth Norton points out in her book The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789 instead of finding themselves back home in England, the emigres encountered an alien culture and system of government there. Even worse, the Country expressed little appreciation of their sacrifice. They expected praise, but were only ignored. This was especially frustrating since they considered themselves best qualified to inform the British ministry on the problems as they were experienced by themselves first hand in America. They felt they were the ones to clear up both the misconceptions and the void of information that plagued both sides. But their offers of advice fell on deaf ears. For many, the pain of disillusionment was compounded by financial problems. Some physicians and lawyers were unqualified to practice in England. Merchants and shopkeepers lacked capital to begin again. Others were certain their stay was just temporary, and that it would be ridiculous to find employment that would only be temporary. All Loyalists held the belief that they would soon return home in

⁷³Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 220.

triumph, thus their greatest disappointment and disillusionment came with the final realization that the cause was being abandoned by the British. The novelty of Britain had long worn off. Many who had served useful purposes in America found themselves of no use in England. For many, no jobs were available, and they were reduced to dependence on the government's generosity. Only in extremely rare cases did the government's reimbursement of an exiled Loyalist even approach the sum he had lost in America. In order to receive anything at all, their claims of property loss had to be well substantiated by documentation and witnesses.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, before their claims could be reviewed some Loyalists had to wait as long as twelve years from the time of his loss.⁷⁶ In their relatively weak financial position, in terms of what many were used to, unable to find a place in a "tightly woven" English society, these homesick exiles attempted to recreate as much as possible their life styles in the colonies. They usually kept the company of other Loyalists, not only in residences but also in their social circles. But as Wallace Brown points out, they were still "Americans without a home."⁷⁷ The fact that their rights were ignored or abandoned at the Peace of Paris simply brought to a conclusion the saga of "one of history's complete losers."⁷⁸

⁷⁵E. R. Fingerhut, "Uses and Abuses of the American Loyalists' Claims: a Critique of Quantative Analysis," William and Mary Quarterly, XXV (1968), p. 247.

⁷⁶Brown, The Good Americans, p. 185.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 159.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 222.

While the saga is at an end, the study has just begun. The works by Wallace Brown and William H. Nelson have proven very helpful. Indeed, at this early stage they are essential for establishing a solid perspective. However, if we are ever to get to the heart of Loyalism the concentration of studies will have to be directed away from these more general works to those of a more specialized nature. Paul H. Smith's and Mary Beth Norton's books have been very helpful in this pursuit. Besides these looks at certain aspects of the Loyalist experience, and perhaps more important than these, are the studies of the various locales during the Revolutionary Period. It has already been shown how much effect the location had on both the treatment and the attitude of the Loyalists. Combined with the lack of communication between Loyalists of different colonies, it is very easy to conclude that the Loyalists were a very insulated and very isolated group of people. Thus Loyalist members of one community would encounter situation that were unique to their locale. As a result, the final, or future judgements of the Loyalists will have to wait for the findings of numerous microcosmic studies on these people and their experiences, both of which appear to be characterized by as much, or more, diversity as concensus.

CHAPTER II

ALBANY COUNTY: ALWAYS THE ANOMOLY

In 1664 the province of New York passed from Dutch to English hands. However during most of the Colonial Period the English were only able to, and to a certain extent, only interested in establishing their influence in the southern, or downstate, sector of the colony. For the most part, the northern, or upstate, sector was able to carry on as it always had in the past. Usually the British governor would only venture up the Hudson to preside over some kind of formal council meeting or gift presenting ceremony with the Iroquois.⁷⁹ The natural result of this type of policy was the rapid Anglicanization of the downstate area. ~~The Dutch inhabitants of New York City were~~ reduced to less than 50% of the population by 1698. In that same year, Albany County retained a population that was 93% Dutch.⁸⁰ To say, therefore, that English ownership meant English control would be a mistake. As late as 1733, it was still claimed that the only thing English about Albany County was the English garrison there.⁸¹

⁷⁹Patricial U. Bonomi, A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York, (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 41-42.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 22.

⁸¹Don R. Gerlach, Philip Schuyler and the American Revolution in New York 1733-1777, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 1.

Nevertheless, the conquest presented some problems to the upstate Dutch. Immediately after the initiation of English rule, it was ordered that all public records be kept in the language of the new governing people. Soon, especially with the English control of the port city of New York, it became far more convenient for all concerned to carry out business transactions in that language as well. In addition, after 1664 Dutch immigration to New York was reduced to a mere trickle, preventing a fresh influx of people from reinforcing the native culture. If the Dutch of New York wished to remain Dutch ~~in more than just name, they would~~ have to consciously, and tenaciously, cling to the old ways. That this was in fact done is best seen by their determination to keep the Dutch tongue a living language in the English province. Not only the liturgy, but also the sermons of the Dutch Reformed Church, by far the largest denomination in Albany County, had to be conducted in Dutch. This implies, according to Alice P. Kenney, that the language must have been spoken frequently, enabling them to easily comprehend their religious services.⁸² In some areas, it was spoken exclusively. As a result, sheriffs in some upstate counties would complain that they could not panel a jury because the people of their area, even in the mid-Eighteenth Century, could only understand Dutch.⁸³ As late as 1776, Domine John Gebhard, a minister of German descent, was informed that

⁸²Alice P. Kenney, "The Albany Dutch: Loyalists and Patriots," New York History, XLII (Oct., 1961), p. 332.

⁸³Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 26.

if he intended to preach at Claverack in Albany County, he would have to learn the Dutch language very quickly.⁸⁴

The persistence and continued strength of the Dutch character in the upstate regions became much more than just a source of irritation to the English. Years of war and commercial rivalry between the two nations made sure of this. During that time the English developed ~~stereotypes for the Dutch, all of which stressed their parsimony and shrewd trading practices.~~⁸⁵ Seen through their eyes, the New York Dutch, especially those in Albany, lent themselves well to these images.

The city of Albany was extremely crucial to the security of the British colony. It was the point of contact with the two powers of the region, as far as the English were concerned, the French and the Iroquois.⁸⁶ Unfortunately for the English, the Albany Dutch were not the right people to be occupying such a critical junction in the province. Not being English, they had no reason to adhere to the growing hatred of the nation for the French. Nor was there reason for them to work for the advance of the British Empire.⁸⁷ As it worked out, the Albany Dutch and the English interest rarely coincided.

Albany was seen by the English as the point of political contact for the colony. To the Albany Dutch it was the point of economic contact. As Arthur Buffington points out, "the most striking

⁸⁴Kenny, "The Albany Dutch," p. 333.

⁸⁵Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 49.

⁸⁶Ibid, pp. 40-41.

⁸⁷Arthur H. Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII (March, 1922), p. 332.

feature of Albany policy was its prevailing economic character and the small extent to which it was governed by political considerations."⁸⁸ Long after the English conquest, the Albany Dutch continued a policy of neutrality toward the French. It was good for the fur trade; and the fur trade was the reason Albany County had the only other city in the province, besides New York. For a time the Albany Dutch looked upon ~~the French as rivals~~ in this trade, but over the long run the French could not compete with the Albany traders. While they both had monopolies, the French company in Canada and the Albany Dutch in New York (gained in 1676), the Albany traders had access to the far superior English manufactured goods that the Indians craved. Furthermore, they paid two to four times as much for the furs as did the French Company. As a result, even the French traders began to come to Albany to sell their furs. By the 1680's, one-half to two-thirds of the total amount of beaver produced in Canada each year was traded within the city limits of Albany.⁸⁹

This extensive trade between the Albany Dutch and the French Canadians, known as the Albany-Montreal Trade, upset the English very much. They saw it as preventing them from making political headway with the Indians of the Six Nations to the west of New York province. All the goods being bartered to the French in the North were in turn traded by them to these Indians. With the French supplying them with the high quality English goods obtained from Albany,

⁸⁸Ibid, pp. 332-333.

⁸⁹Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 42.

the English were finding it impossible to re-direct the Indians' allegiance from the French to themselves.⁹⁰ The solution arrived at by the English was that the trade between Albany and Montreal must end. There was to be direct trade opened with the Indians in the West. Then all would benefit, the Albany Dutch economically, and the English politically, while the French would suffer in both areas. Some Albany traders, who already had opened such trading lines to the West were more than willing to comply with this plan. The majority of them could not, however, bring themselves to accept the act that outlawed the Montreal trade route.⁹¹ They could not accept it for two reasons. First of all, they feared a French retaliation for the new direction of the Albany trade.⁹² Albany was still located on the frontier, and in a relatively unprotected posture. The memory of some three decades earlier, in 1690, when the French ordered the massacre of the people of Schenectady merely to restore their prestige with the Indians, undoubtedly gave them reason to expect a similar reaction over the more serious ramifications of a new westerly trade. Secondly, there was no reason to disturb their vested interest. There was no reason to rock the boat that had served them so well in the past. Albany traders had never been noted for their gambling spirit. They wanted the sure thing. Thus the order banning the trade to the North was simply ignored.⁹³

⁹⁰Gerlach, Philip Schuyler, p. 104.

⁹¹Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," p. 358.

⁹²Ibid, p. 359.

⁹³Gerlach, Philip Schuyler, p. 105.

Following the Schenectady massacre there had been a brief surge of support in Albany for an expedition to Canada. Hopefully it would gain a good deal more security for the region. However, with its absolute failure, and the apparent lack of English support for the project, neutrality became a necessity more than ever before. This was achieved once again. And while New England was being ravaged by the French following the outbreak of war in 1702, Albany continued right on with its business as usual. This lack of patriotism by the Albany traders, in a sense selling out for the sake of profit, became renowned as the "Albany Spirit." As early as King Philip's War, they were accused by the English inhabitants of New England of selling arms and ammunition to the very Indians involved in the fighting.⁹⁴ As late as the French-Indian War they refused to comply with English directives for impressing their wagons and services.⁹⁵

While the issue of economic benefit was a prominent part of the "Albany Spirit", its roots were still to be found in the ethnic "clannishness" of the Dutch who dominated the region for so long. They maintained control of the governing positions in Albany County until the middle of the Eighteenth Century.⁹⁶ With little love lost between them and the English, ethnic distinctions played a prominent role in the colonial life of Albany County. William Johnson complained in 1761, "there is no Justice to be expected by any English in the County nor ever will, whilst the Bench of Judges & Justices is

⁹⁴Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 49.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 52.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 51.

composed entirely of Dutch ... I could give you, Sir, numberless Instances ... of their partiality, cruelty, and oppression."⁹⁷

Thus following the conquest of 1664, New York became an ethnically divided province. While the English gave New York City their culture, 150 miles up the Hudson the Dutch continued operating Albany and its environs as a virtual city-state.⁹⁸ They did not love the English, they did not respect the English, and they rarely obeyed them. Frequently they even acted to the detriment of the British Empire, and the rest of the province of New York.⁹⁹ In effect the Albany Dutch during the Colonial Period succeeded in removing a portion of vital land and inhabitants from the mainstream of New York's provincial life. They helped give divergent tendencies to New York. They established in part the initial polarity that Patricia Bonomi refers to as the "divided mind" of colonial New York.¹⁰⁰

The past activities of the Albany County inhabitants may lead to some quick conclusions about their role in the American Revolution. Given the natural Dutch abhorrence for the English, and their basic clash of interest, the obvious assumption would be that they would be the first to throw their support behind the rebellion. Unfortunately, the whole question of the Revolution in New York cannot be understood in terms of Dutch and English nationalities. Just as it

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁹Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," p. 333.

¹⁰⁰Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 40.

is not possible to study it in terms of a class struggle, or a merchant versus landed wealth struggle. By the time of the Revolution, the old question of ethnic heritage was of some value. Even in New York City in times of economic or political upheaval, ethnic and religious loyalties could be resurrected. But they had ceased to be automatic responses.¹⁰¹ In Albany County, large numbers of immigrants of French, German, and especially British descent had diluted the Dutch population. They had become, according to Marcus Hansen, a minority there. A study of the militia lists of the county reveals they were somewhere in the neighborhood of 38% of the population.¹⁰²

The nationality question became another element in the pot that gave New York society such diversity even in colonial times. The fur trade, the other source of contention between the people of Albany and the English government in New York had also been significantly reduced in importance well before the time of the Revolution. The production and trade of agricultural staples in the Hudson Valley had superseded it.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the same type of geographical division that was present during the Colonial Period also took shape during the Revolutionary one. New York City with its excellent port facilities and strategic location, facilitating equally, movement up or down the sea coast, made its occupation by the English forces a necessity. By the summer of 1776, this was accomplished. The English continued

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰²Kennedy, "The Albany Dutch," pp. 334-335.

¹⁰³Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 101.

to hold the city until the end of the conflict. Their big mistake, however, was that they did not send a sufficient force to the North to aid Burgoyne on his march toward Albany. With his defeat at Saratoga, and subsequent Rebel occupation of the fort at West Point, the British army, as far as the war in New York was concerned, remained bottled up in the Southern sector. Just as in colonial times, their influence was felt only in that area. Once again the upstate area remained outside their immediate control. And once again, this situation would cost them dearly. There the Rebels established their capitals, ~~at Kingston in Ulster County, then later at Poughkeepsie in Dutchess County.~~ Still, the real heart of the upstate region was Albany. As in previous times, it held the strategic position of that area. It remained the door to both Canada and to the West. Had the British occupied it early, they would have opened unobstructed lines of communication to their sizeable forces in these areas. The analogy that is often drawn is that New York was the key colony in the Revolution for the British. If they could have taken it, they would have split the rebellion in half. As New York was to the rest of the colonies for the British, Albany was to New York as far as the Rebels were concerned.¹⁰⁴ As long as they could hold on to it, New York would be split. No direct, or safe lines could be opened between New York City and Canada, or New York City and the Western regions. In short, if the rebellion in New York was to continue, Albany would have to be protected. This was a difficult task for

¹⁰⁴Hugh Hastings, ed. The Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795, 1801-1804, 10 Vols., (New York & Albany: The State of New York, 1899-1914), I, 143.

the Rebels. It was a frightening task because in many ways Albany County was like the eye in the middle of a storm.

To its north lay British dominated Canada. Charlotte County, which had been part of Albany County before 1772, provided somewhat of a buffer zone between the two, but not much. In 1777, Burgoyne marched with the greatest of ease through that county. Over a year later, the enemy was still active around Lake George in Charlotte. They burned houses, took prisoners, stripped women and children, and killed cattle.¹⁰⁵ In 1780, the Rebel garrison at Skeensborough was hit hard by loyal Indians.¹⁰⁶ As a result, the people of Albany were constantly in fear of attacks by the British and their allies from the North again. The threat of another full scale invasion from this area like Burgoyne's in 1777, was always there.

To the northeast, Albany had other problems. Its boundaries there were in contact with some of the disputed lands that eventually helped form the state of Vermont. Here trouble was forever brewing over the Vermonters desire for some type of statehood or some degree of autonomy. Led by Ethan and Ira Allen, these people vacillated over whether or not to remain as supporters of the Revolution or to attach their hopes to Great Britain. All hinged on which side was willing to free them from the clutches of New York.

¹⁰⁵Christopher P. Yates to Abraham Yates, March 17, 1780, Ibid., V, 548-550.

¹⁰⁶John Chipman to Colonel Van Schaack, March 22, 1780, Ibid., p. 551.

Rumors, with some degree of validity, at times floated about the province, claiming that Ethan Allen had made some deal with the British.¹⁰⁷ By 1781 these rumors took on an added dimension when it was announced by Philip Schuyler that Tories from everywhere were moving to the Vermont lands.¹⁰⁸

To the south, the situation was as gloomy as to the north. Here lay New York City and its environs. The British stronghold in the thirteen colonies. West Point offered a measure of reassurance that they would remain there. On the northern side of West Point, ~~however,~~ and to the immediate south of Albany County, were situated Ulster and Dutchess Counties. Both of them had their problems. In October of 1777 the first capital of the state in Kingston was burned, about one month after the first state legislature met there. In Dutchess County, the location of the second capital, there were also serious problems. Neither the county committees nor the local militia there could effectively deal with the Loyalists there.¹⁰⁹ They took away the arms of the Whigs and left the committees in "awe." The county militia could not be trusted. Whig officers were fearful of being killed. And it was impossible to draft anyone.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷Brinton Paine to Governor Clinton, April 16, 1781, Ibid., VI, 775-777.

¹⁰⁸General Schuyler to Governor Clinton, May 4, 1781, Ibid., pp. 840-843.

¹⁰⁹Alexander C. Flick, Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution, (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), p.86.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 133.

The trouble with the Loyalists in Dutchess County could not compare with the problems presented by those in Tryon County to Albany's west. Here there was a large group of both white and red Loyalists under the capable leadership of William, John, and Guy Johnson, John and Walter Butler, and the Mohawk, Joseph Brant. At various times, these men terrorized the Rebels in all the counties of the upper New York. However, their activities in Tryon County are especially noteworthy. They leveled Cobus Kill in May 1778. In June of 1778, Springfield was destroyed. July 1778, Andrustown was burned. German Flats was destroyed in September of that year. Cherry Valley inhabitants were massacred in November 1778. Harpersfield was hit in April of 1780, Canadigua in May. Canajohorie was burned in August 1780. Cherry Valley was hit for a second time in April 1781, and Cobus Kill was bloodied again in August of 1781.

Throughout the conduct of the Revolutionary War, by no stretching of the imagination, could Albany's position be seen as secure. To both the north and south, were located large bodies of British forces. Towards the east, was a very dissatisfied population, at any moment capable of joining the enemy. To the west, were relatively large, organized bands of Loyalists, playing havoc with the frontiers of the province. In the middle was Albany County, with no small number of Loyalists of its own. A contemporary report claims they were a "very considerable and respectable body."¹¹¹ On such places as Livingston Manor in Albany County, the Loyalists supposedly

¹¹¹ Wallace Brown, The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants, (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965), p. 85.

outnumbered the Whigs by a margin of three to one. The districts of Coxsakie, Cattskill, Kings, and the Helleberg were reported to be also greatly disaffected.¹¹² In spite of this large number, in spite ~~of the realization~~ by both these Loyalists and the British that they were occupying a vital section of the province, and despite the fact that all around Albany County, fellow Loyalists and British soldiers ~~were taking some sort of action against the Rebels, the Albany County~~ Loyalists were held in check throughout the war. How this was accomplished can only be realized by taking a very close look at Loyalism in that county.

¹¹²Flick, Loyalism in New York, p. 133.

CHAPTER III

LOYALISM IN ALBANY COUNTY BEFORE 1778: THE EARLY FAILURE

In the mid-Eighteenth Century Albany County was dominated by the Van Rensselaers, the Livingstons, the Johnsons, and Philip Schuyler.¹¹³

Of these four names, only the Johnsons remained loyal to the Crown throughout the course of the Revolution. There is little mystery surrounding the reasons for their loyalty. Sir William Johnson was given a royal appointment as Indian Superintendent. This title was then passed to his son John, and the whole family reaped the rewards of, in their eyes, a benevolent king. Thus, self interest, the desire to maintain their position in the society, and a large sense of gratitude all had a hand in determining that family's allegiance. Not so clear are the reasons behind the choice of the other prominent figures. True, all of them were landlords with extensive holdings in the up-river region, but none of these factors guaranteed which side a man gravitated to once the fighting started. To find the answer a brief look at politics and political factions in New York would be very helpful.

Basically, there were two political factions in New York during the mid-Eighteenth Century. They took their names from two prominent families, the DeLanceys and the Livingstons.

¹¹³With the division of the county in 1772 into three counties, the Johnsons were removed from the immediate picture because their homestead was now located in Tryon County.

While the DeLancey faction had a greater affinity for merchants in the downstate area,¹¹⁴ the other came to be a haven for the more land conscious up-river people.¹¹⁵ Still, there was no iron-clad rule for determining which faction any individual might find appealing. Men were constantly shifting from one to the other for any number of reasons. Often personality clashes or arguments over "self and Place" were enough reason to cause such a shift.¹¹⁶

The Livingstons, Van Renssalaers, and Schuyler formed the nucleus of the Livingston faction. While this may have guaranteed ~~that these men would be on the same side of any conflict~~, it did not guarantee exactly which side this would be. When the question of British colonial policy arose would they be supporters or opponents of it? The answer to this is dependent on a time factor. If the time considered was before 1768, then these men could be found supporting British policy. Up until that time they dominated the Assembly of New York, meaning they had a large share of the political power in the colony. They were an important part of that policy, or at least were identified with it. Since they held a measure of the power, and, like any political party or faction, needed this power to survive, they could be counted on to do all in their power to maintain this status quo. To defend and protect the colonial policy meant to do the same for themselves. When the initial acts of the Revolutionary

¹¹⁴Bernard Mason, The Road to Independence: The Revolutionary Movement in New York, 1773-1777, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 6.

¹¹⁵Bonomi, A Factious People, p. 261.

¹¹⁶Mason, The Road to Independence, p. 6.

Period, the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, and the Mutiny Act, were invoked the Livingston faction found themselves, if not always offering a defense for them, at least showing caution in their attack on them.¹¹⁷ The DeLancey faction on the other hand, being the minority in the Assembly, on the outs of governmental power, so to speak, were able to move full steam against these "despicable acts." In the process they picked up a large popular following. This development made it possible for the DeLancey group to oust the Livingstons from their domination of the Assembly by 1768. By 1770 the DeLancey faction outnumbered the Livingstons in the Assembly by a two to one count. They held this ratio until 1774.¹¹⁸

Following 1768, a change of uniforms became noticeable. The former denouncers of the Stamp Act and Townshend Duties, finding themselves in a new position, had to reassess their role in the power structure of the colony and make the appropriate adjustments. The result was that the very group that defended the populace against the tyranny of British colonial policy in 1765 and 1767, now became its staunch supporter. The Livingstons, in turn assumed the role recently vacated by their opponents.

What occurred in New York is a familiar scene to most students of politics. Little concern was shown for political philosophy. There was only a concern for power. The switch that took place in 1768 had nothing to do with a change of heart. It simply lent itself

¹¹⁷L.F.S. Upton, The Loyal Whig: William Smith of New York and Quebec, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 64.

¹¹⁸Gerlach, Philip Schuyler, p. 213.

far better to the type of maneuvering needed to retain or regain political power. In New York, the whole weighty argument about the right of Great Britain and its colonies was simply a tool for furthering local political aims.¹¹⁹

When the Revolution exploded, the Livingston faction was still on the outside trying to regain its share of power in the political structure of the British Empire. In attempting to regain this power it had turned to channeling popular action into extra-legal bodies, such as the Provincial Congress, and the Committees of Correspondence, and the Association recommended by the Continental Congress. These extra-legal bodies and the methods or tactics employed by the Livingstons helped create, and added to the momentum that eventually brought about the destruction of that political structure in America. By the time the colonial crisis sharpened in 1775, most of the DeLanceyites had broken their connections with the illegal committees. They entrenched themselves among the ranks of the "Friends of Government."¹²⁰ This left the Livingstons to provide the political basis for the rebellious subjects of New York.

Since three of the most powerful names associated with this faction were located in Albany County, the logical assumption, as provided by Carl Lotus Becker, would be that the numerous tenants

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 162.

¹²⁰Mason, The Road to Independence, pp. 40-41.

on the estates of the Livingstons, the Van Renssalaers, and Schuyler would blindly follow their landlord's political course.¹²¹ In Tryon County there were five districts. Out of them only one, the Mohawk District, the home of the Johnsons, was considered strongly Loyalist.¹²² Yet the very strength of this one district seemed to shift the whole county into what would be considered the Loyalist camp. On the other hand, during the Revolution Livingston Manor, itself, contained a population that was overwhelmingly disaffected.¹²³ Therefore, Becker's generalization does not hold true. Nevertheless, Albany County did show itself to be strongly anti-DeLanceyite.¹²⁴

With this nucleus of Rebel leadership, early in the conflict the people of Albany County proved to be quick to support whatever action was least advantageous to the British government and its supporters. In fact the people of Albany outdistanced their leadership by far in this respect. Ulster, Suffolk, and Albany were the only New York counties to comply wholeheartedly with the call of the First Continental Congress for an Association.¹²⁵ The battle of Lexington and Concord, which caused such a trauma in every colony, did not present any problem to Albany County. By that time, it knew the course to take was armed resistance. Going one step further, the

¹²¹Carl Lotus Becker, The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776, (Madison: Wisconsin University, 1909), p. 14.

¹²²Mason, The Road to Independence, p. 89.

¹²³Flick, Loyalism in New York, p. 132.

¹²⁴Gerlach, Philip Schuyler, p. 142.

¹²⁵Mason, The Road to Independence, pp. 42-43.

county led the call for appointments of people to take over the government of the colony.¹²⁶ It was only a short step from this type of thinking to an outright advocacy of Independence. While in the Continental Congress during June of 1776, Robert Livingston himself was declaring that New York was not yet "ripe" for a clean break from Great Britain,¹²⁷ and the New York Provincial Congress was ~~finding its deliberation on the question of Independence to be incon-~~clusive, many of the districts in Albany County in that same month had, of their own initiative, taken a vote on the question, showing by the results their hearty approval of such a course.¹²⁸

During this time the Loyalist leaders were not inactive, as it might appear. Their actions, however, were misplaced, since many of them were actually partaking in the Rebel activity. A number of them participated in the various extra-legal bodies. Eight of them were listed as members of the Provincial Congress. Peter Van Schaack, the famous Loyalist from the Kinderhook, was a member of the Committee of Fifty-one, and the Committee of One-hundred.¹²⁹ Of course his purpose in joining these groups was to act as a moderating force, hopefully keeping violence at a minimum and conciliation as the goal.¹³⁰

¹²⁶Becker, Political Parties in the Province of New York, p. 204.

¹²⁷Mason, The Road to Independence, p. 166.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 172.

¹²⁹Claim of Alexander and James Robertson, 1784, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Exchequer and Audit Department, AO. 12, American Loyalist Claims, Series I, 1776-1831, 146 Vols., V, 279.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 280.

The belief was that they had to go along with the rebellious subjects if they wished to override them. What they did not realize was that while they may have to play the same game as the Rebels in order to ~~beat them~~, they did not always have to enter the Rebels' arena to do so. By joining Rebel committees they did exactly this. Rather than influencing them, the Loyalists themselves were drowned out. What they ~~should have done was set up their own Committees, or at least operate~~ their Council and Assembly effectively. By not concentrating on building their own organization and creating their own power structure aimed at quelling these disturbances, instead of beating their heads against the walls of the various Rebel committees, valuable time was lost. They gave the Rebels the upper hand from the very start.

Of course, all of this is clear in hindsight. At the time, there was a much different view, and a much different attitude.

It was one that was present in all the colonies, and shared by most of the people, no matter what side they eventually took. All of these people actually believed that the British government with its Stamp Act and the like, was doing an injustice to the colonies.

In many instances, future Loyalists joined the Rebel side in order to register their protest and seek a change in colonial policy.

Abraham Cuyler, the Mayor of the City of Albany at the time of the Revolution and an eventual Loyalist in exile was one of these men.

He signed the Association because he too sought a Constitutional redress of grievances.¹³¹ Thus, in the late 1760's and early 1770's, it was virtually impossible for the leaders in the colonies, in

¹³¹Claim of Abraham Cuyler, 1784, AO. 12/19/158.

New York, and in Albany County to establish some sort of pro-British organization capable of competing with those set up by the Rebels because at that time many of the eventual Loyalists found themselves on the same side as their future adversaries. Once the course of events had gotten out of hand, and blood was shed, and Independence declared, those with Loyalist tendencies found themselves out in the cold.

The very institutions they helped to form and acted in were now turned against them, and they were not prepared to fight back. They were not even sure of how to fight back.

The major question that faced many of the Loyalists at this point was "Do we remain here and fight, or do we leave and join the King's troops and return with them to fight?" The Loyalists of Albany were divided on this question. In 1776, Ebenezer Jessup asked permission of Governor Tryon to go join the British troops with the men he had raised against the Rebels. Permission was granted, allowing Jessup to take his 90 men to Lake Champlain.¹³² John Cummings, the recognized leader in the area of the Cattskill, sent his people to join the King's army as well.¹³³ But he, himself, felt the need to remain behind. He believed that the voluntary removal of too many Loyalist leaders would hurt the morale of the Loyalists in Albany County. Others like him were convinced that they could be of more use while remaining in the midst of Rebel activity. Colonel William Edmeston, of Tryon County, was imprisoned in Albany jail. He claimed that he could have easily escaped (and in light of the frequent

¹³²Claim of Ebenezer Jessup, 1786, AO. 12/22/159.

¹³³Claim of John Cumming, 1784, AO. 12/20/38.

accomplishment of this feat in Albany, there is little reason to doubt Edmeston's word on this matter) but he remained in order to conduct and forward articles of a pro-British nature to the people of the Albany neighborhood. From his place of confinement, he was in constant communication with Alexander and James Robertson. These two brothers published a pro-British paper in Albany. Edmeston supplied them with such news items as an account of the American defeat at Quebec in 1775 that was vastly different from the one published by pro-Rebel sources that grossly altered the details in order to lessen its possibly damaging effects. He came by a letter from John Adams to John Hancock telling about how he expected the Congress to challenge the King as well as the ministry. Edmeston had this item released long before such action, as stated in the letter, was deemed necessary by the colonists. He also obtained and passed on to the Robertsons an account of Carleton's landing at Crown Point, and Howe's General Orders upon landing at Staten Island. In short, all items that could "awaken the Jealousy of the Loyalists and put them on their Guard against the machinations of their [the Rebels'] insidious Crimes" were passed from Edmeston to the Robertsons for printing.¹³⁴

Whether they went or remained, the real hope of all the Loyalists was the British army. Nothing could be accomplished without them, and nothing was really attempted without them. Colonel Edmeston waited in his confinement for Carleton to cross Lake George or Howe to open the Highlands before he would urge the Albany Loyalists to

¹³⁴Claim of Alexander and James Robertson, 1784, AO. 12/19/280.

"erect the King's Standard."¹³⁵ The only positive action taken by Mayor Cuyler while he was in Albany was to begin making plans for magazines to aid the King's army if it came.¹³⁶ Unfortunately for them 1775 passed, and so did 1776 without the appearance of British troops in Albany County. By the time the British government was ready to invade the area, Edmeston and Cuyler had finally decided to go to New York City. John Cummings was also removed from the scene by then, being sent to a prison ship at Esopus. The Robertsons had been driven from the county. With such leaders out of the picture, the Loyalists of Albany County found themselves in a very disrupted, diverse, and uncertain condition by the spring of 1777. It was at this time that the British government had decided to take action in the area of Albany County.

In May of 1777, Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne landed in Quebec. His mission was to move from Montreal to Albany eventually effecting a junction with Sir William Howe's army in New York City. Burgoyne's force was to consist of approximately 6,000 British and Hessian regulars, and as many provincial and Indian recruits as could be raised. His successful march through the heart of Albany County would have more than compensated for the leadership and organizational deficiencies that plagued the Loyalists there. For a while it looked like he would turn the tables in their favor. The reports coming from Albany in August of 1777 were very gloomy from the Rebel point of view. John Barclay, Chairman of the Albany Committee of

¹³⁵Claim of Colonel William Edmeston, 1787, AO. 12/24/250.

¹³⁶Claim of Abraham Cuyler, 1784, AO. 12/19/165.

Correspondence wrote to the New York Council of Safety that he did not believe their army to the north could repel the oncoming British force.¹³⁷ Neither did Burgoyne believe he could be stopped.

— Along with Sir William Howe and Lord Germaine, he was convinced that the rebellion was in the process of winding down. His juncture with Howe would simply bring it to a proper conclusion. However, Burgoyne ~~was mistaken about the conclusion.~~ He was mistaken about a number of things.

Both he and Lord Germaine were positively sure that the Loyalists formed a substantial majority in New York's upper region. Supposedly large numbers of provincial recruits had enlisted there before Burgoyne's arrival in Canada. This led to the assumption that many more could be obtained once the people heard of the approach of a massive British force.¹³⁸ The movement of his army south was to be seen as a rallying point around which the Loyalists could gather in mass. This, however, never occurred. The multitudes never materialized. The largest number of provincials Burgoyne ever had in his camp at one time was 682.¹³⁹ Of this number, 154 had been with him in Canada, leaving only 528 as the number of men he recruited as he moved through New York. While this was certainly a disappointing figure by any standard, Burgoyne was not the least bit discouraged. On the whole,

¹³⁷John Barclay to New York Council of Safety, August 9, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 202.

¹³⁸Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, p. 51.

¹³⁹List of the Army from Canada under Lieutenant-General ~~Burgoyne~~, in John Burgoyne, A State of the Expedition from Canada, (London: J. Almon, printer, 1780; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1969), p. 11.

he considered provincial troops to be a "tax upon time and patience."¹⁴⁰ Only after his defeat did he conveniently decide that a lack of Loyalist military recruits was fatal to his campaign.¹⁴¹

~~This lack of recruits is not that surprising considering that Burgoyne left the people an option in their course of action during his campaign. He encouraged, and expected, those of a more aggressive nature, who wished to "partake of the glorious task of redeeming their countrymen from dungeons, and re-establishing the blessings of legal government" to join him.~~¹⁴² However, given his personal attitude about provincials and his convictions about the present course of the rebellion, he found it far more appealing to allow the "domestic, the industrious, the infirm, and even the timid inhabitants" to remain at their homes. All he asked was that they did not hinder his advance by removing their cattle or hiding their forage and corn.¹⁴³ What Burgoyne really desired of the Loyalists of upper New York was a form of passive cooperation. Only periodically did he expect to call upon them for assistance.¹⁴⁴ Even those who joined his army were given, for the most part, relatively passive roles. While at Bennington Albany Loyalists did partake to a large extent in the actual combat, usually those in the ranks were used to search for

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 133.

¹⁴¹Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, p. 54.

¹⁴²Proclamation of General Burgoyne, June 29, 1777, in Alexander Flick, The American Revolution in New York, (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1926), p. 340.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats, p. 54.

cattle, clear roads, choose routes of march, and guide columns on the march. According to Burgoyne, this was all they were fit to do.¹⁴⁵

It is very difficult to determine how many of the 524 provincials who joined Burgoyne were from Albany County. An examination of the Loyalist Claims reveals that there were for certain at least 113. In total 259 people are listed in the Claims from that county as having ~~bore arms against the Rebels.~~ ~~Of this number 61 were in the other units~~ located with Johnson and Butler in the Western arena. This leaves about 87 men of whom nothing is known, except that they did bear arms.

If all of them were with Burgoyne, and this is very doubtful, that would mean that approximately 200 Loyalists from Albany County joined Burgoyne on his march.¹⁴⁶ A single district in Albany could supply far more men than this for its militia. Apparently the Loyalists there preferred to take advantage of the option Burgoyne gave them about supporting him. Proof of this can be found in the writings of William Smith Jr., who at the time of Burgoyne's campaign was a virtual prisoner at Livingston Manor because of this suspected loyalty. Two times Burgoyne's Proclamation to the people of New York is mentioned. In both instances there is only reference to Burgoyne's appeal to

¹⁴⁵Burgoyne, Expedition from Canada, p. 145.

¹⁴⁶While some people who bore arms did not attempt to make any claims, it is doubtful that a significant number refrained from doing so. Usually people declined because they could not produce sufficient evidence of their loyalty. Since those who joined provincial units would have such proof, from eye witnesses and recruitment lists, it is very likely that most of them made some application for reparation.

remain at their homes. There is no mention at all of his call to join him.¹⁴⁷ Obviously the people of the county wished to ignore that option as much as Burgoyne did. Those who did remain at home, nevertheless, did cause some trouble for the "well-affected" inhabitants of Albany County.

Upon his arrival in Montreal, Burgoyne discovered that the aims of the intended campaign were common knowledge in the streets.¹⁴⁸ With the constant passage of expresses from Montreal to New York through Albany, it is absurd to think that a great deal of this news did not filter through the area. Evidence of this being true was apparent as early as April 1777. At this time, professed Loyalists at Livingston Manor began to show some new found boldness.¹⁴⁹ Governor Clinton dismissed these actions lightly. In his mind, it was just the "usual ... Wicked Plott" that Loyalists tend to concoct in the spring to get people to join them in going off to the enemy. Ironically, he wrote to Robert Livingston that there was nothing to fear from them, unless they were "favoured by some attempt of the Enemy ag't this Quarter."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷William H. W. Sabine, ed., Historical Memoirs of William Smith, From 16 March 1763 to 12 November 1783, 2 Vols., (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1969 & 1971), I, 175, 189.

¹⁴⁸Alexander Flick, History of the State of New York, 10 Vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933-1937; reprint ed., Port Washington, L.I., N.Y.: Ira Friedman, Inc., 1962), III, 89.

¹⁴⁹Robert Livingston to Governor Clinton, April 11, 1777 Clinton Papers, I, 709.

¹⁵⁰Governor Clinton to Robert Livingston, April 1777, Ibid., p. 711.

By May, this "agitation" had become more pronounced, and more prevalent. In response, the Provincial Congress felt the need to take action. All suspicious characters were to be apprehended and placed in prison ships on the Hudson River. It was especially interested in silencing those who were "daily Endeavouring by Exaggerating acco'ts of the Power of the Enemy, and other Wicked and inimical Practices to work upon the fears of the weak and timid Person, and to betray the liberty of their Country."¹⁵¹ This was followed by a request of the northern committees to "take the most effectual measures to prevent, suppress, and quell, all Insurrections, Revolts and Disaffection within their respective Counties." The committees were empowered to call out the militia against those in arms against the state.¹⁵² At the same time the Provincial Congress was coming down hard on these Loyalists, it was granting a pardon to New York subjects who had been merely "seduced ... by subtle and wicked Emissaries from the Enemy" into aiding the cause of the King.¹⁵³ The Provincial Congress was playing both ends against the middle in the hope of calming the situation in New York.

As long as Burgoyne remained a serious threat these measures failed. Staunch Loyalists, bolstered by his proximity, continued

¹⁵¹Resolve of the Provincial Convention of New York, May 2, 1777, Ibid., p. 785-786.

¹⁵²Resolve of the Provincial Convention of New York, May 5, 1777, Ibid., p. 802.

¹⁵³A Declaration, or Ordinance, of the Convention of the State of New York, Passed May 10, 1777, Offering Free Pardon to Such of the Subjects of the State, As, Having Committed Treasonable Acts Against the Same, Shall Return to their Allegence, (Fish-Kill: Samuel Loudon, printer, 1777), p. 1.

to speak, and those who were less moved by politics, but fearful of being caught on the wrong side continued to listen. All through the summer months, the well-affected inhabitants of Albany County were "fully employed" fighting the insurrections of the disaffected.¹⁵⁴ With the Loyalists causing such disturbances in various parts of the county, and each district committee naturally calling for aid in ~~putting them down~~, the militia of the county was "effectually" prevented from going to the aid of the army waiting to oppose Burgoyne at Stillwater.¹⁵⁵ In some instances the militia itself was a source of malevolence. John Livingston wrote in August, 1777 that twice he assembled the militia of Manor Livingston for the purpose of marching to Stillwater. Both times they refused to leave.¹⁵⁶ While some of these militiamen were obviously disaffected, making one of the officers there hesistant to leave for fear that if he did they would "destroy his buildings containing sugar & molasses for the United States,"¹⁵⁷ others were simply fearful of the consequences of facing Burgoyne. As William Smith notes, a letter from General Ten Broeck encouraging the Livingston Manor militia to join him at Stillwater was totally negated by the unconfirmed report of four wagoners that Burgoyne's Indians were scalping at a rate of 30 per day.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴Council of Safety to Governor Clinton, August 12, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 217.

¹⁵⁵John Barclay to President of Council of Safety, August 9, 1777, Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁵⁶John Livingston to Robert Livingston, August 12, 1777, Ibid., p. 218.

¹⁵⁷Major Dirck Jansen to Governor Clinton, August 7, 1777, Ibid., pp. 193-194.

¹⁵⁸Sabine, Memoirs, I, 193.

In the Western sector of the county, at Schohary, there was a more pronounced militia revolt. Led by Captain Mann, many declared themselves outright friends of the King, and threatened "destruction ~~to all who do not lay down their Arms~~" in compliance with Burgoyne's wishes.¹⁵⁹ A few weeks later he made good his threat. Peter Vrooman of the Schohary Committee wrote to the Council of Safety on August 20, 1777 that at present "one half of this valuable settlement lies in ruin & deselution, our Houses plundered, our Cattle destroyed & our well affected in Habitants taken prisoners ... while the Harvest is rotting in the fields."¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless Mann's activities at Schohary were not as effective as they could have been. There is no evidence that he ever took his force out of the district, either to aid or incite Loyalist uprisings, of a similar large and aggressive nature, in other districts, or to cooperate with the British Colonel St. Leger operating in Tryon County. There were a number of instances when St. Leger could have used the additional forces Mann could have supplied. But his insurrection was an isolated incident. All those that took place throughout the county were far less severe. They were more irritating than damaging. No incidents are mentioned in which Loyalists in other districts actively harassed or desimated American troops or militia. Nor is there mention of them destroying valuable American supplies. Their only real accomplishment during Burgoyne's Campaign was that

¹⁵⁹John Barclay to President of Council of Safety, August 9, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 202.

¹⁶⁰Peter Vrooman to President of Council of Safety, August 20, 1777, Ibid., pp. 238-240.

they kept the Albany militia from reinforcing the army at Stillwater. Never did they seize the initiative, that Burgoyne's proximity provided, and take the offensive. They only succeeded in neutralizing the effectiveness of the Rebel militia for a time. They were a nuisance. Had Burgoyne descended with more alacrity, quickly penetrating into the heart of Albany County before the effect of Ticonderoga had worn off the American regulars, then the results of his campaign may have been very different. Instead Burgoyne prodded toward Albany.

His actual invasion of New York began on June 1, 1777.

It took him sixteen days to force the Rebels to evacuate Crown Point. On July 6, 1777 he forced General St. Clair from Ticonderoga. A day later, he moved to Skenesborough. Up to this point his expedition had been moving along at a good pace, and with the least amount of exertion and expense to his troops. Upon reaching Skenesborough, Burgoyne made a decision that some considered to be the first blunder leading to his defeat. Skenesborough was just 70 miles from Albany. According to General Gates, who eventually defeated Burgoyne at Saratoga, if the British general had taken with him only his auxiliaries, his best regulars, and a few light guns he could have made it to Albany in three weeks.¹⁶¹ Instead, Burgoyne wanted to take his whole army, except for a garrison to be left at Ticonderoga, and practically all of his artillery. This too could have been accomplished with a great deal more speed if he had moved back to Ticonderoga, and from that point taken the easy water route afforded

¹⁶¹Flick, History of New York, III, 93.

by Lake George. From there, he could have marched the 14 miles to Fort Edward over "an open, plain, well-beaten road."¹⁶² Instead, Burgoyne decided to take the overland route to the same place. Due to ~~a number of circumstances, including General Schuyler's troops obstructing the road, and Burgoyne's own belief that an urgent descent was not required, it took him until July 30 to reach Fort Edward.~~ ~~It took him 10 more days to march the next 8 miles to Fort Miller, a mere 35 miles from Albany.~~ At this point Loyalist activity was at its height; and Rebel fears reached their zenith. One of Burgoyne's officers, a Lieutenant Digby reports in his diary, that once they reached Fort Edward, the people started to come to them in large numbers for "protection."¹⁶³ Nevertheless, the bottom soon fell out of Burgoyne's Campaign.

St. Leger's Indians, who made up the majority of his force, due to the deaths of a number of their sachems in a recent fight with the Rebel General Herkimer, and also because it was getting on toward Autumn, decided to go home. This reduced the strength of St. Leger to the point of insignificance. The mere rumor that General Benedict Arnold was approaching from the south with 4,000 troops was enough to convince St. Leger that he could no longer hold his sector of New York.¹⁶⁴ With the actual appearance of Arnold, the Americans were re-established in the West.

¹⁶²Thomas Jones, History of New York During the Revolutionary War, 2 Vols., (New York: New York Historical Society, 1879; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1968), I, 200.

¹⁶³Diary of Lieutenant William Digby, July 30, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 244.

¹⁶⁴Jones, History of New York, I, 218.

On the heels of this defeat came the Battle of Bennington. Burgoyne's losses here amounted to approximately 400, either killed or wounded.¹⁶⁵ Following this disaster, his Indians also began to dwindle in number. By September he had less than 100 with him.¹⁶⁶ Coupled with St. Leger's demise in the West, Bennington helped turn the tide against Burgoyne. The ardour of many of the Albany County Loyalists began to turn with it. The Americans for the first time in months found it easier to fill their militia rolls. Lieutenant Digby was quick to grasp the situation when he wrote that the army awaiting them at Stillwater, because of the news from Bennington, was "joined by some thousands of Militia, who in all probability would have remained neuter had we proved successful" there.¹⁶⁷ Almost two months to the day after his Hessians were mauled at Bennington, Burgoyne himself was forced to surrender to Gates at Saratoga.

For the most part Burgoyne brought about his own downfall. A quick descent would have brought him to Albany in the same amount of time it took him to reach Fort Edward. To this, of course, could be added the failure of the army in New York City to offer a sufficient diversion until it was too late. General Henry Clinton marching from New York City did not burn Kingston until October 13, six days after Burgoyne's second and final defeat at Saratoga. Upon hearing about the Northern Army's surrender four days later, Clinton had no choice

¹⁶⁵Burgoyne to Lord George Germain, August 20, 1777, in Burgoyne, Expedition from Canada, p. xliii.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. li.

¹⁶⁷Diary of Lieutenant William Digby, September 10, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 431.

but to turn around and go back to New York. The third share of the blame must go to the Loyalists, especially in Albany County.

Burgoyne was correct in his assumption that the people of upper New York would prove sympathetic to the King's cause, if a large British army marched through their territory. In this respect he was correct. Reports coming from the Schenectady Committee said that ~~after Ticonderoga fell even those who had been very "warm in the~~ Interest of the Country" now became rather cool, if not actually inclined to the other side.¹⁶⁸ After Burgoyne had penetrated the county to Fort Edward, and wild rumors were bandied about claiming his force numbered 14,000 or possibly even 24,000, many inhabitants were strongly in favor of capitulating. The Schohary Committee reported to John Barclay that if the army at Stillwater was forced to retreat to Halfmoon, thereby opening lines of communication between Burgoyne and St. Leger, the people of Schohary would be "obliged" to lay down their arms.¹⁶⁹

While this may raise some questions about the strength of the Rebel spirit in Albany County, it is for certain that the quality of Loyalism there was not high. It was even more fickle. Burgoyne was perceptive enough to sense this, even in the character of his provincial recruits. In a letter to Germaine he wrote, "On this side I find daily reason to doubt the sincerity of the resolution of the

¹⁶⁸Committee of Schenectady to Governor Clinton, August 5, 1777, Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁶⁹John Barclay to President of Council of Safety, August 11, 1777, Ibid., pp. 209-210.

professing loyalists. I have about 400, but not half of them armed who may be depended upon; the rest are trimmers merely actuated by interest."¹⁷⁰ Burgoyne's mistake was that he did not plan on set-backs. ~~He knew what the people's reaction to them would be if they did occur. But he did not believe them to be possible. The overconfidence that dictated his slow advance, also prompted him to ignore the consequences of setbacks, even though he was aware of them.~~

Burgoyne's appearance in Albany County afforded the Loyalists there an excellent opportunity to advance their position. But they did not take advantage of it. They tempted some people to switch their allegiance temporarily, but as soon as Burgoyne was defeated, they quickly reverted. Even with these recently converted Loyalists on their side they made little progress. A little disturbance here, some insignificant damage in another area, that was the extent. The lack of organization, direction, initiative, and leadership rendered them incapable of taking any significant advantage of Burgoyne's threat. Their activities were totally uncoordinated, both between themselves and with Burgoyne. Everything they did was spastic and sporadic. All their hopes were placed in Burgoyne. In a matter of a few months these had risen to new heights. They expected liberation at any moment. They watched many of the people who had damned them earlier now join their ranks. Together they waited, and waited. But they were not liberated. Once again the ranks were decimated. Once again they were without the type of support they had always

¹⁷⁰Burgoyne to Lord George Germain, August 20, 1777, in Burgoyne, Expedition from Canada, p. xlvi.

— expected. Now many were exposed, and they had made a number of enemies in the last few months. What was worse, they were open prey for the anti-Loyalist machinery that had grown so much since the outbreak of hostilities.

CHAPTER IV

LOYALISM IN ALBANY COUNTY, 1778-1781:
UNDER THE EYE OF THE COMMISSIONERS

Early in the conflict, Rebel policy toward the Loyalists was very confused. At times it was harsh; other times it was lenient. Trial and error seemed to be the format. On September 16, 1775, the Provincial Congress ordered that all the New York Loyalists, people who did not sign the Association, must be disarmed. Once the war was over these confiscated arms were to be returned to the owners. If they were not functional or could not be found, then the appraised price of the arms was to be paid to the Loyalists who owned them. Some members of the Provincial Congress believed this measure was premature, a hasty action. They were convinced that if these men, who simply refused the Association, were left alone, they would cause no trouble for the provincial government. They would not trouble themselves to organize against the Rebels. On the other hand, if they were aggravated, and removing a person's weapon was a serious aggravation, they were likely to take action against this oppression. Such a move would create hatred, that probably would never have existed, for the Revolution. These voices gained dominance, and on October 24, 1775, a little over a month later, the Provincial Congress revoked this act.¹⁷¹ By the time March 1776 had come the Continental Congress

¹⁷¹Agnes Hunt, The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution, (np., 1904; reprinted, New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1968), pp. 65-66.

requested that all the colonies disarm the Loyalists. And once again the Provincial Congress of New York, in compliance with this request, went about confiscating Loyalist arms.¹⁷²

Even as the war evolved, becoming more extensive and heated, the uncertainty about how to treat the Loyalists was still noticeable. The account of the action taken by the Provincial Congress during the period of Burgoyne's descent illustrates this. Even afterward there was the opportunity for Loyalists to take an oath of allegiance to the American government, and have their past offenses, in most cases, forgiven. On one hand there was a desire to punish the traitors, on the other, there was the hope and belief that reconciliation with them was possible.

For the most part, however, as the war became more grueling and destructive, the treatment of the Loyalists kept pace. Their harassment became more systematic and constant, although it is not accurate to refer to it as more brutal, at least in reference to the actions of the higher authorities of the Rebel government, such as the various Boards that were created to deal with the Loyalist problem. These more specialized and centralized institutions were given the responsibility of neutralizing the effect of the Loyalists for the remainder of the conflict. The atrocities that the Loyalists faced were dealt to them by the Rebel mobs, or on some occasions, by local committees. If anything these more centralized authorities, more removed from the intense heat of local conflicts, acted as a temporizing force in this respect. But this does not mean that they did

¹⁷²Ibid.

not make life miserable for the Loyalists in a more "civilized" way.

Throughout 1775 and the first half of 1776, the problems presented by the Loyalists were the headaches of the county and district Committees of Correspondence. These organizations were charged with the responsibility of apprehending such individuals, and in some cases of disposing of them in a number of ways. Imprisonment, or some type of confinement was one alternative, placing them on parole or under a bond was another. In some cases the Loyalists were exiled to neighboring counties or colonies. Others were permitted to take the oath of allegiance, and were then released. The most important cases, such as those involving people who actually took up arms against the American cause, were referred to the Provincial Congress or the Committee of Safety for deposition. For the most part, the methods for apprehending and punishing Loyalists were arbitrarily decided by the committees. As a result, much was dependent on the disposition of the members of these committees, as well as the nature of the offense. The same could conceivably bring different punishments in different counties, or even in different districts.

While it was never entirely eliminated, arbitrary treatment of Loyalists was somewhat diminished after June 5, 1776. At this time a special committee was established by the Provincial Congress to try and punish Loyalists. It also had the power to seize them, but this action was still the main occupation of the local committees. Since the recently established central committee had only nine members with which to operate the county committees still retained the right to

try and dispose of Loyalists.¹⁷³ This special central committee was dissolved on August 7, 1776, only to be replaced by another on September 21, 1776. Technically this committee of seven members became known as the first Board of "Commissioners for detecting and defeating all Conspiracies." Whereas previously the county committees operated on a par with the central committee, in the case of the Commissioners, the county committees were actually subordinated to it.¹⁷⁴ It was this Board that moved up to Albany to aid General Schuyler in October of 1776 when General Carleton threatened Ticonderoga. While this Board also tried and punished Loyalists, a large portion of its time and energy was also devoted to capturing them.¹⁷⁵

By this time there were any number of offenses that labeled a man as disaffected, and made him liable to apprehension. Of course the refusal to associate remained on the list. Violating the provisions of the Association was another one. Such offences as harboring and associating with Tories; recruiting for the British, or aiding them in any way; corresponding with either the British or Loyalists; refusing to muster; denouncing or refusing to obey the various congresses or committees; writing or speaking against the American

¹⁷³Mason, The Road to Independence, pp. 199-200.

¹⁷⁴Victor H. Psaltis, ed., Introduction, Minutes of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, Albany County Sessions, 1778-1781, 2 Vols., (Albany: State of New York, 1909; reprinted New York: DeCapo Press, 1972), I, 11. In subsequent citations a distinction will be made between the Introduction by Psaltis and the actual Minutes of the Commissioners.

¹⁷⁵Mason, The Road to Independence, p. 20.

cause; refusing continental money; inciting or taking part in plots or riots against the provincial government; being a royal officer; and simply attempting to remain neutral, all stamped the offender as a Loyalist.¹⁷⁶

The first Board of Commissioners was dissolved on February 11, 1777. It was immediately replaced by a second, consisting of three, then five, and then, by August 28, nine members. Given the same powers as the previous board, these Commissioners moved from place to place, again seeking out and arresting Loyalists.¹⁷⁷ This Board had the unfortunate task of dealing with the Loyalists during the invasion of New York by Burgoyne. With Loyalist uprisings cropping up in various districts and counties, it was virtually impossible for this single board to be as effective as the supporters of the American cause would have desired. As always, experience was a good teacher. If the Commissioners were to be successful they needed to be given more stability and range. The third Board of Commissioners, established in February 1778, combined both of these assets. It remained active from April 1778 until March 1783, far longer than any of its predecessors. Furthermore, twenty-six men were appointed to this Board in the month it became active. The counties of Charlotte, Dutchess, Tryon, Orange, Ulster, and Westchester were each to have three members, or a quorum of the Board, operating within their districts at all times. Albany, to insure a quorum in that vital county, and also because of its greater ability to send Commissioners

¹⁷⁶Flick, Loyalism in New York, pp. 83-84.

¹⁷⁷Psaltis, Introduction, Minutes, I, 11.

to other counties due to its central location, had eight men appointed initially to conduct the Board's business within its borders.¹⁷⁸ The county and district committees still existed, but they were reduced to mere extension of the Commissioners. Thus, the third Board was the final step in the evolution of anti-Loyalist bodies. Its powers were not significantly increased over those possessed by the previous Commissioners. Just as before, it had access to both militia, and rangers, and also state money. It acted under all the laws that applied to the former committees. The real improvement of the Board, however, was in its organization. It was still a centralized body, but due to its distribution throughout the upper counties, it was not remote. The full power to deal with the problem of Loyalism was finally present in each of these counties, and the well-affected inhabitants of Albany County took good advantage of it.

The Minutes of the Commissioners sitting in Albany County are full of references to various individuals coming before the Board with complaints and affidavits attesting to the disloyalty of some other individual. Of course such voluntary information was not always reliable. Often it was second hand. Other times, it was concocted simply to harm a personal enemy. Such an instance occurred in 1777 while the second Board of Commissioners was in operation. Jothan Bemus and John Ashton wrote to Governor Clinton in September of that year that they had been apprehended and imprisoned, without the semblance

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 61.

of a hearing, because of the "Report of a Spiteful person."¹⁷⁹ Similar opportunities of vengeance were available during the term of the third group of Commissioners. An affidavit from John Coppernoll and John Vrooman accusing Jacob Truax of being a disaffected person led to a warrant for his immediate apprehension and confinement without the briefest appearance before the Commissioners.¹⁸⁰ And what if Truax were innocent of the charge? Then he would have spent an undeserved term in confinement. As for Coppernoll and Vrooman, they would not have suffered in the least for their false charge. Even when the charges were proven to be unfounded there is no mention, in the Minutes of the Commissioners, of the slightest reprimand directed at the false accuser. Furthermore, even if the accusations were proven false or the suspicions groundless the man who was accused would often find himself still placed under a bond or recognizance or both. Thus the policy of the Commissioners made it very easy for a person to gain a measure of vengeance against someone he disliked, without the slightest cost or risk to himself. In the first place his simple accusation would inconvenience his enemy by forcing his appearance before the Board. If the charges were proven false, the accusation alone would have no adverse effect on the man making it, while at the same time it was likely to burden the accused with a period of confinement, and upon release, some type of bond or security, even if found innocent. It was this often misleading source that

¹⁷⁹Jotham Bemus and John Ashton to Governor Clinton, September 17, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 329.

¹⁸⁰Psaltis, Minutes, II, 454.

funneled a great deal of the information about the Loyalists to the Board. It was upon this type of information that the Commissioners acted.

In other cases individuals residing in Albany County were not anxious to reveal all they knew about their neighbors. Some of them did not wish to cause trouble for their friends. These unwilling informants were then summoned, as was within the power of the Commissioners, to reveal the information that they held and that the Commissioners deemed pertinent to the success of their efforts. Hannah Bemus was interrogated about her knowledge of Angus McDonald corresponding with the British and harboring British officers that passed through the county as expresses. She refused to answer, prompting the Commissioners to order her committed to prison until she gave "Satisfactory Answers."¹⁸¹

While the general populace either voluntarily or involuntarily aided the Albany Commissioners in discharging its duty, the real strength of the Board laid in its close correspondence with the other Rebel organizations. Information was constantly coming in from the Commissioners in other counties, especially Charlotte and Dutchess; with representatives of the city and county of Albany; with the Schenectady branch of the Albany Commissioners, after it began working in July of 1780; with various Rebel justices of the peace; and especially with regular and militia officers. It was upon the military men that the Albany Commissioners were dependent to a large extent for capturing known disaffecteds. On occasion these men

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 624.

were given monetary rewards for apprehending Loyalists. Even more closely associated with the Commissioners were bodies of rangers. The most famous and active of which was recruited by Captain John Ryley. Sworn to an oath of allegiance to the state government of New York and promised six shillings a day and one ration of provisions, the purpose of the body was "ranging about the Woods and doing such Services as should be requested of them by the Commissioners."¹⁸² Earlier Ryley had performed a similar function for the Albany City and County Committees.¹⁸³ Operating between May 11, 1778 and July 20, 1778, he and his fifteen men moved about the county capturing robbers and suspected disaffecteds as directed by the Commissioners. When it was the Commissioners' opinion that his force was not large enough to handle their task he was ordered to apply to the local militia officers who were thereupon requested by the Commissioners to supply Ryley with "such a Number of Men as he shall want." With this reinforced contingent, he was to "meet any Person who to him appears suspicious" and challenge him. If he could not adequately account for himself, Ryley was to bring him before the Commissioners at Albany.¹⁸⁴ At Manor Renselaerwyck a company of men under the direction of the Commissioners and commanded by Captain Jacob DeForest was raised for strictly defensive reasons.¹⁸⁵ However, his group ended up conducting itself much in the manner of

¹⁸²Ibid., I, 111-112.

¹⁸³Psaltis, Introduction, Minutes, I, 47.

¹⁸⁴Psaltis, Minutes, I, 162.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 347-348.

Ryely's, only, in a more restricted area. Other companies were set up in the King's District, Kinderhook, and Claverack. At times the conduct of the different ranger, regular, and militia companies ventured beyond the simple apprehension of robbers and Loyalists. Johannis Beecker, Paul Seekeler and Johannis Bearhouse all complained to the Board that in October, 1778, a party of men from Colonel Bellenger's regiment of militia came to their houses under the pretense of searching for disaffecteds concealed in the area. After a brief search, they robbed these people of nearly all their effects "scarce leaving them wherewithal to cover themselves."¹⁸⁶ In this particular instance, the offenders were ordered to return the goods taken.¹⁸⁷ But the Board was not above reproach in handling these affairs, especially when the charge was made against someone relatively close to them. Frederick Berringer accused Captain Ryley of taking articles from suspected people, and the Board ordered him to appear before it to answer the charge.¹⁸⁸ But there is no mention of him ever heeding his summons, nor action being taken against him for a failure to do so. To the Loyalists the various ranger groups meant terrorism. Upon hearing that a party of them were approaching her district Mrs. John Cumming, whose husband had already been jailed for his loyalty, wrote to the Commissioners for some type of protection. The Board replied that no officers civil or military would molest her, her

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 270

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., p. 263.

family or their property.¹⁸⁹ However, this guarantee was not always possible. In certain cases the Commissioners themselves were responsible for not insuring the safety of individuals. The Commissioners turned a deaf ear to a group of Loyalists from the Helleberg who wished to band together to prevent robberies. But they were refused the right to do so.¹⁹⁰

Regardless of their action, the rangers were authorized bodies. Throughout the Revolution in Albany County the Loyalists had to constantly contend with Rebel mobs. In the Hosick District a mob operated under a pretence of recognition by the Commissioners.¹⁹¹ At Schohary a similar group "pulled down" the house of Catherine Simpson.¹⁹² Both of these groups' activities were met with the public disfavor of the Commissioners. They ordered an investigation of the Schohary incident by the justices of the peace there. Nothing, as might be expected, ever became of the investigation. No report was turned in, nor were members of the guilty party bound over. The matter was not brought up again. Lip service was the most the Commissioners would do to counter such acts of over zealousness by the Patriots. Direct action was never taken, and indirect action was the same as ignoring the whole affair.

On occasion mob activity got completely out of hand. Sometimes it even challenged the authority of the Rebel committees. The most noticeable incident of this nature took place in the Cambridge

¹⁸⁹Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 341.

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 388.

District in February 1778. Here the committee cautioned a mob of Patriots against inflicting corporal punishment upon a Loyalist. The mob answered by forcing the committee through the whipping gauntlet intended for the Loyalist. The leader of the mob, Edmund Wells Jr., then damned not only the committee but also all state authority for their lenient policy toward the Loyalists. The mob, of its own volition, then canvassed the town in search of the Loyalists out on bond because the jails were too full at the time to hold them.¹⁹³

While harsh treatment of the Loyalists was an aspect of all periods of the Revolution, it was especially pronounced in the months following the Burgoyne affair. This was the most frightening occurrence of the war to Albany Rebels. It was one of the reasons for the organization of the Commissioners.¹⁹⁴ After his defeat, the citizens of Albany County and the state of New York were determined that if another invasion came, they would not be hampered in the least by the Loyalists in their midst. It was the duty of the Commissioners to see to this.

In order to accomplish this the Commissioners attempted to suppress all activities resembling Loyalism. This made their task all the more difficult. One crime that was particularly prevalent was that of speaking in terms considered by the Board as supportive of the British. Such things as drinking to the health of the King,

¹⁹³John Younglove to the Albany Committee, February 26, 1778, Clinton Papers, II, 854-856.

¹⁹⁴"An Act appointing Commissioners for detecting and defeating Conspiracies, and declaring their Powers, February 5, 1778," in Psaltis, Minutes, II, 777.

or announcing attachment to him and hope of his success in the present ordeal, or using expressions "inimical" to the American cause, like Abraham Wendell who "propagated Intellegence respecting the Enemy which tho' false may nevertheless tend to dishearten weak and ignorant Persons" would be included in this offense.¹⁹⁵ Neither could a person be disrespectful of any congresses, Boards of Commissioners, or wish bad luck to George Washington.¹⁹⁶ British proclamations could not be read or possessed without punishment. One person who was in an excellent position to rant against all aspects of the Rebel cause, and did, was John Doty, a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the rector of St. Georges' Church in Schenectady. Using the pulpit for purpose, he was "molested," his church closed up, and he was threatened with prison. After the expedition of General Burgoyne, however, he was permitted to go to Canada.¹⁹⁷

The Commissioners, as well as the Provincial government were very concerned about whom they allowed to go to the enemy's lines. First of all, in June of 1778, the whole question of exchanges becomes very important. In return for a troublesome Loyalist, a well-affected citizen, in British hands, could be regained. After June of 1778, many a Loyalist, who would have previously been exiled to the enemy lines, was now detained until such a trade could be arranged. In many cases the Loyalists did not mind this. They were not anxious

¹⁹⁵Psaltis, Minutes, I, 355.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., II, 454.

¹⁹⁷Claim of John Doty, 1784, AO. 12/19/30-33.

to leave their homes. Usually when a man was exiled his family stayed behind to tend to the property. They were convinced they would return to it someday. For many, time wore on, and the circumstances remained the same. As a result a re-evaluation of their positions began. Mrs. Annatio Van Buren, in a petition Governor Clinton, wrote that all through the "long and painful" separation from her husband, who was ordered removed by the Commissioners of Albany in August of 1778, she believed something would happen to bring about her husband's return. But such a time, if it ever was to come now seemed to her far too distant. No longer could she afford to maintain herself and child. Thus she asked permission to go to her husband.¹⁹⁸ The Commissioners at Albany were more than happy to accommodate the transfer of women. In the first place they had become a source of intelligence for the enemy by their correspondence with their husbands. Secondly, and of more importance, was the burden that their destitute condition was presenting to their neighbors and also the state.¹⁹⁹

For the most part, however, the benefits to be gained by an exchange made it a criminal offense to go to the British lines without the Board's permission or the Governor's. But monitoring exchanges was only part of the government's desire to monitor all movement within the state. Passes were needed for anyone to move anywhere in the state. On July 28, 1779, the Albany County Commissioners

¹⁹⁸Mrs. Annatio Van Buren to Governor Clinton, December 4, 1779, Clinton Papers, V, 399.

¹⁹⁹Albany Commissioners to Governor Clinton, July 29, 1778, Clinton Papers, III, 592-593.

ordered that nobody except themselves was permitted to approve the issuance of these passes in the county. Even the Albany Committee and justices of the peace now had to obtain the Board's approval before such a pass could be granted.²⁰⁰ This made it very difficult for the Loyalists to move undetected. Before this time, passes were gained from any number of sources, and this method often proved detrimental to the state. Colonel Frey, who from the very beginning of the conflict proved to be an avid supporter of the British cause, was given a permit that allowed him to range about the area between Fishkill and Albany, even though he was at the time considered a prisoner. He was able to accomplish this because he had friends on the Albany Committee who provided him with the pass.²⁰¹

Besides being in a position to monitor movement within the county, and exchanges with other areas of the state and Canada, the Commissioners also had the power to order Loyalists to different areas of the state. Because the frontiers of the county were always considered to be in a perilous condition due to the extensive Loyalist activity in Tryon County, several families who lived about Jessup's Patent were ordered to remove themselves and all of their effects to the interior of the state without delay.²⁰² This practice became very extensive as the activities of the Johnsons and the Butlers became more prevalent. It was fairly easy to have most of these people moved

²⁰⁰Psaltis, Minutes, I, 394.

²⁰¹Joh. Daniel Gros to Governor Clinton, September 8, 1777, Clinton Papers, II, 286-287.

²⁰²Psaltis, Minutes, II, 696.

since they were usually free on bond or recognizance in the first place. As a result all the Board had to do was threaten the person with prosecution and the desired movement would be easily achieved.

Under this close observation, Loyalists found it very difficult to navigate. Often they would escape to the wooded area of the various districts where the Rebels would find a difficult time in observing or trailing them. Most of the time, the men who found it necessary to take to the woods would look for the first opportunity to arise for them to sneak to either Canada or New York. However, on occasion, they would set up a type of camp, such as Francis Hogel of Lansingborough did, from which they encouraged, protected, and supplied Loyalists on their way to the British army.²⁰³ After the organization of the third body of Commissioners, with their control over movement in the county and access to their own group of rangers, this type of Robin Hood activity was seriously hindered. Loyalists wanted by the Commissioners attempted to escape the county as fast as possible. To do this they needed the help of other Loyalists, who would supply them while they were in hiding in the woods, informing them as to the whereabouts of rangers and well-affected citizens who would expose them. These gregarious Loyalists would offer the same services to British expresses, scouts, and at times British officers. Under the Commissioners, to be successful for long in this occupation demanded a great deal of imagination. In Tryon County a John Dochsteder succeeded in harboring a wounded soldier from

²⁰³Claim of Francis Hogel, 1787, AO. 12/26/175.

Sir John Johnson's regiment in his home by dressing him in a woman's clothes until he was well enough to make it to Canada.²⁰⁴

Obviously these people, who were often times strangers moving through the county, knew exactly which people they could go to for aid. It does not appear to have been a hit or miss choosing of homes. This could lead to the assumption that the Loyalists in Albany County had set up an underground railroad for conveying loyal subjects of the King out of the county. But never in the Loyalist Claims does a man who talks about his activity harboring expresses or Loyalists talk of being part of such an organization. The Minutes of the Commissioners and the Clinton Papers do not indicate any knowledge of such a network. Many were aware of certain people in different areas who were notorious for such actions, but never was there an attempt to trace the path of Loyalist travel, which from all indications appears to have been anything but uniform. On the other hand, as far back as the days of the Association, Loyalists were having their names published, thus giving expresses a good idea who would be likely to aid them on their route. Furthermore with the exchanges, and escapes to British lines of numerous people a simple consultation with Loyalists from the various districts through which an express or scout would travel would certainly give him some names to choose from for shelter. While people in certain districts may have been aware of some people in neighboring areas who could be of assistance to Loyalists or expresses, it is extremely doubtful that they had it organized on an entire county-wide level.

²⁰⁴Psaltis, Minutes, II, 563.

Two Loyalists were especially adept in moving about the county, evading not only rangers and militia, but on occasions, even Continental troops. The first of these men was Joseph Bettis, who acted as an emissary from the British in both Canada and New York.²⁰⁵ The first verification of his presence in the county was October 1780.²⁰⁶ He operated throughout it until August of 1781.²⁰⁷ During this time he was successful in gaining a number of recruits to go with him to Canada. He was the first emissary in the county to make use of black people there. Unfortunately his plans to take a number of them to Canada were thwarted by an informer to the Commissioners.²⁰⁸ Word also reached them that he had been very successful in raising a party of men at the Helleberg. Either it was so large a group, or by this time they had become so respectful of his elusive nature that the Board sent word to both General Gansevoort and General Clinton to apprehend him. At the same time a party of men from the Schenectady militia was sent to assist these troops.²⁰⁹ However, they all failed.

Apparently Bettis' knack for escaping all of these Rebel parties was due to his numerous contacts throughout the county. At least twelve different people were brought before the Commissioners and charged with harboring Bettis and his cohorts. Ironically his

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 548.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷He may have operated longer than this, but since the Minutes end at this time, there is no way to be sure of it.

²⁰⁸Psaltis, Minutes, II, 702.

²⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 699-700.

numerous contacts left him open to duplicity. Jellis Legrange who had been confined on the charge of harboring Bettis, informed the Commissioners that he could be found at Legrange's home. Legrange made this revelation in the hope that the gratitude of the Board would be expressed by his release. The Commissioners immediately ordered a party of Continental troops to go to the home of Legrange and "Strictly search" for Bettis.²¹⁰ They found no one. The next day Christian Legrange, the son of Jellis, appeared before the Commissioners to report that Bettis had shown up that very day. Once again the Commissioners sent word to General Clinton to go to that location and take Bettis.²¹¹ Once again they found no one.

Hans Waltimyer, noted for his daring but unsuccessful attempt to kidnap General Schuyler, also operated in Albany County at the same time as Bettis. An original inhabitant of the county, during the war he attached himself to Tryon's Rangers. Both he and Bettis received a good deal of support from the people of the Helleberg.²¹²

Unfortunately, he also had many of the same enemies as Bettis.

Peter Seger, in exchange for his freedom offered to apprehend Waltimyer in 1779. Two years later, he was offered cash to take Bettis.²¹³

Jellis Legrange also offered information about Waltimyer that he said he received from two men in confinement with him. A great deal of information could have been gained from these men had the Commissioners

²¹⁰Ibid., p. 755.

²¹¹Ibid., pp. 755-756.

²¹²Ibid., pp. 733-734.

²¹³Ibid., I, 329-330; II, 688.

let them talk and Lefrange listen undisturbed, but instead the Commissioners called these men before them for an examination. They refused to talk, both then and also later in their cells, thus closing a source of information about Waltimyer's movements within the county.²¹⁴ Despite the relatively constant influx of information to the Commissioners on Waltimyer, he moved flawlessly about the county picking up occasional bits of information by seizing people, detaining them for questioning, then releasing them. One such person, a William Dewitt was taken by Waltimyer a mere eight miles from the city of Albany.²¹⁵ This was a demonstration of supreme confidence in his ability to elude Rebel authorities, an insult to the Commissioners. Nevertheless, while the exploits of Bettis and Waltimyer were daring, and extraordinary in their own right, they did little more than embarrass the authorities. They made no real significant contribution to the overall British effort to put down the rebellion.

A more serious threat came from the relatively easy transfer of information to the enemy. This was impossible to control since every Loyalist was a potential informant. As mentioned previously, women in Albany County were a good source of intelligence. Janet Clemming, who sold stores at the Middle Fort of Schohary to militia men and the Continental troops would ask them such questions as where they were going, against whom they were going, and when they

²¹⁴ Ibid., II, 759.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 729.

were going. When she found out, she would send the information to a friend of hers with Butler.²¹⁶ Technically these people would not be considered as spies, neither would the Loyalists who harbored expresses and the like from the enemy and told them all they knew about the Rebel activities. According to the law, only persons who came "out of the Enemy & secretly lurk in any part of this State" could be considered as spies and subject to Court Martial.²¹⁷ If found guilty the penalty was hanging. This created some ironic situations, since a person like Janet Clemming who was doing the work that one would normally associate with espionage could not be tried for it, while a person like Jacob Schell, a member of Johnson's regiment, who was ordered to go to his home in the Helleberg and tell the People there to stay put so as not to be hurt by Johnson's maneuvers, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hung as a spy, after he surrendered himself as a prisoner of war.²¹⁸ Under such circumstances, the accused usually felt it wise, for the sake of self preservation, to supply as much information about the Loyalists as possible. Convicted spy James Van Driesen offered to be a continuous aid by making "Discoveries advantageous to the United States." As a consequence, he was given a reprieve of sentence in order to accomplish this.²¹⁹ What followed were usually the names of people

²¹⁶Deposition of Sergeant James Richards, August 8, 1778, Clinton Papers, III, 615.

²¹⁷Account of the Court Martial of Jacob Schell, October 28, 1780, Clinton Papers, VI, 334.

²¹⁸Ibid., pp. 334-335.

²¹⁹Account of the Court Martial of James Van Driesen, October 26, 1780, Ibid., p. 336.

who had harbored them. This was either what the spies were most likely to divulge, or what the examiners wished to know the most.

Counterfeiting also carried a death penalty upon conviction. While a number of men were apprehended on the charge of carrying or passing counterfeit bills, only one conviction is on record for Albany County. In April 1781, Wilhelmus Lampman was sentenced to death for knowingly carrying, not passing, 700 counterfeit bills.²²⁰ He was taken on a suspicion of robbery, since they were frequent that particular week in the district of Claverack. Tampering with the currency in any way whatsoever was carefully guarded against as well. The Commissioners especially disliked attempts at depreciation. On a couple of occasions men tried to exchange three pounds of continental currency for one pound of specie. They were punished for this by the Board.²²¹

Usually anyone charged with one of the offenses associated with Loyatism was placed in some type of confinement. In Albany County most prisoners were kept in the Albany jail, but a number were also placed in the city fort, for a period of time deemed sufficient by the Commissioners. Soon after the Commissioners took over they had to remove eleven men from the jail since the over-crowded conditions there were making the "Situation of the Prisoners there very disagreeable."²²² They were able to alleviate this problem somewhat, for a year later

²²⁰Judge Robert Yates to Governor Clinton, May 6, 1781, Ibid., pp. 847-848.

²²¹Psaltis, Minutes, II, 681, 706.

²²²Ibid., I, 128-129.

many of those confined in Tryon County jail, where there was an inadequate guard, were shipped to Albany jail.²²³ In the early stages of the war treatment of the prisoners was considerably harsher than at the time of the Commissioners. By the Fall of 1778, Clinton announced his satisfaction with this new trend in treating prisoners, without the "Degree of rigor which they formerly experienced." Only when some sort of retaliatory action was necessary did he advocate more oppressive treatment.²²⁴ Usually ill prisoners were permitted to be moved to a more healthy location to aid their recovery. Sometimes this would be to the Albany fort or hospital. In some cases they could even go home or to a friend's home. Refusals to remove people with illnesses from confinement were rare. Even when prisoners sent word that their families were distressed without them, or someone else was ill, or that they just wanted to see some of their loved ones, their requests for temporary release were often granted. On the whole, treatment for the imprisoned was never very brutal in the Albany areas of confinement. In the Loyalist Claims, it is a rare instance where someone complains about his treatment in the jails. As has been seen, a man like William Edmeston was able to run a Loyalist propaganda program from his cell. And this occurred before 1778.²²⁵ On the other hand, the Loyalist Claims are filled with vivid descriptions of the

²²³Ibid., p. 364.

²²⁴Governor Clinton to the Albany Commissioners, October 26, 1778 (circa), Clinton Papers, IV, 206-207.

²²⁵Claim of Alexander and James Robertson, 1784, AO. 12/19/279.

miserable conditions in the jails outside of Albany County, such as those at Esopus.²²⁶

While it was policy for prisoners to cover the expense of their confinement, and most were forced to do this, the Commissioners did their best to see that no one starved or froze to death while in confinement. They made an agreement with John Lansing in August, 1778 to supply the prisoners who could not support themselves with "such a proportion of Bread as the Commissioners from Time to Time shall judge Necessary." He was also given a contract for supplying them with beef.²²⁷ The diet was not exactly well balanced, the usual meal consisting of only these two foods. If the prisoner was eating at state expense, the maximum intake for him was one pound of bread and a half pound of beef per day. No minimum standards were set.²²⁸ The Commissioners also paid the Deputy Quartermaster General to furnish wood for the prisoners.²²⁹

All of this created a great deal of expense for the Commissioners. As a result, other methods of controlling Loyalists were employed. The most desirable alternative was to persuade them to take an oath of allegiance to the state of New York. With the jails full and unknown numbers of Loyalists roaming the area, this was hoped to be a significant step in dealing with the problem. Oaths were given as a form of absolving former Loyalists of their past

²²⁶Claim of John Cumming, 1784, AO. 12/20/42.

²²⁷Psaltis, Minutes, I, 210-211.

²²⁸Ibid., p. 375.

²²⁹Ibid., p. 235.

offenses, as long as they were not capital, and also to force a commitment out of those who had a penchant for remaining neutral on the issues of the conflict. In respect to the latter, an act was passed on June 30, 1778 stating that all people who in the past had shown such a nature would have to take an oath of not only allegiance, but also of recognition of their duty to defend their state's integrity. All who refused to take the oath were ordered to be removed to the British lines.²³⁰ It must be remembered that these were not necessarily men with Loyalist tendencies. These were men who did not wish to be committed. Thus, of the sixty-five men tendered the oath of allegiance, twenty-nine of them asked for time to consider their decision. Eventually, twenty-one took the oath, thirty-four refused it, and ten of those summoned never appeared to give their decision. This meant that approximately forty-four people were forced into being loyal. Once they made their decision, they had to be prepared to leave the county for the British lines on the "shortest notice." Usually departures were set for a Saturday. If one refused the oath on a Wednesday, he would have as little as four days to prepare to leave. However, both the time and manner of departure were dependent on the attitude of those in charge toward the individuals under their authority.

Arbitrary decisions also affected the Commissioners' handling of recognizances and parole. Unable to confine violators in prison

²³⁰"An Act more effectually to prevent the Mischiefs, arising from the Influence and Example of Persons of equivocal and suspected Characters, in this State," June 30, 1778, in Psaltis, Minutes, II, 784.

for extended periods of time, the usual procedure was to confine the person for a period of variable duration immediately after he was apprehended. The same offense could very likely bring two different periods of confinement. After what the Board considered to be a sufficient period of imprisonment the Loyalist was brought before them, and bond and recognizance were set at this time. Once again the same offense could bring two different rates for both. Those released under these conditions were usually restricted to a certain area and subject to recall at any time by the Commissioners. They also had to report once a month to a Commissioner. This proved to be a fairly successful system of containment. Nevertheless, at one point, in August 1779, the Commissioners announced that many of those who had entered into recognizance had not appeared agreeable to it. They decided to put up an advertisement in different parts of the county notifying all those on recognizance that they had until the last day of August to appear before the Board. If they failed, they would be prosecuted.²³¹ Since there is no mention of people being prosecuted immediately after this deadline, it seems safe to assume that they all complied. Only twice during the time the Commissioners sat at Albany were people prosecuted on their recognizance and forced to forfeit it.²³² Still, the chance of prosecution was something that all of those released under such a condition had to live with. At any time the mere report of one of their personal enemies could cost them their recognizance, and in the process ruin them. While the sum of

²³¹Psaltis, Minutes, I, 402.

²³²Ibid., II, 603, 736-737.

recognizance could be as low as twenty-five pounds currency, it could also be as high as one thousand pounds currency. Most of the time, they were set at one hundred pounds for recognizance and one hundred pounds for bail per person. However, the size would at times reflect the size of the person's pocketbook, as well as the nature of the offense. The reason few people forfeited their recognizance was that few people wished to risk the economic ruin that would entail. This could happen easily enough without them doing a thing, let alone by their actually committing an offense.

The loss of property was rarely incurred through forfeiture of recognizance or bail in Albany County. But, as in every other county, it was often lost by confiscation or sequestration as evidenced by the various Loyalist Claims Commissions. In Albany County a total of 277 names appear on the official list of legal confiscations by the Committee of Forfeiture.²³³ To this must be added the names of an unknown number of Loyalists whose political allegiance to Great Britain gave wandering bands of county militia a virtual license to plunder them of live stock and furniture. Sometimes even the well-affected fell to this unruly type of activity. The most notable example of this indiscriminate plundering came at the hands of the Rebel William Butler. He wrote to Governor Clinton in 1778 that all the cattle he took would be sold and the money dispersed among his soldiers because of the "Benefit there derives from

²³³Schedule of Confiscations by the Committee of Forfeiture, 1786, AO. 12/86/fr. 44-92.

rewarding good troops."²³⁴ In reply, Clinton sent word to the Commissioners of Sequestration saying that for the time being he approved of Butler's action since these men guarding the frontiers at such a critical time were due "all reasonable encouragement."²³⁵ One week later General Stark sanctioned similar action for his troops. In order to facilitate this action people were being charged by the military with treason when in fact, according to the Albany Commissioners, they were merely providing themselves with a "better Opportunity to appropriate their Effects."²³⁶

This random plundering of private property was the unfortunate climax of a policy that was from the beginning very touchy and uncertain to its proponent. Starting with the belief that the Loyalists had to be disarmed, the idea of tampering with other peoples' property did not appeal to many in authoritative positions. Thus they were very careful to point out that this property would be restored as soon as the conflict was finished.²³⁷ From this the Rebels moved on to the practice of turning over the real and personal property of any person who armed himself "against the liberties of America" to the nearest committee, to be held in trust.²³⁸ By March 1777, the

²³⁴William Butler to Governor Clinton, August 31, 1778, Clinton Papers, III, 710-711.

²³⁵Governor Clinton to the Commissioners of Sequestration, September 8, 1778, Ibid., IV, 11-12.

²³⁶Albany Commissioners to Governor Clinton, September 10, 1778, Ibid., p. 20.

²³⁷Flick, Loyalism in New York, p. 135.

²³⁸Ibid., p. 136.

Provincial Congress went one step further. It established three Commissioners of Sequestration in each county under its control. They had the authority to seize all the personal property of those who joined the British and, after then days, sell it at public vendue, with the proceeds going to the provincial treasury.²³⁹ This was an especially important act to the people of Albany County for Burgoyne at the time this act was initiated, was marching through the territory. The Loyalists were faced with a real dilemma, should they go and lose their property, or stay. This had to have some effect on the poor turnout of Loyalists in Burgoyne's ranks. Especially since almost every Loyalist from Albany County who reported joining the British at this time mentioned that immediately following enlistment his cattle were seized by the Rebel authorities or militia.

On a number of occasions the Loyalists reported that their families were evicted from their homes long before such action was made legal.²⁴⁰ To keep pace with what was actually happening, and due to the popular call for such action, real estate began to be sequestered as well. On October 22, 1779, fifty-nine people were found guilty of felony. It was decided that they should be attained and then their property, both real and personal, forfeited to the state. Among those charged were Abraham Cuyler, Robert Leake, Edward and Ebenezer Jessup, all of Albany County.²⁴¹ In April of the next year the wholesale indictments of a similar nature against Loyalists

²³⁹Ibid., p. 139.

²⁴⁰Claim of Mary McAlpin, 1785, AO. 12/21/53-54.

²⁴¹Flick, Loyalism in New York, p. 147.

in Albany County for the purpose of confiscation began, the first conviction of this group coming through in July of that year.

The enactment of these confiscation orders was the final step in the process of rendering Albany Loyalists helpless. Constantly harassed by ranger, militia, patriotic neighbors, temporary confinement, recognizances, and numerous, costly appearances before the Board, there was little opportunity for significant action on their part. Left leaderless, even before the defeat of Burgoyne, and without British military support, due to the shift of the main theater of the military conflict to the Southern states after Saratoga, Albany Loyalists had every reason to feel abandoned. They were left to shift for themselves at a time when the Rebel government had put into effect a strong, extensive and centralized organization, developed through the years of the conflict for the express purpose of curtailing them. It was no contest.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The reasons for Loyalism, the motivational forces behind the movement in Albany County are still very difficult to determine. Being such personal decisions, the reasons for choosing the Crown's side in the conflict are probably as numerous as the Loyalists themselves. Only if it were possible to obtain the diaries of each of them could it then be possible to comprehend fully the complexities of motivation. In a sense, the Loyalist Claims provide types of miniature diaries of the Loyalists, but in themselves, the Claims provide incomplete, and, at times, inaccurate accounts.

Albany County in 1775 contained approximately 45,019 people,²⁴² a fair proportion of which at one time or another could have been considered loyal. Only a fraction of these people are available for examination since a mere 330 are listed in the Claims. Furthermore, the accounts related in the Claims are not always reliable. It must be remembered that their purpose was to compensate the Loyalists for losses. The autobiographical sketches they gave were to have a serious impact on their future. As a result, it was common to find a person giving an over-estimation of his estate with the hope of being better compensated. In many instances, the Loyalist claimants were

²⁴² Estimation based on the figures presented in Stella Helen Sutherland, Population Distribution in Colonial America, (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 70.

correct in assuming that the only way to receive compensation equal to their losses was for them to list losses in excess of those actually incurred, because the Claims Commissioners' policy was to undercompensate them.²⁴³ In Albany County, John Griffiths tried to present himself to the Claims Commissioners as a wealthy land and tavern owner, all the while bemoaning the fact that he could not prove his case because his deeds had been burned when the Rebels set fire to his house. His masquerade, however, was ended by Captain John Munro, who revealed to the Claims Commissioners that instead of being a wealthy resident of New York, Griffiths had spent so much time "fishing Troubled Waters," there was no opportunity for him to amass anywhere near the amount of wealth he claimed.²⁴⁴

In addition to lying about their fortunes, many claimants lied about their activities during the conflict as well. After all, these also played a major role in determining how much the Loyalists would receive from the British government. Once again, John Griffiths provides an example of such action. In the autobiographical section of his claim he tells the tale of how he raised 400 men to free hundreds of Loyalists in confinement at the Albany Fort, only to refrain from doing so upon the request of the prisoners themselves.²⁴⁵ It is truly remarkable that Griffiths thought anyone would believe he could raise 400 men when Burgoyne himself hardly gathered that

²⁴³Fingerhut, "Uses and Abuses of the American Loyalist Claims," p. 252.

²⁴⁴Claim of John Griffiths, 1786, AO. 12/22/135-151.

²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 135-136.

many Loyalists together. By carrying his stories to such preposterous lengths, Griffiths ended up destroying all of his credibility with the Claims Commissioners, becoming no more than an interesting sidelight in the study of the Loyalist movement. Others, however, were not so blatant. If they sufficiently doctored enough evidence and found cooperative witnesses to supply favorable testimony in their behalf to the Claims Commissioners, they were able to slip their inaccurate claims and statements through undetected both then and now.

Vague details are a more prevalent affliction of the Claims than the intentional inaccuracies of the claimants. As a consequence many important questions are left unanswered. In most cases, the point of motivation is not even considered by the claimants. It is as if, in their minds, there was no reason to deal with the subject. If is as if loyalty to the King was the only alternative, to have done otherwise is something that was not even considered. It was unthinkable. That this attitude was actually present in a number of cases should not be doubted; but to think that it prevailed in all of the instances where this impression is given would be a little too much to expect from human nature.

The Claims containing the least amount of detail belong to Loyalists who could be classified as tenant farmers. Out of the 330 Claims from Albany County, 164 were tenant farmers. Usually their claims made references only to the fact that they leased lands, the value of their estates, the total amount of their losses, and whether or not they bore arms for the British. Possibly some of their activities in support of the King would also be mentioned. Thus, the explanation behind such a large number of tenant farmers appearing in

the Loyalist ranks is dependent to a large extent upon inferences. One of these would be that the Loyalists who were tenant farmers were actually revolting against the miserable conditions imposed upon them by their Rebel landlords, the Livingstons, the Van Renssalaers, and Philip Schuyler. But this inference does not hold true. In the first place, a great number of Loyalists lived on the lands owned by Loyalists, such as Ebenezer Jessup. Rather than becoming Rebels, these tenants joined their landlord's own provincial corps.

Peter McDougal leased DeLancey land for 1 shilling per acre per year forever.²⁴⁶ These conditions were not as good as those made by Philip Livingston to the Loyalist Robert Whitman. Whitman leased the land at the same rate as McDougal, but Whitman was given the opportunity to purchase the land upon the initial termination of his lease.²⁴⁷ Thus rather than driving tenants into the Loyalist camp by imposing oppressive living conditions upon them, it appears as if the Rebel landlords offered better terms to their tenants than did their Loyalist counterparts.

Several factors must be considered in any attempt to uncover the reasons behind the large proportion of tenant farmers listed in the Loyalist Claims of Albany County. That they undoubtedly constituted a very large percentage of the population of this particular area is certainly one. The second is again tied to the most crucial event of the Revolution for the residents of Albany County, the campaign of Burgoyne. As was seen, the march of Burgoyne

²⁴⁶Claim of Peter McDougal, 1787, AO. 12/28/290.

²⁴⁷Claim of Robert Whitman, 1788, AO. 12/32/182.

into Albany County had a positive effect, for a time, on the growth of Loyalism here. The Claims reveal that better than two times as many Loyalists joined British lines in 1777 than all the other years of the conflict combined.

Tenant farmers were the most defenseless and insecure members of the Albany community. On occasion it was possible to come across a fairly wealthy one, but these were well in the minority. The survival of the tenant farmers was completely dependent upon their ties with the "powers that be" in their area. Before 1777, this usually meant one of the great Rebel landlords. However, once the seemingly invincible force of Burgoyne appeared ready to sweep through the county, everything changed. The British General appeared destined to be master of the region. There was reason to believe that if this occurred the rebellious landlords would be dispossessed. With this the validity of their leases could very well be denied. The tenants felt the need to insure their holdings with the new authorities, thus they joined the ranks of General Burgoyne. Of course their decision was a little premature. Once Burgoyne was defeated, the tenant farmers, turned provincial soldiers, now found themselves in the very position they hoped to avoid. As soon as they left their homes the Rebel landlords reassumed control of the leased lands. The crops, furniture, and other personal belongings of the Loyalists were usually taken by other state authorities. The families of the Loyalists were often evicted so that the landlord could lease the lands to another person. All the while people of different circumstance, such as free holders, were returning to their lands, and reassuming their patriotic posture. At this time they still had a place to return to. The tenant farmers

had nothing to return to or for. They remained in exile, many continuing in the British service for lack of any other means of support.

In the case of the tenant farmers, expediency, for the most part, governed their decision on loyalty. Expediency governed the political choice of a majority of Albany County residents, thus accounting for the very noticeable change of face before and after the defeat of Burgoyne. This is not to say that there were no "true" Loyalists, or Loyalists who truly believed in the righteousness of their choice. It is just very difficult, if not almost impossible, to pinpoint such people on the basis of the skimpy evidence pertaining to this particular aspect of the subject.

It is much easier to deduce reasons other than true dedication to the Crown. The people forced to be Loyalists are perfect examples of this. In Albany County there was a fairly strong pacifist movement led by the Shaking Quakers. The Commissioners for detecting and defeating conspiracies, however, did not believe these people were serious about their philosophy. It was seen only as a movement subversive to the rebellion. The Board referred to this religious sect as a group of "pretended" practitioners of the pacifist concept.²⁴⁸ Ironically, their attempts to convince others that taking up arms was construed by the Board as breaches of the public peace, and the Shaking Quakers were so charged.²⁴⁹ Although not necessarily loyal to the King, the Shaking Quakers were treated as such by the Rebel

²⁴⁸Psaltis, Minutes, II, 455-456.

²⁴⁹Ibid., p. 469.

authorities. Eventually they were accused of purchasing arms and ammunition for the enemy.²⁵⁰

In Albany County, the three factors of no other alternative, expediency, and principle all played a role in determining which people became Loyalists. In what proportion these three factors existed cannot be answered. But whom they affected is sometimes another question altogether. Those who were determined not to become involved in the political conflict, those who had no interest in it, had to become Loyalists. With the mandatory oath of allegiance to the state, and its accompanying pledge to bear arms in its defense, they had no choice but to enter the Loyalist camp. Their kind was totally unacceptable to the Rebels.

It was already demonstrated how expediency was a major factor in determining the allegiance of the large group of tenant farmers. Nevertheless, even among this group, principle must have had some effect. The proof that it had a role in motivation of Albany Loyalists was in the continued existence of Loyalists in the county. This was in spite of the fact that, except for the few months Burgoyne threatened to end the rebellion in New York, it was never expedient to be a Loyalist. From the beginning, they were devoid of organization. They were just a group of individuals lacking a positive direction, meaningful action, and strong leadership. Following the defeat of Burgoyne, bewildered and dispirited must also be added to their description. After February of 1778, the Albany Loyalists faced countless appearances before the Rebel Board of Commissioners, the

²⁵⁰Ibid., p. 723.

continued threat of economic ruin due to high bonds and recognizances, and confinement upon mere accusation. They were completely at the mercy of their enemies. Their activities may have been restricted and meaningless as far as the British war effort was concerned, but they did continue to exist in a place and during a time when their beliefs brought them absolutely no benefit.

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