

LORD CHARLES CORNWALLIS AND THE LOYALISTS: A STUDY IN BRITISH
PACIFICATION DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1775-1781

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. CORNWALLIS' FIRST EXPERIENCES	7
3. CORNWALLIS AND THE NEW JERSEY LOYALISTS	12
4. AMERICANIZATION AND THE FALL OF CHARLESTON	15
5. CORNWALLIS' INDEPENDENT COMMAND	19
6. LOGISTICS AND LOYALISTS	25
7. THE SUMMER OF 1780	29
8. THE PUSH INTO NORTH CAROLINA	35
9. KINGS MOUNTAIN	40
10. OBJECTIVES IN QUESTION	45
11. THE REBEL RESURGENCE	50
12. GUILDFORD COURTHOUSE	54
13. DESPERATION	59
14. CONCLUSION	63
ABBREVIATIONS	67
ENDNOTES	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

For many Loyalists in the southern colonies, their first military experiences in the American Revolution ended in disaster. Those who continued to fight suffered many hardships and ultimately put their hopes for protection in Lieutenant General Charles, Second Earl Cornwallis, commander of British forces in the South from June 1780 to October 1781. Cornwallis and his relations with the southern Loyalists, especially his attempts to rally and shield them, are misunderstood by historians. Often criticized by scholars for failing to properly support the southern Loyalists and ignoring their pleas for assistance, Cornwallis in fact made a concerted effort to ensure their security and empower them against their enemies.¹ Cornwallis' correspondence shows he followed a consistent approach towards the King's American supporters. He employed the Loyalists to further his military objectives and relied on their efforts to pacify the interior of the southern colonies. Without proper support however, many Loyalist efforts failed. In the end, Cornwallis left the King's supporters at the mercy of the Rebels.

Despite a surge in interest among historians concerning the southern Loyalists, the new scholarship has not yet fully analyzed their impact on the course of the war. The southern Loyalists, like their northern counterparts, continually aided the British throughout the war. They provided the King's forces with supplies and recruits. They also became the backbone of the British southern strategy from 1779 to 1781. Historians have long associated British failure in the southern colonies with inflated reports of Loyalist numbers and zeal, especially in the Carolinas. Contemporary British accounts of the American Revolution, notably Sir Henry Clinton's memoir, *The American Rebellion*,

and Banastre Tarleton's *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, tend to focus on the major military operations and only sparingly mention Loyalist contributions. When these observers mention the Loyalists, it is often with scorn for their lack of fervor and dedication to the British cause.

Clinton and Tarleton's accounts heavily influenced historians' interpretations of the American Revolution. As historian William Nelson states, the Loyalists became a forgotten people, losing "their proper place in history." Nelson's book, *The American Tory* (1960), was the first systematic study of the Loyalists and highlights the inability of their leaders to effectively articulate their beliefs and organize their political and military operations. The lack of coordination exhibited by Loyalist leaders significantly hindered their ability to provide a viable alternative to war and independence. Nelson's groundbreaking work, though mainly an intellectual history focusing on a few northern Loyalist leaders, helped encourage historians to examine Loyalists in a more objective light.²

Paul Smith followed Nelson's lead with *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (1964), focusing on the relation between Loyalist support and British military policy. Smith argues that British officials, political and military, never fully understood the nature of the Loyalists. Consequently, those officials never developed a consistent policy to incorporate them into military and civil operations. Therefore, Loyalist failures, due to inadequate support from regular British troops, confirmed many British officers' views that Loyalists were unreliable when their need was greatest. Smith's analysis became widely accepted and went unchallenged for many years. Franklin and Mary Wickwire's biography, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*

(1970), adopts Smith's analysis and argues that the lack of strong Loyalist support forced Cornwallis to abandon the Carolinas and move into Virginia, eventually leading to his ultimate defeat at Yorktown. Smith and the Wickwires perpetuated the idea that the war in the South was an extension of that in the North, characterized by pitched battles against regular army forces, when in fact the war in the South was far different and unlike anything Cornwallis and other British officers anticipated.

John Pancake's *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (1985) and John Buchanan's *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The Revolution in the Carolinas* (1997) examine the American Revolution in the southern colonies. Pancake argues that the war in the South was essentially a "civil war" fought mainly by partisan forces that tended to switch sides throughout the conflict. The British military consistently failed to provide proper support to the Loyalists, exacerbating the savage nature of the war. Though Pancake covers some major engagements in which Loyalist forces participated, he does not closely examine the wide range of Loyalist activities throughout the conflict. Buchanan reinforces Pancake's notion of a southern "civil war" by examining multiple smaller confrontations between opposing partisan forces and their impact on the operations of the larger conventional armies through March 1781. He shows that Loyalist militia continually engaged Rebel partisans and, when properly supported, won those engagements and provided support for the British Army. Yet whenever the British Army left a supposed pacified area, Buchanan argues, Loyalist support withered, which adversely affected the relationship between the British and the Loyalists.

Jim Piecuch's recent work, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (2008), refutes the longstanding belief that Loyalists were passive actors who only supported the British when friendly regular troops were in the immediate vicinity. His work is a revisionist history of the British collaborators who are all too often relegated to footnotes in most other works. Piecuch demonstrates that Loyalists were numerous and they provided their British allies with continuous support throughout the conflict in the south. Piecuch also argues the reports of numerous Loyalists that inspired the British southern campaign were in fact true. Even when the British military consistently failed to support Loyalist operations and the latter suffered numerous military defeats at the hands of Rebel partisan forces, southern Loyalists played an active and instrumental role during the duration of the war.

Though Loyalists were ubiquitous throughout the conflict, British commanders failed to make a rigorous effort to integrate them into British strategy. This changed in 1780 with the arrival of the British in South Carolina and the appointment of Lieutenant-General Cornwallis as commander of the British southern army. As a major figure of the American Revolution, Cornwallis receives much attention from historians. He is faulted for the Yorktown disaster and the overall British defeat.

There are three schools of thought regarding Cornwallis' culpability, assigning him all, some, or none of the blame. Most historians argue that Cornwallis is partially culpable for the British debacle at Yorktown. They also cite other factors, such as the indecision and poor planning of Cornwallis' superior, General Sir Henry Clinton, as well as general logistical problems and poor naval support.³ Other historians take a more

critical view of Cornwallis, blaming his personality, rash decision-making, and lust for glory as reason for Britain's loss of the Thirteen Colonies.⁴

Historian John Shy argues British misperceptions produced a gap between strategy conception and its implementation. The British military leaders in the colonies and the civilian superiors in London could not reconcile different interpretations of the conflict and therefore failed to properly communicate their military resolutions to each other. Tensions between General Clinton and Cornwallis, coupled with Secretary of State for the American Department Lord George Germain's contradictory orders to both commanders, created a situation where, as Shy put it, "none of the three British leaders . . . knew what [they were] doing."⁵ He also argues that none of the British military leaders were "grossly incompetent." Historians, Shy notes, often hold military officers to unrealistic standards, creating the illusion of incompetence. Failing to recognize that the American Revolution in the southern colonies was a civil war, British generals doomed their army's efforts to pacify the region.⁶

Other historians, such as John Tilley, blame the Royal Navy for allowing the French fleet to secure control of the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, effectively isolating Cornwallis' army at Yorktown. France's entry into the conflict in 1779 prompted British commanders to reevaluate the objectives of the war. As Tilley argues, British naval officials assigned the colonies a secondary role in order to combat the French navy across the globe, especially in the Caribbean. As a result, British Admiral John Graves was unaware of the French navy's approach towards Chesapeake Bay, which contributed significantly to Cornwallis' capture.⁷ Renowned scholar Jeremy Black argues that Admiral George Rodney, the British naval commander in the Caribbean, is to blame for

the British defeat at Yorktown. Charged with tailing the French fleet under Vice-Admiral François-Joseph Paul, Marquis de Grasse Tilly, Comte de Grasse, Rodney failed to accurately report the Frenchman's movements and fleet strength to British leaders in London and New York. Admiral Rodney also sent too few vessels from his own fleet to join Admiral Graves in New York, thus permitting the French to secure naval supremacy in the Chesapeake.⁸

Cornwallis' experiences in the American Revolution ran the gamut from battlefield victory to grave disappointment and eventually utter disaster. Cornwallis faced many difficulties trying to protect southern Loyalists and coordinate his operations with theirs. Loyalists were ever present throughout the conflict, sometimes in large numbers, but their faith and zeal paled in comparison to their continuous military failure. Early Loyalist actions in the southern colonies met with disaster. Loyalists in New Jersey in 1776 and 1777 introduced Cornwallis to the challenges of securing colonists' loyalty as well as organizing royal supporters into effective military units. Though criticized for misunderstanding and neglecting the Crown's American allies, the earl developed a systematic plan for employing those people as the major instrument in reestablishing local control in the South. His plan however, met with considerable obstacles and he eventually decided to pursue more militarily offensive operations in Virginia.

CHAPTER 2

Cornwallis' First Experiences

The summer of 1775 saw events unfold around Boston that solidified a military conflict between the American colonies and the British Crown. The British Army under Lieutenant General Thomas Gage, then commander in chief of His Majesty's Forces in North America, tried to force the hastily created Continental Army under General George Washington from the heights overlooking Boston. Simultaneously, pleas from royal governors, for military support and assurances that a great number of British supporters resided in Virginia and the Carolinas, prompted British officials to extend operations there. Though the first British expedition to liberate the southern colonies ultimately failed, it introduced Major General Cornwallis, to the complex issues associated with subduing a rebellion.

As the British planned to storm the Rebel fortifications at Bunker Hill in June 1775, Josiah Martin, the royal governor of North Carolina, wrote to General Gage in Boston and his superiors in London. In this dispatch, Martin stressed the overwhelming number of Loyalists in his colony, claiming at least 20,000 Loyalists were eager to fight for the British. He also believed he could assemble 9,000 Loyalists as early as 1776.⁹ William Campbell, the royal governor of South Carolina, echoed Martin's observations a month later. Campbell wrote to Lord William Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the American Colonies, that Rebel control of Charleston had "stirred up such a spirit in the back part of this country, which is very populous." He also noted that reports from representatives in the Camden and Ninety-Six districts numbered Loyalists in the thousands. Despite these optimistic reports, Campbell had instructed the Loyalists to

“preserve in these sentiments” and “cultivate this loyal disposition amongst their neighbours.” He would afford them protection as soon as possible.¹⁰

London responded by assuring Governor Martin that troops would be dispatched on December 1 and would arrive off the North Carolina coast by early February 1776. Throughout the fall of 1775, the British Army assembled a large contingent of reinforcements at Cork, Ireland. Towards the end of November, Cornwallis asked to join the expedition at Cork, destined for the mouth of North Carolina's Cape Fear River. Lord George Germain, who replaced Lord Dartmouth as Secretary of State for the American Department, relayed Cornwallis' request to King George III, who immediately acquiesced. The king ordered the 33rd Regiment of Foot, which Cornwallis commanded, to replace the 53rd Regiment, originally destined for America. Logistical problems delayed the departure of Cornwallis' forces until February 12, and they did not arrive at Cape Fear until May 3. Cornwallis rendezvoused there with his superior, Lieutenant General Henry Clinton, who had been waiting for him for nearly two months. The long delay proved detrimental to the Loyalists of the southern colonies who were all too eager to reassert royal authority.

As Cornwallis contemplated taking an active part in the war in November 1775, a group of fervent Loyalists in South Carolina attempted to oust the Rebels from the backcountry post of Ninety-Six. Approximately 1,800 Loyalists under Patrick Cunningham marched against Major Andrew Williamson on November 19. After two days of fighting, the opposing leaders signed an armistice and returned to the countryside. The Council of Safety, the Rebel colonial government in South Carolina, dispatched Colonel Richard Richardson to suppress this uprising. Gathering over 4,000 men,

Richardson marched in December to the area between the Broad and Saluda rivers, capturing many Loyalist leaders and disarming a great number of their supporters. He also forced many Loyalists to pledge obedience to the Rebel cause in the future.¹¹ When news of this reached Clinton, he remarked the South Carolina Loyalists were “overflowing with zeal and elated by some advantages they had gained over the Rebels,” but were “equally precipitate in showing themselves.”¹² The quick and thorough suppression of Loyalist activities in South Carolina was repeated in North Carolina nearly three months later.

Upon receipt of London’s assurances, Governor Martin ordered the Loyalist troops recruited by Brigadier General Donald McDonald and Colonel Donald McLeod to assemble at Brunswick, North Carolina, by February 15, 1776. McLeod mustered about 1,500 men, mostly North Carolina Highlanders of Scottish descent. His column proceeded towards Wilmington in late February to confront the Rebels massed there. On February 27 however, a smaller contingent of 1,000 Rebel militia under Colonels Alexander Lillington, John Ashe, and Richard Caswell engaged McLeod’s Loyalist militia at Moore’s Creek Bridge. At a cost of one killed and one wounded, the Rebels killed thirty Loyalists, wounded forty, and captured 850, effectively neutralizing the Loyalist threat.¹³ The 1,500 Loyalists that responded to Martin’s pleas fell far short of the 9,000 he anticipated gathering by 1776. Nevertheless, the actual turnout that fought at Moore’s Creek Bridge suggests that there were many Loyalists in North Carolina who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the Crown. The arrival of the British fleet in late spring however, failed to rouse any further Loyalist uprisings. The devastating defeat at

Moore's Creek Bridge left the King's remaining supporters in North Carolina badly cowed.

As Cornwallis traversed the Atlantic, Clinton sailed south along the American coast with 2,000 troops. Clinton's orders from Gage's replacement as commander in chief, General William Howe, were to "protect and support the loyalists" while restoring royal authority in the southern colonies.¹⁴ While taking refuge from a violent storm in early March, Clinton received word from Governor Martin of the disaster at Moore's Creek Bridge. Governor Campbell furthered Clinton's distress when he arrived on a frigate on March 12 with news of the widespread disarmament and imprisonment of many Loyalists in the South Carolina backcountry. He also reported the late departure of the Cork fleet. Discouraged, Clinton began to question the feasibility of regaining the Carolinas.¹⁵

Clinton determined that most Loyalists were scattered throughout the interior of the colonies, making it difficult to re-establish governmental control. He also concluded that the season was too far advanced to make sufficient gains once the British Army was established on the mainland. Clinton resolved that it would be detrimental as well as discouraging to Loyalists in the Carolinas if the British had them rally around the king's standard only to abandon them later that year.¹⁶ By moving operations to Chesapeake Bay, Clinton believed he could establish two stationary posts with adequate protection from land and sea attack. According to Clinton, a "secure asylum" could have been provided for "whatever loyalists in the lower parts of Carolina and Virginia might be disposed to join the King's standard."¹⁷ Clinton communicated his ideas to General Howe in hopes of gaining the latter's approval.

Once the entire Cork fleet arrived on May 3, 1776, Clinton suggested to Commodore Sir Peter Parker to move the army and navy to the Chesapeake. In the meantime, Parker conducted a reconnaissance of Charleston Harbor and found an incomplete Rebel fort standing on Sullivan's Island. This intelligence, along with no response from General Howe, persuaded Clinton to forgo his Chesapeake plans and concentrate his operations on the Carolinas. It is unclear whether Cornwallis attended Clinton's discussions with Parker. However, being Clinton's chief subordinate, the earl may have derived some understanding of Clinton's desires for an expedition to the Chesapeake and the role Loyalists played in that decision making.

Convinced the South Carolina port was vulnerable, Clinton ordered an attack. Upon conferring with Cornwallis, Clinton decided to land their troops on Long Island, just north of Sullivan's Island. The water between the two islands was too deep to ford thus preventing Clinton's Redcoats from storming the fort. Commodore Parker's fleet attempted to silence the fort's cannons, but failed with significant losses. As a result, the Royal Navy sailed out of the harbor, leaving it under Rebel control. Having suffered just over 200 casualties, the British abandoned the Carolinas, leaving many potential supporters to suffer further suppression by the Rebels.¹⁸ Cornwallis' first experience in the American colonies was a sobering one. Loyalist failures in the months preceding his arrival deprived the British of American support in pacifying the South.

CHAPTER 3

Cornwallis and the New Jersey Loyalists

Defeated and demoralized, Clinton's force sailed north to rendezvous with a much larger British Army off Long Island under General Howe. There, Howe granted Cornwallis command of the British reserves for the upcoming attack on Long Island. After the British took New York and forced General George Washington's beaten Continental Army to retreat into New Jersey, Howe gave Cornwallis command of a contingent of about 5,000 British and German troops to pursue the Rebels. Orders from Howe soon forced Cornwallis to check his pursuit at Brunswick, even though he was hot on the heels of the retreating Rebels after his capture of Fort Lee near Newark. Once Howe arrived and reassumed command, the British forces pursued the Rebel army until General Washington crossed the Delaware River, taking refuge in Pennsylvania. Satisfied at dislodging the Rebels from New York City and New Jersey, Howe retired to New York and ordered his troops into winter quarters, providing Washington the perfect opportunity to strike back. The winter of 1776-77 provided Cornwallis with his first direct contact with the Loyalists and their sometimes fickle nature.¹⁹

Howe's reasoning for entering New Jersey was twofold: he wanted to pursue Washington's weakened army and establish a string of posts to protect pockets of Loyalist strength. In August 1775, New Jersey's royal governor, William Franklin, assured Lord Dartmouth "there are many friends of government still remaining." These people were scattered across several provinces and unable to organize themselves. New Jersey's inhabitants resented British taxation, but Franklin believed many would "fight to preserve the supremacy of Parliament in other respects and their connexion with Great

Britain.”²⁰ Howe reaffirmed this sentiment in his account of the campaign stating, “My principal object in so great an extension of the cantonments was to afford protection to the inhabitants, that they might experience the difference between his majesty's government, and that to which they were subject from the Rebel leaders.”²¹ Further evidence of the Loyalists’ importance in the New Jersey campaign came from Howe’s order on December 14, 1776, which mandated, “The Commander-in-Chief calls upon the Commanding Officers of Corps” to preserve order and discipline among the troops for “the Protection of the Inhabitants and their Property.”²² Howe wanted his troops to start making American allies and not more Rebel foes.

Clinton cautioned Howe against pursuing a strategy based on widely separated posts because that would expose scattered British forces to Rebel attacks during the winter. Soured by his experience in the South, Clinton also argued there were only a “few friends . . . in the province.” Clinton suggested removing the troops and any professed Loyalists to Staten Island where they would be better protected. He also advocated sending a detachment to the mouth of the Delaware to cut off Washington’s escape.²³

Cornwallis later justified invading New Jersey based on Howe’s belief that the colony abounded with Loyalists. In a 1778 Parliamentary inquiry on the importance of the British occupation of Trenton on December 6, 1776, Cornwallis referred to “the advantage that must naturally arise, from holding so large a Part of the Jerseys—the great Encouragement we met with from the Inhabitants . . . 3 or 400 of whom came in, and took the Oaths every Day, for at least Ten Days.”²⁴ His testimony indicated there were numerous Loyalists who responded to Howe’s proclamation and that the commander-in-

chief was fully justified in occupying New Jersey to aid the many loyal subjects residing there.²⁵ As Howe remembered however, many Loyalists who professed their friendship soon were “taken in arms against us, and others killed with my protections in their pockets.”²⁶ Cornwallis did not comment again on this issue. His previous comment, coupled with the aftermath of the engagements in which he participated in the New Jersey campaign, suggest the earl was well aware that the promise of Loyalist support in New Jersey proved false. For the second time in almost a year, the collapse of Loyalist support contributed to another British withdrawal.

From August to December 1777, Cornwallis participated in Howe’s Philadelphia campaign. During those operations, the British captured Philadelphia in an attempt to lure Washington’s troops into a decisive battle. After Howe’s costly victory at Fort Mercer, New Jersey, on November 20, Cornwallis returned to England to submit his commander’s request for reinforcements to the home government. The earl also wanted to tend to his ailing wife, Jemima. During this time, Parliament conducted its inquiry into the conduct of General Howe after his resignation. George III appointed Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton as commander-in-chief of the American forces. Cornwallis returned to America in the spring of 1778 and commanded the rear guard of the British main force as it withdrew from Philadelphia to New York. While stationed in New York, Cornwallis received notice that his wife’s health was rapidly deteriorating and left for England in November 1778. He resigned his appointment to serve in the colonies before departing for England. Jemima died in February 1779. After several weeks of grieving, Cornwallis prevailed upon the King to let him rejoin the army in America, retaining his previous rank of lieutenant general.²⁷

CHAPTER 4

Americanization and the Fall of Charleston

As Cornwallis marched with General Howe near Philadelphia in the fall of 1777, British Lieutenant General John Burgoyne marched south from Canada toward Albany, New York. After suffering two consecutive defeats near Saratoga, Burgoyne surrendered 7,200 British and Germans to Rebel Major General Horatio Gates on October 17, 1777. Defeat caused the French government to recognize the colonies as an independent nation and entered into a treaty of alliance on February 8, 1778. Upon France's entry into the war, British officials in London assigned the colonies a secondary role in the conflict. British military operations focused more on countering the French around the globe. The Royal Navy, for example, concentrated on protecting British colonial possessions in the Caribbean, namely sugar producing islands. As a result, British regulars were transferred to other areas of the Empire, rather than being available in the American colonies.

British leaders in London proposed a new phase to the colonial war that would reduce the burden carried by their regular army: Americanization. By organizing and arming Loyalists, British regulars in the colonies would be used in combat against the Rebel military rather than pacification duties or manning inland posts. The Loyalist militia would focus on pacifying the colonial interior, which included suppressing the Rebel militia. The British Army would concentrate on defeating the Continental Army in one or more decisive battles. Continuous Loyalist harassment of Rebel supporters coupled with the defeat of the Continental Army would crush the Rebels' will to resist, bringing an end to a costly war. Clinton and Germain decided to implement this new strategy in the southern colonies, where the Loyalists were still reported to be numerous

and overflowing with zeal.²⁸ As historian Jim Piecuch notes, “Rallying the genuine Loyalists and organizing them into a militia was the linchpin of British strategy in the South.”²⁹ As Cornwallis would learn however, the ability to convince, coordinate, and rely on the Loyalists proved much more difficult a task than expected, forcing Cornwallis to adapt to constantly changing circumstances.

By the end of August 1779, Sir Henry Clinton, with Cornwallis again as his second-in-command, decided to launch a more expansive and vigorous campaign to subdue the southern colonies, with Charleston as his center of operations. Secretary Lord Germain’s letter to Clinton on August 5, highlighted the importance of Charleston for the reduction of the southern colonies. According to Germain, if Major General Augustine Prevost found “means to effect the reduction of Charleston ... the province [would] be speedily restored to the King’s obedience.”³⁰ In late June, Prevost launched an unsuccessful attack on Charleston from his headquarters in Savannah, Georgia. Despite Prevost’s failure, sanguine reports on the state of South Carolina and its inhabitants convinced Germain that there were many Loyalists willing to support the Crown. Clinton used the reports from Prevost to justify his new southern strategy, stating that if the British failed to conquer South Carolina, “everything is to be apprehended for Georgia.” The “flattering hopes of assistance from the inhabitants” were encouraging to Clinton, especially since he believed that an earlier conquest of South Carolina would have had a more “serious influence” on securing the southern colonies.³¹

Prevost’s repulse failed to dispirit Clinton, who believed a larger and more concentrated effort on Charleston would prove successful. Clinton hoped to set sail with around 7,000 troops by October. Repeated delays caused by the threat of French attack at

the hand of Vice Admiral Charles Hector, Comte d'Estaing, at Jamaica and then Halifax, Canada, caused Clinton to postpone his departure. After finally receiving information that d'Estaing's fleet had left North American waters, Clinton's troops, escorted by Vice Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot, sailed for Charleston on December 26, 1779.³² Arriving at Savannah a month later, British forces suffered a series of weather-related problems that destroyed several transports, including those carrying horses intended for the cavalry.³³ Clinton called for reinforcements from New York and for most of the British troops stationed in Georgia to join him as he and Cornwallis began planning to besiege Charleston.

The British conducted the Siege of Charleston, which lasted from March 29 to May 12, 1780, in the same manner the French engineer Sebastien le Presetre de Vauban proscribed in the mid- to late-seventeenth century.³⁴ Night raids, cannonades at all hours, and continual harassment characterized their operations.³⁵ Cornwallis was instrumental in securing the northern islands around Charleston through April. His judicious planning and selection of junior officers to perform key missions cut off the Rebel escape route. Clinton, accepting Rebel Major General Benjamin Lincoln's surrender, reaped the glory of capturing the bastion of the southern colonies while Cornwallis eagerly awaited a command of his own.³⁶

At a loss of only seventy-six killed and 189 wounded, Clinton forced Lincoln's surrendered force to capitulate. The British captured 3,371 of 5,466 Rebel troops, 2,571 of whom were Continentals.³⁷ This astounding victory was well received in British circles. It inspired hope of a quick end to the war and provided relief to the many disaffected British supporters. The Town Council of Montrose, England, sent a message

to the king, which also appeared in the *London Gazette* at the end of July. It stated that the council hoped the success at Charleston would “stimulate the well-effected through all the Colonies to unite in Sentiment and Effort your Majesty’s Servants.”³⁸ This accolade demonstrates the significance British officials and the general public attached to the southern campaign, placing immense pressure on Clinton and Cornwallis to succeed militarily and win the hearts and minds of the colonists.

CHAPTER 5

Cornwallis' Independent Command

The British triumph at Charlestown removed the Rebel army in the south and provided the Loyalists with their first favorable opportunity to come forward and offer their services to the Crown. Having established a coastal military base with easy access to the Carolina interior, Clinton and Cornwallis began planning to secure the campaign's next objective: organizing and arming Loyalist militia. While Clinton tended to administrative duties in Charleston, Cornwallis commenced securing the surrounding counties. It was during this time that he first encountered South Carolina Loyalists.

Hessian Captain Johann Ewald, on his way to Ashley Ferry in late May, remarked that "an entire company of loyal inhabitants arrived from the mountains of South Carolina" to request arms and ammunition. Two thousand armed Loyalists "are said to have gathered already, some here, some with Lord Cornwallis."³⁹ Another Hessian officer observed in a letter dated June 4 to Hessian Lord High Chancellor Friedrich Christian Arnold, Baron von Jungkenn, that "more than 2,000 men have come from the country" since Charleston's fall to join the British. He further revealed that the Loyalists had brought their own arms, but most "have sworn allegiance on condition that they will not be compelled to fight against their own countrymen."⁴⁰

On June 8, Clinton sailed back to New York, leaving Cornwallis to command the 8,000 British and Hessian troops that made up Britain's southern army. Cornwallis' goal was "to protect & secure His Majesty's loyal & faithful Subjects and to encourage & Assist them in Arming & opposing the Tyranny & Oppression of the Rebels."⁴¹ One of Clinton's last formal directives before he departed was his June 3 Proclamation, with

which Cornwallis heartedly disagreed. Clinton's proclamation freed from parole those South Carolinians who surrendered themselves to the British, so long as they had not been part of the Rebel army at the time of Lincoln's capitulation. The former parolees would have their rights as citizens restored and could expect to be treated as such. The proclamation required all released from parole to swear allegiance to the British. Those who refused, even if they were not bearing arms against the British, would be considered enemies and suffer the corresponding punishments.⁴² Clinton's proclamation was an attempt to gently reassert British control over South Carolina by portraying the King's forces as the granters and protectors of the inhabitants' citizenship.

Cornwallis, on the other hand, felt that indiscriminate amnesty, especially to known Rebels, would cause more harm to the British cause. Once these individuals returned to their homes, they could freely oppose royal authority through sabotage, refusal to comply with British directives, or even rejoining Rebel military forces. The earl insisted that "we can only place our confidence" in those who join the militia. Parolees who did not join the provincial or militia units should be sent to the prison.⁴³ Cornwallis viewed military service as the most important and perhaps the only tangible sign of loyalty. As the earl expanded his operations throughout the Carolinas, he expressed deeper and deeper frustration with those who refused to serve outright. He also complained that Loyalists who sacrificed their lives on the battlefield did not fight effectively.

While awaiting Clinton's return to New York, Cornwallis, sent emissaries to North Carolina. He instructed the Loyalists there to "remain quiet" until he could arrive and properly support them with British troops. If North Carolinians felt compelled to

organize and take action however, he would support them the best he could, possibly “by incursions of light troops, furnishing ammunition, etc.”⁴⁴ In effect, Cornwallis cautioned the Loyalists to take pause without warning them of negative consequences if they chose otherwise. To both his and their detriment, Cornwallis even pledged to try to support them. In making a promise he might not be able to keep, Cornwallis risked squandering potential Loyalist support before he could finish securing South Carolina.

Before Clinton departed for New York, he appointed Major Patrick Ferguson as Inspector General of the Militia of South Carolina and tasked him with organizing the Loyalists who offered their services.⁴⁵ Along with a fixed term of active service, those citizen-soldiers would be furnished with a written contract and have arms, ammunition and clothing provided when possible. Ferguson would also instruct the recruits to behave in compliance with British military practices and restrain them “from offering violence to innocent and inoffensive people.” Furthermore, men with families would form domestic militia and be charged with maintaining order in their own districts.⁴⁶ Cornwallis peevishly suspended Ferguson from his duties until he received written confirmation from Clinton.⁴⁷ Upon receiving proof of Clinton’s directive, Cornwallis sent Ferguson into the back country to initiate recruitment and organization of the Loyalist militia.

Though Cornwallis claimed he delayed Ferguson due to a lack of communication during his transition of command, the earl’s decision stemmed from his growing feud with Clinton. Tensions between Cornwallis and Clinton surfaced after the Battle of White Plains in October 1776. Following that engagement, Clinton spoke ill of General Howe and his abilities. The earl reported Clinton’s comments to Howe in attempt to gain the commander-in-chief’s favor. Though Franklin and Mary Wickwire claim Clinton and

Cornwallis “smoothed over their disagreement,” it is hard to believe that Sir Henry forgot about the earl’s attempt to smear his reputation.⁴⁸

This friction continued after Clinton obtained the post of commander-in-chief. Cornwallis desperately wanted an independent command, which he believed could only be secured by becoming commander-in-chief. While the earl patiently waited for this opportunity, Clinton continually tried to resign his position as commander-in-chief. The entry of France into the war after the Battle of Saratoga forced the British to divert much of the naval support and 5,000 regular troops to the Caribbean to protect Britain’s rich sugar islands. The lack of troops and the Ministry’s new focus on combating the French outside the thirteen American colonies prompted Clinton to offer his resignation. Upon learning of Clinton’s desire, Cornwallis believed the position he coveted for so long was soon to be his. The Ministry and king however, rejected Clinton’s plea and Sir Henry reluctantly continued to command the British troops in America, much to Cornwallis’ dismay.⁴⁹

In addition to Ferguson’s recruitment efforts, Cornwallis wrote to Clinton outlining his plans for organizing the Loyalist militia into two classes. The first class, consisting of men over forty who owned property, had families, or performed indispensable services, were charged with guarding their districts and enforcing paroles. They were not to be called to serve outside their district, similar to the domestic militia Ferguson was instructed to organize. Younger men comprised the second class. These men would serve six-month terms and could be utilized throughout the Carolinas and Georgia. Through this strategy, Cornwallis placed great importance on the Loyalists, especially those not actively serving in the army, by trusting the maintenance of royal

authority in the localities to them. By releasing soldiers to fight in the field rather than undertake police duties, Cornwallis would be free to pursue and engage the Rebel army, the other objective of the southern campaign. His desires turned out to be more difficult to attain than expected, especially when some Loyalists refused to wait for the earl's help.⁵⁰

In the months following Lincoln's surrender, prominent Loyalist Colonel Ambrose Mills of Tyron County, North Carolina, assembled some men and marched to join other Loyalists gathering at Fair Forest Creek near Spartanburg, South Carolina.⁵¹ Two weeks after Cornwallis dispatched Major Ferguson, the earl wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Innes, commander of the South Carolina Royalists, that Colonel Mills has been "premature in his rising." In keeping with the directives he sent to North Carolina in June, Cornwallis advised Innes to "let him act," but also to send "some tolerable officer with him, to insist positively on his acting only on the defensive." "Should he act on the offensively," he would cause many more Loyalists to hastily expose themselves, "and ruin all [their] plans for the reduction of North Carolina."⁵² No formal effort was made to halt Mills' zealous rising.

A few days after Cornwallis wrote Innes, roughly 1,300 North Carolina Loyalists under Lieutenant Colonel John Moore, assembled at Ramsour's Mill. This large gathering in the central part of the colony prompted Rebel Brigadier General Griffin Rutherford, commander of the North Carolina militia, to assemble 800 eager militiamen. Colonel Francis Locke, another Rebel leader, mobilized 400 more militiamen. Without waiting for Rutherford's force, Locke launched a surprise attack, charging with his mounted men. Although a quarter of Moore's Loyalist militia lacked firearms, they

repulsed the impetuous Locke. The Rebels rallied, and deadly hand-to-hand combat ensued with casualties amounting to 150 on each side. The Loyalists scattered and Moore arrived at Lieutenant Colonel Francis, Lord Rawdon's post at Camden, South Carolina, with only thirty men.⁵³

Cornwallis wrote to Clinton of Moore's defeat on June 30, claiming the Loyalist commander defied his orders. In another letter to Lord Rawdon a day earlier, Cornwallis angrily asserted "the folly and imprudence of our friends are unpardonable." The earl also threatened to consign Lieutenant Colonel John Hamilton's Royal North Carolina Regiment to garrison duty on Sullivan's Island if he heard "any more instances of irregularity about recruiting, or disobedience of orders."⁵⁴ Cornwallis' protégé, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, wrote in his account of the southern campaign that Moore's defeat "encouraged a spirit of persecution" and forced Colonel Samuel Bryan, who "promised to wait for orders," to take his 800 Loyalist followers from the Yadkin Valley in North Carolina to "the nearest British post."⁵⁵ Cornwallis was deeply troubled by the premature rising of the Loyalists, but resolved nonetheless to provide effectual means to assure their safety and facilitate their service to the Crown.

CHAPTER 6

Logistics and the Loyalists

Any military officer charged with leading an army has many logistical problems to solve in order to ensure a high level of efficiency. Cornwallis was no exception. Supplies, such as arms, food, and clothing, are crucial for the proper function of any army. Cornwallis not only had to provide these items for his own troops, but also for many Loyalists who flocked to the royal standard in the months following Charleston's conquest. Though Cornwallis had access to the Royal Navy for supplies, his supply lines strained and became susceptible to Rebel attack whenever he plunged further north and west into the interior. As a result, Cornwallis needed to gather supplies from Loyalists and Rebels alike in the areas surrounding his operations. Some inhabitants willingly offered supplies to the British army while others resisted, resulting in the use of force to procure necessities.

As the campaign progressed, the earl entrusted the procurement of supplies to Loyalist militia foraging parties.⁵⁶ This contrasted with the start of the earl's Southern command, when he relegated this task to regular troops who tended to use force to acquire provisions, especially beef. A rising chorus of complaints over cattle theft by British forces prompted Cornwallis to issue a proclamation on July 18, 1780. In it, he referred to the thieves as "licentious and evil-disposed persons" and promised that those caught stealing would "make recompence and satisfaction" to the owners. Additionally, Cornwallis promised the perpetrators would be punished "in a manner that an offense of so great enormity and evil example doth deserve."⁵⁷ From Cornwallis' language, it is evident that he was deeply disturbed by the thefts, most likely because such licentious

behavior by his troops risked alienating potential supporters. A primary goal for Cornwallis in the southern colonies was to protect the Loyalists. If he was unable to prevent his own troops from raiding the inhabitants, how could the citizenry trust him to protect them from Rebel attacks?

Cornwallis was also aware of the need to provide his army with beef. To ensure compliance with his proclamation and feed his troops, the earl authorized only the militia field officers in each district to impress cattle. He did not however, specifically authorize any compensation for what those officers impressed. The earl hoped that by using Loyalists to procure the cattle, the inhabitants would be more willing to offer the needed supplies to persons from their own localities. In addition, he hoped that the Loyalist militia would treat their friends and neighbors with more civility than the Redcoats. Through this proclamation, Cornwallis demonstrated his commitment to the protection and security of South Carolina's people. In essence, he also put that responsibility on the militia officers, who were predominately highly regarded Loyalists.⁵⁸

Cornwallis' efforts resulted in limited success. James Kelley, a Loyalist from Ninety-Six, drove in his cattle to the British when their army arrived in the district.⁵⁹ John Rose, who owned plantations in the parishes surrounding Charleston, continually provided the British Army with cattle, horses, and other provisions, but was only partially paid for his receipts.⁶⁰ John Deas filed a large claim with the American Loyalist Claims Commission after the war, stating the British constantly raided his plantations and refused to issue receipts for provisions, including cattle.⁶¹ Sarah Boyd and Peter Vandevier from North Carolina also filed claims for cattle stolen by the British Army, yet their claims were never approved.⁶² Despite instances of British failures to compensate

Loyalists, some Loyalists provided other amenities crucial for any army's survival. For example, Robert Williams, Sr., of Charleston provided the army with timber and firewood, essential for surviving the winter months.⁶³ The duties performed by Loyalists were not limited to strictly supplying the army.

Loyalists not only contributed supplies, but also took on additional responsibilities necessary to ensure the proper function of the army. Leonard Askew of Charleston was employed as a cattle driver, yet despite his continued loyalty, the army took five horses from him in August 1780.⁶⁴ Richard Fortune of the Camden district served as a wagon master for several months in 1780, sacrificing his life to impress wagons and horses in enemy territory.⁶⁵ After joining the militia at Savannah and fending off a Rebel attack, Thomas Creighton joined the British army at Charleston and served as a baker for the duration of the war.⁶⁶ Though some Loyalists opted to provide supplies to the British in return for protection from their Rebel counterparts, those that chose the ultimate sacrifice relied on Cornwallis to properly provision them.

Cornwallis' most challenging logistical concern was arming the many Loyalists who offered their military service, not only after the fall of Charleston, but also during his venture into North Carolina. Arms were in short supply throughout the conflict, evinced by the fact that approximately a quarter of Moore's men were unarmed. Before Cornwallis took command in the South, two uncontrollable events significantly hampered his ability to provide both his troops and Loyalists with functioning weapons. According to Hessian Captain Johann Hinrichs, some muskets surrendered by the Rebels after Charleston were still loaded, and when one of them was thrown into the pile of arms, it discharged and ignited a powder magazine causing a massive explosion. That accident

destroyed large quantities of military supplies, including 2,000 to 3,000 muskets, an undisclosed number of rifles, and many other important items. Hinrichs claimed those guns “were intended to arm the back-country people, all of whom are Loyalists, or at least pretend to be.” He also noted that the *Russia Merchant*, a merchant ship, sank on route to the colonies carrying 4,000 muskets, which he described as “an especially hard blow.”⁶⁷ Cornwallis failed to adequately solve his logistical problems, especially weapons, which prevented the Loyalist militia from training and participating in field operations. As the campaign wore on, continual Loyalist defeats and relentless Rebel harassment convinced the earl to abandon the Carolinas.

CHAPTER 7

The Summer of 1780

The reduction of Charleston and the surrender of the Southern Rebel army afforded Cornwallis the opportunity to concentrate on pacifying the Carolina interior. As Major Patrick Ferguson roamed the backcountry recruiting many Loyalists, Cornwallis began securing the area immediately surrounding Charleston. In order to expedite the process, the earl ordered Loyalist militia officers to recruit men, usually in corps of 500. Promising William Harrison the rank of major, Cornwallis ordered him to raise a corps of 500 men between the Wateree and Pedee districts. The earl wrote to Clinton confident of Harrison's success.⁶⁸ Colonel Samuel Bryan, who fought at Moore's Creek Bridge in 1776, raised a force of 810 men by July 1780, 111 of whom were recruited by Andrew Hamm.⁶⁹ Lauchlin McKinnon, having served three years imprisonment after Moore's Creek Bridge, recruited a company of Loyalists at his own expense after the fall of Charleston.⁷⁰ The positive results achieved by these and other Loyalist pleased the earl and provided an early step toward Americanizing the war.

Cornwallis predicted his militia would number 8,000 by the end of August 1780. Loyalist troops already stationed at Orangeburg and Ninety-Six rendered the upper part of Georgia secure according to Cornwallis.⁷¹ By mid-July, he received reports of Loyalists assembling at Georgetown, South Carolina. In response, Cornwallis instructed Major James Wemyss to provide them with ammunition and directed him to inform Captain John Gaillard of the "critical situation of Georgetown" and "the great importance of getting our Friends there to enter heartily into the Militia."⁷² Cornwallis' attempts at

Americanizing the war met with initial success, but when the Loyalist militia confronted their counterparts on the battlefield, the results were less than encouraging.

Upon hearing of Rebel militia assembling at Cedar Springs, Major Ferguson dispatched 150 Loyalist militia to prevent the Rebels from joining the partisan leader, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Sumter. Jane Thomas, the mother of a Rebel officer, Colonel John Thomas, overheard some Tory women discussing the surprise attack on the Rebel militia. She rode to Cedar Springs and arrived in time that night to warn her son. Prepared for the Loyalist attack, Colonel Thomas kept the campfires going throughout the night to entice his foes to strike. While the Loyalist militia approached, Thomas led his men into the woods surrounding the camp. When the Loyalists charged, the Rebel militia opened fire from both sides of the woods, killing approximately thirty and suffering about the same.⁷³ On the same day, Captain Christian Huck of the British Legion, a Loyalist regular unit composed of infantry and cavalry, suffered an overwhelming defeat at the hands of another band of Rebel militia. Huck, along with 115 men, sixty of whom were Loyalist militia, looted two Rebel officers' houses and took the son of Rebel Captain John McClure prisoner. Upon learning of Huck's ruthless actions, McClure and Colonel William Bratton assembled 250 men on the way to James Williamson's plantation, where Huck was encamped. Surprising the Loyalists at dawn, they inflicted severe casualties, killing Huck and thirty-four others, wounding twenty-nine, and capturing many more.⁷⁴

The Rebel militia had soundly defeated a part of the feared British Legion, which caused many cautious Rebel sympathizers to flock to Colonel Sumter.⁷⁵ Cornwallis even wrote that "Huck's defeat [encouraged] the enemy," making it more difficult to establish

any semblance of British control in the Carolina backcountry.⁷⁶ The Loyalists were particularly distraught after the engagement. A former Rebel militia officer, John Lisle, who had joined the Loyalist militia after his parole, turned his coat in a spectacular fashion. He led an entire Loyalist regiment to join a Rebel officer operating with Sumter, carrying away the new arms and supplies his unit had received from the British.⁷⁷ Lisle's treachery compounded the Loyalists' distress, lowered their moral, and placed Cornwallis in an increasingly precarious situation as the summer progressed.

Early attempts by Loyalists to seize control through military means highlight some important problems Cornwallis failed to resolve throughout the Southern campaign. The most crucial was the inability of the Loyalist militia to best Rebel partisan forces, even when the Loyalists enjoyed numerical supremacy. Some of the first Loyalist combats in the south, such as Moore's Creek Bridge, resulted in defeat at the hands of smaller Rebel forces. Loyalist defeats not only demoralized other Tories from joining the fight, but also provided Rebels with propaganda to swell their ranks. It is through this tactic that the new commander of the Continental Department of the South, Major General Horatio Gates, was able to amass a large enough force to confront Cornwallis in open battle.

After receiving news of poor Loyalist performances, Cornwallis resolved to make better use of the Loyalist militia by training its members. During the first week of August, the earl authorized Lieutenant Colonel Robert Cunningham, a prominent Loyalist from South Carolina, to raise a corps of 500 men. Cornwallis instructed Cunningham to march his recruits to Ninety-Six. Once there, Lieutenant Colonel John Cruger of Major General Oliver DeLancey's New York Volunteers, a seasoned Provincial unit raised in

New York in 1776, was to “give him all possible Assistance towards forming them, and teaching both Officers & Men the common Rules & Discipline of the Army.”⁷⁸

Provincial units were very similar to regular units, usually recruited and command by officers in the British army and could be sent anywhere to serve. Loyalist militia units, however, were made up of part-time citizen soldiers, mainly used for home defense.

Provincial units were highly valued over militia units, especially by British officers.

Lieutenant Colonel Innes of the South Carolina Loyalists inspector general of provincials said, “I look upon it that every man intitled to serve in a provincial cops during the war is a useful soldier gain’d to the King’s Service and I am well convinced the Militia on their present plan will ever prove a useless, disorderly, destructive banditti.”⁷⁹ Training was only one part of the earl’s attempt to transform the Loyalist militia into an effective component of his army.

Officer quality among Loyalist militia posed a key problem that inhibited unit effectiveness, on and off the battlefield. Cornwallis recognized a change in the leadership of the militia units, coupled with instructional reform, was essential to improving their quality. He instructed Captain Frederick De Peyster of the Royal New York Volunteers to “make something of the militia under Major [Samuel] Tynes” by “regulating the few honest Militia” under capable officers while “disarming the rest in the most rigid manner.”⁸⁰ In the same letter, Cornwallis wrote that Captain John Moore, a local militia officer, could not be trusted because of his friendship with a family that openly supported the Rebellion and. Though Cornwallis considered a Captain Bromfield an “active and well-effected Man,” he was “more intent on private plunder than the King’s service,” alienating potential supporters and possibly driving others to the Rebel

cause. To resolve the officer dilemma under Major Tynes, Cornwallis suggested organizing the men under Colonel Ambrose Mills, operating in the Cheraws.⁸¹

Inherent in this philosophy was the inability of Cornwallis to recognize the struggle for the South as a civil war that did not adhere to the formalities associated with armed conflict on the European Continent. Small confrontations away from open fields and the use of guerrilla tactics were the most effective ways to secure the Carolina interior. By suppressing small Rebel groups with Loyalist militia forces, Cornwallis could have prevented further aid from reaching either the roaming Rebel partisan bands or any Continental forces that might enter the state. Cornwallis never adopted a widespread training program and also failed to remain in any one area long enough for training to produce effective results.

Major General Gates, the hero of Saratoga, formed a new Continental army composed mainly of militia and marched against Cornwallis in August. The approach of Gates' troops toward Camden, South Carolina, encouraged the Rebel militia to increase their attacks and harassment of the British, especially supply lines between Charleston and Camden. British Major Archibald McArthur of the 71st Regiment, commonly referred to as Fraser's Highlanders, ordered Colonel Ambrose Mills, a Loyalist militia officer, to escort 100 sick soldiers from Camden to Georgetown. En route, his party came under attack by Rebel partisans. During that engagement, some of the Loyalist militia mutinied. The mutineers captured Mills, along with two other Loyalist militia colonels, James Cassells and Robert Grey. The Rebels took the officers and ill soldiers as prisoners into North Carolina. Colonel Mills however, escaped to Georgetown where he resigned his command.⁸²

Despite these setbacks, the earl remained confident in his army's ability to defeat Gates' force in battle. Cornwallis' smaller army of 2,239 men consisted of British regulars and Provincials. Gates' force of 3,052, on the other hand, contained less than a thousand Continentals. On August 16 at Camden the British approached the Rebel lines and fired a few volleys. Adhering to traditional tactics, the British charged with bayonets, stampeding the militia into a wholesale retreat. Eight hundred Continentals remained to oppose Cornwallis' army and counterattacked against Lord Rawdon's wing, nearly breaking the British line.⁸³ At the same time, Cornwallis dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and the cavalry of his British Legion to strike the rear of the Continental line. The Rebel army collapsed and Gates, along with a few of his bodyguards, barely escaped.⁸⁴ Cornwallis later lamented to Lord Germain that the Loyalists living north of Camden allowed Gates to escape to Hillsboro. Though frustrated, the earl received the "strongest assurances of support" once the British military entered the interior of North Carolina.⁸⁵

CHAPTER 8

The Push into North Carolina

From May to August, the British soundly defeated two Rebel armies, yet failed to silence the roaming bands of Rebel militia in the countryside. The ineffectiveness of the Loyalist militia prompted Cornwallis to enact reforms to address the Loyalists' poor performance. He also relied on Major Ferguson to organize Loyalists in the Carolina backcountry in order to prevent further Rebels from joining the militia. Two days after Cornwallis' victory at Camden 200 Rebel militia routed 500 Loyalist militia and British regulars under Lieutenant Colonel Innes on their way to join Ferguson.⁸⁶ Uncertain of Ferguson and the Loyalists, Cornwallis lamented to Clinton that the Loyalist militia's "want of Subordination and Confidence in themselves [would] make a considerable regular Force always necessary for the defence" of South Carolina as long as North Carolina remained unsecure.⁸⁷ Cornwallis believed that by moving into North Carolina, the Loyalist militia would "be kept in high spirits and together by the appearance of offensive operations."⁸⁸ Therefore, Cornwallis resolved to use the Loyalists more comprehensibly as he marched into North Carolina.

By the end of August, Loyalists in North Carolina expressed enthusiasm to join Cornwallis. In a letter to Clinton, Cornwallis stated that he "received the strongest profession of friendship from North Carolina," but the Loyalists were unwilling to show themselves "until they [saw the] army in motion." Cornwallis was eager to join them, but illness among his troops forced him to remain at Camden. Sickness was such a problem that he remarked "the recoveries" were "nearly keeping pace with the falling down." As a result, Cornwallis placed much importance on Clinton's promise of a diversion to the

Chesapeake. Yet, if “any unforeseen cause should make it impossible,” Clinton should send reinforcements to the Carolinas.⁸⁹

Clinton was averse to jeopardizing the safety of New York City by reducing its strength, which forced Cornwallis to utilize Loyalist militia in different ways. The earl ordered Lieutenant Colonel Nesbit Balfour to place the Orangeburg militia between Camden and Nelson’s Ferry, over sixty miles south on the Santee River. Cornwallis ordered the militia to “protect everything that [went] down by water,” thus ensuring a secure supply line for his army to move into North Carolina.⁹⁰ He also hoped to raise enough Highland troops from Bladin, Cumberland, and Anson counties across the North Carolina boarder. The earl believed they would “awe the Country from Cheraws to Georgetown,” rendering the northeastern part of South Carolina secure.⁹¹ Despite the earl’s optimism, Robert Cunningham’s attempt at recruiting 500 men was only partially successful. Cornwallis determined that Cunningham should take the recruits he had gathered and return to Ninety-Six because, if Cunningham continued wasting time, his efforts would “entirely ruin the militia at 96.” If additional militiamen were needed in the future however, Cunningham would “undoubtedly stand first” to organize them.⁹²

As Cornwallis planned to invade North Carolina, he also issued a proclamation from Waxhaws, South Carolina. He hoped to alleviate the fears of many South Carolina Loyalists, especially since Loyalist militia units failed to protect them from roving Rebel partisan bands. The earl claimed full responsibility for their protection and stated it was his incumbent duty “to take all due precaution to secure the tranquility” of the King’s government as well as the “peace and liberties of his [King’s] faithful and loyal subjects.”

Cornwallis also promised to “prevent the wicked designs” of all Rebels “from taking effect.”⁹³

In order to protect the Loyalists, Cornwallis ordered the estates of Rebels and their collaborators sequestered. The names of confiscated estates and properties were printed in three successive newspaper editions to expose the Rebel sympathizers. Upon confiscation, a commissioner on duty must use two regular army officers or militia officers as witnesses in order to legitimize the seizure. The use of militia as witnesses constituted an effort by Cornwallis to utilize Loyalists in more non-military capacities, freeing more regular troops to participate in combat operations. Cornwallis appointed a prominent Loyalist, civilian John Cruden, as Commissioner of Estates and promised to “liberally” reward those who provided Cruden with any information regarding the theft or concealment of Rebel persons and property.⁹⁴ Cornwallis’ proclamation was just a collection of useless words unless he could secure the safety and loyalty of the inhabitants of the the Carolinas.

The misfortunes of earlier Loyalist mishaps required Cornwallis to undergo a more rigorous recruiting and reorganization campaign. Once Loyalist units were purged of potential Rebel sympathizers, they could be used to secure the earl’s rear as he marched to the aid of the North Carolina Loyalists. An informant reported that several men in Colonel Nicholas Lechmere’s Beaufort militia declared to him that “they would join the Rebels whenever it was in their Power.”⁹⁵ Cornwallis did not mention problems in Lechmere’s militia again. Five days later, he informed Lieutenant Colonel George Campbell, commandant of Georgetown that Tarleton’s second-in-command, Major George Hanger, needed to discretely disarm some questionable men in Colonel Mathew

Floyd's militia. The disarmed men "must be put on parole" and if any serviceable arms were collected and refused by Tarleton, Cornwallis wanted them sent to Waxhaws where he was stationed.⁹⁶

Roaming Rebel militia under the command of Colonels Thomas Sumter, Elijah Clarke, Issac Shelby and James Williams, as well as Lieutenant Colonel Francis Marion, continuously harassed the British. Their efforts forced Cornwallis to delay his operations in North Carolina as well as induced a state of fear among many potential British supporters. As a result, Cornwallis expanded his recruiting efforts. In a letter to Major Wemyss at Cheraw Hill, Cornwallis deemed it necessary to raise some militia in the surrounding area to regain the frontier. He instructed Wemyss to return to Camden with the Sixty-Third Regiment of Foot and Hamilton's militia, but to leave William Harrison in charge of the militia in the Cheraw region. Cornwallis also instructed Wemyss to mount fifty men from Lieutenant Colonel Innes' corps to assist Hamilton in the recruiting effort. Cornwallis despondently added that "100, or even fifty men would be helpful."⁹⁷

Cornwallis' pessimism was matched with determination. Despite Colonel Mills and Major Wemyss' failure to recruit Loyalists around Cheraw in their first attempt, Cornwallis ordered them to persist. "It is absolutely necessary," Cornwallis wrote "that we should leave no means untried to establish some force in that Country to keep the Balance if possible." Despite repeated failures, Colonel James Moncrief eventually recruited a corps of Loyalist militia in Georgetown and placed them under the command of Colonel James Cassells.⁹⁸ Remembering the loyal militia's poor combat performance, Cornwallis expressed fear that Colonel Cassells' unit, along with the militia under Colonel Elias Ball and Lieutenant Colonel John Wigfall, would "meet with some serious

disaster which [would] be exceedingly prejudicial” to British operations. He hoped that by dispatching thirty of Lieutenant Colonel George Turnbull’s New York Volunteers and some of William Harrison’s “best Militia” to Major Thomas Fraser near Ninety-Six, they would strengthen the post enough to withstand an attack. The earl ordered them to undertake offensive operations only when “it [was] advantageous.”⁹⁹

After initiating basic reforms in the training of the Loyalists, conducting a more widespread recruiting effort, and strengthening frontier posts, Cornwallis focused his attention on North Carolina. According to the earl, “*The Object of marching into North Carolina is only to raise men [his emphasis].*” The reports he received pledged there would be a “*considerable amount*” of eager Loyalists. Cornwallis’ destination was Salisbury and once there, he planned to “*invite all loyalists of the Neighbouring Countys to return to our standard,*” form them into Provincial Corps, and provide them with clothes and arms when possible. Major Patrick Ferguson and his force of militia were crucial in Cornwallis’ plan. As the earl’s army moved north, Ferguson’s troops would pacify the Carolina interior by preventing any Rebel supporters from crossing the mountains and joining Rebel partisan groups. Ferguson’s men would secure Cornwallis’ left flank from Rebel attack while also encouraging the support of any Loyalists they found.¹⁰⁰ On the same date that Cornwallis wrote of his objectives to Major Wemyss however, disaster struck Ferguson and the British pacification effort.

CHAPTER 9

King's Mountain

On the South Carolina frontier, Ferguson's recruiting efforts met with great success. September marked a high point for Ferguson as he gained numerous recruits. According to historian Robert Lambert, Ferguson's "September campaign" had three objectives. First, Ferguson planned to disperse the Rebel militia commanded by Colonel Charles McDowell. Second, he planned to prevent McDowell and Colonel Clarke from combining forces and threatening the crucial British post at Ninety-Six, a rallying point for backcountry Loyalists. Lastly, Ferguson hoped to provide his recruits with the field experience necessary to toughen their resolve and perfect their military skills.¹⁰¹

Ferguson's force at this time numbered about 500 militia and 100 Provincials. On September 11, he routed a Rebel force of 220 and continued to Gilbert Town, North Carolina. When he arrived on September 23, two hundred men offered Ferguson their military services. After Ferguson issued a proclamation a few days later, 500 more people took the oath of allegiance to the British crown and his force swelled to nearly 1,100 armed men. In response to Ferguson's rapid success, numerous Rebel militia, numbering upwards of 1,300 men, assembled to check his advance.¹⁰²

Between September 12 and 18, Rebel Colonel Clarke conducted a siege of a post the British recently captured at Garden Hill near Augusta, Georgia. The threat of British reinforcements from Ninety-Six under Lieutenant Colonel Cruger forced Clarke to retreat after suffering sixty casualties at the hands of Colonel Thomas Brown's King's Rangers, a Loyalist unit created during the early stages of the Revolution. Despite Clarke's repulse, about 300 Rebels joined him on his retreat. Cruger developed a plan to cut off

Clarke's retreat and wrote to Ferguson requesting his assistance, to which the major agreed. Setting out from Gilbert Town, Ferguson was unaware that Cruger ultimately decided that pursuing Clarke would jeopardize Ninety-Six and never dispatched any troops. As a result, more than 900 determined Rebel militia, with 400 men nearby, surrounded Ferguson at King's Mountain, miles away from any effectual British support.¹⁰³

Ferguson chose King's Mountain for its advantageous terrain. Rising sixty feet above the countryside and stretching 600 yards in length, the plateau was clear of trees and undergrowth, making it a suitable defensive position. Despite Ferguson's tactical advantage, he did not order his troops to construct redoubts or breastworks to use as cover. As a result, Ferguson's troops were exposed on all sides. Though holding the high ground is usually advantageous in battle, Ferguson's men tended to fire high at targets downhill. James Collins, a Rebel participant in the battle remarked, "Their great elevation above us [provided] their ruin: they overshot us altogether, scarce touching a man, except those on horseback, while every rifle from below seemd to have the desired effect."¹⁰⁴ The Rebel militia attacked Ferguson by alternating the direction of their attack, allowing the Loyalists little time to reorganize after each repulse. Overwhelmed, the British eventually surrendered after suffering 157 killed (including Ferguson), 163 severely wounded, and nearly 700 taken prisoner. Along with the destruction of Ferguson's force, the Rebels captured approximately 1,500 muskets, yet suffered only twenty-eight killed and sixty-two wounded.¹⁰⁵

Major Ferguson's defeat had severe repercussions for British pacification efforts. Loyalists became discouraged and failed to support the British, even when the army was

present. Sir Henry Clinton, reflecting of Ferguson's defeat, was convinced that it "unhappily proved the first link in a chain of evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America."¹⁰⁶ Another officer lamented that Ferguson's defeat "produced very bad consequence," convincing him that "England never had, or will ever have, A Single Friend in this Country."¹⁰⁷ The loss of Ferguson's troops was not the only indication that the British pacification effort failed to achieve proper results.

Lord Rawdon, who took over command when Cornwallis fell ill at the end of October, wrote a letter to Clinton that evaluated the British experience in the southern colonies up to that point. According to Rawdon, Loyalists were outspoken when the British military was distant, but failed to act on their promises once the British army moved to their aide. Rawdon noted to Clinton that when Cornwallis arrived at Camden, "repeated messages were sent to head-quarters by the friends of Government in North Carolina, expressing their impatience to rise and join the King's standard." When Gates' army marched against Cornwallis however, "no information whatsoever of its movements was conveyed to us," even by the North Carolina Loyalists.¹⁰⁸

After Cornwallis dispersed the Rebel army, he issued a proclamation inviting supposedly eager Loyalists to join him, but "not a single man . . . attempted to improve the favorable moment." When the British moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, to gather supplies and plan a further advance into the state, the Loyalists "did not even furnish us with the least information respecting the force collecting against us." Though Rawdon believed that there were many people in North Carolina friendly to the British cause,

“they [had] not given evidence enough— either of their numbers or of their activity—to justify the stake of [South Carolina].”¹⁰⁹

Lord Rawdon confided to Clinton that Ferguson’s defeat “so dispirited this part of the country.” “The loyal subjects were so wearied by the long continuance of the campaign” that Loyalists around Ninety-Six were “determined to submit as soon as the Rebels should enter it.”¹¹⁰ The loss at King’s Mountain and the disparaging impact on Loyalist morale sparked a surge in Rebel partisan activity. Rebel partisans under Francis Marion overtook Georgetown and “the whole country east of the Santee gave such proofs of general defection” that the militia of High Hills “could not be prevailed to join a party of troops.”¹¹¹ After Cornwallis regained his health, he dispatched the British Legion under Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton to pursue Marion near Georgetown.

Tarleton’s pursuit successfully suppressed Marion’s operations and brought security to the Loyalists and the post of Ninety-Six. According to Tarleton’s account, the Loyalist militia “flocked” to him and the appearance of his troops ‘had checked a revolt, which would in a few days have become general.” After encouraging the “dispirited Loyalists,” Tarleton rode toward Ninety-Six to disperse Colonel Sumter’s militia.¹¹² Marion attempted to capitalize on Tarleton’s departure by attacking Georgetown, but the arrival of 200 Loyalist militia under Captains Jesse Barefield and James Lewis forced Marion to retreat after a brief skirmish.¹¹³ Meanwhile, on November 20, Tarleton and 270 cavalry and infantry of the British Legion caught up with Sumter’s force, numbering around 1,000, and engaged it at Blackstock’s Farm. Tarleton claimed victory and numbered Rebel casualties at nearly 100. In reality, his force had been badly mauled. At a cost of ninety-two killed and seventy-six wounded, Tarleton inflicted only seven

casualties on Sumter's men. For two days after the battle, Tarleton harassed Sumter's partisans, capturing fifty and gathering British stragglers from other skirmishes in the surrounding area. Though Tarleton lost many men, he succeeded in protecting the Loyalists at Ninety-Six from Sumter's force and returned to the main army at the end of November.¹¹⁴

CHAPTER 10

Objectives in Question

Cornwallis' use of Tarleton to halt Marion's exploits highlights the most substantial consequence of Ferguson's defeat. During the months after the British captured Charleston, Loyalists, including Ferguson's men, provided a buffer against Rebel partisans and adequately manned interior posts without the need for excess regular troops. This allowed Cornwallis to utilize his regular forces to seize populated settlements during his march north as well as engage the new Continental army under Gates. Ferguson's disaster however, forced the earl to use regular troops more frequently to combat Rebel partisans and retain British posts scattered across the Carolinas. As a result, the number of effectives in his army continued to dwindle due to casualties and sickness. Americanization of the war slowly became less of a concern for Cornwallis as he had to substitute Redcoats for his dwindling force of Loyalist militia. Reinforcements became necessary for Cornwallis to ensure the Americanization of the war in the southern colonies. Only the presence of more British and German regulars would make the Loyalists feel safe enough to join the earl's militia. This need for more regulars forced Cornwallis to commandeer troops Sir Henry Clinton sent to the Chesapeake. A shift in objectives, from rallying and organizing Loyalists to protecting the gains the British had achieved in the South, eventually led Cornwallis to abandon the Loyalists in favor of offensive operations in Virginia.

Despite the painful setback of Ferguson's defeat, Cornwallis initially made a concerted effort to attend to the needs of the Loyalists. In early November, he instructed Lieutenant-Colonel Balfour, the Charleston commandant, to give three months' back pay

to the militia stationed at Ninety-Six who served with Ferguson. “I foresee that [back pay] will drain us into great Expense,” Cornwallis noted, but “should the militia of this County absolutely refuse to serve, the Consequences would indeed be fatal.” In addition to that money, Cornwallis attempted to solidify the militia’s morale by granting a promotion to brigadier general to Robert Cunningham, “who by all accounts is the most popular Man amongst them.”¹¹⁵ Later that same month, Cornwallis again wrote to Balfour regarding the Loyalists. The earl felt that it was “absolutely necessary” to issue “payment of receipts given for forage, cattle, etc., and to friends and people living under our protection.” If the British failed to live up to their promises, their “reputation and credit” would be “totally lost.”¹¹⁶

During the ensuing months Cornwallis expressed deeper frustration with the Loyalists. In reaction to Colonel Moses Kirkwood’s account of militia troubles around Ninety-Six, Cornwallis remarked “the supineness and pusillanimity of our militia . . . takes off all my compassion for their sufferings.” The earl hoped that Kirkwood exaggerated the militia’s “demerits,” but if the Loyalists continued to allow themselves to be “plundered” and “ruined” by small bands of Rebel partisans, “there [was] no possibility of [his] protecting them.”¹¹⁷ As Cornwallis criticized the South Carolina Loyalists, Sir Henry Clinton dispatched 2,000 Redcoats under Major General Alexander Leslie to the Chesapeake. The earl hoped that Clinton would allow him to use Leslie’s troops for operations in North Carolina. In a letter to Leslie, Cornwallis expressed his enthusiasm for their joining forces to “give our friends in North Carolina a fair trial.” If the North Carolina Loyalists “behave like men,” Cornwallis wrote, “it may be of the greatest advantage to the affairs of Britain.” However, if they turned out to be “dastardly

and pusillanimous” like those in South Carolina, “we must leave them to their fate and secure what we have got.”¹¹⁸ The earl still had faith that when “armed, entrenched, not outnumbered, and within ten miles of solid support from a regular army,” Loyalists could take care of themselves.¹¹⁹

In the span of just over a month, the South Carolina Loyalists deflated any hopes Cornwallis still harbored. The cunning Rebel cavalry commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Washington, embarrassed the Loyalists twice, enraging the earl. On November 28, Washington led 100 troops to dislodge Colonel Henry Rugeley from a blockhouse he had recently constructed. Before engaging Rugeley’s 100 Loyalists, Washington’s men constructed a fake cannon out of wood. Washington’s “Trojan Horse” enticed Rugeley to surrender without firing a shot.¹²⁰ A month later, Colonel Francis Waters began raiding Rebel settlements near the South Carolina mountains with 250 men. Rebel Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, having recently arrived in the south, dispatched Washington with 280 men to neutralize Waters. On December 30, Washington’s men descended on the unsuspecting Loyalists. The Loyalists fled in every direction, some dropping their weapons. Washington’s force killed and wounded 150 Loyalists and captured forty more without suffering any casualties.¹²¹

The devastation wreaked by Washington filled Cornwallis with intense rage. As news of Loyalist defeats reached Cornwallis, he fumed “The remissness and constant misfortune of our Militia are very provoking.”¹²² The earl understood that he could not protect every Loyalist all of the time, but “when [he saw] a whole settlement running away from twenty or thirty robbers,” he believed such cowards should be robbed.¹²³ By the end of December, “Cornwallis had come to expect little from the militia,” noted

Franklin and Mary Wickwire.¹²⁴ The earl even went so far as to suggest that the Loyalists of South Carolina were actually no longer needed for his operations. “I am convinced that it is throwing away good Arms,” by providing the Loyalists with French firelock. Even worse, Loyalist defections placed those weapons in the hands of the Rebels.¹²⁵ Cornwallis’ comment seems to indicate his failure to appreciate the services performed by the Loyalists. Disgusted by Loyalist defeats and frequent flights with offering the Rebels any resistance, the earl decided to leave South Carolina during the winter of 1780-1781.

Despite Cornwallis’ ebbing faith in the Loyalists, the King’s faithful American subjects continued to aid the British army. As Cornwallis marched his troops into winter quarters at Winnsboro, South Carolina, Loyalists provided indispensable services to ensure the army arrived intact. According to Charles Stedman, whom the earl appointed Commissary of Captures, the British “could not have proceeded but for the personal exertions of the militia, who rendered the most important services.” One important function the Loyalists performed was foraging, as previously noted, which sometimes brought them into contact with Rebel partisans “with no inconsiderable loss.”¹²⁶ When the horses pulling supply wagons suffered exhaustion, Stedman reported that “the militia unhitched the horses . . . and got into the harnesses themselves.”¹²⁷ “In return for these exertions,” Stedman lamented, “the militia were maltreated, by abusive language, and even beaten by some officers in the quartermaster-general’s department.” In response to the abuse, some militia left, “for ever, chusing to run the risque of meeting the resentment of their enemies rather than submit to the derision and abuse of those whom they looked

up to as friends.”¹²⁸ No proclamation or material assistance would ever atone for the mistreatment the Loyalist militia suffered at the hands of the British army.

Ferguson’s defeat was the turning point in the British pacification campaign in the southern colonies. The Loyalists consistently underperformed against Rebel partisans and forced Cornwallis to utilize Redcoats to secure and protect frontier areas. This prevented the earl from consolidating his gains and providing proper support to eager North Carolina Loyalists. The British delay in moving north allowed the Continental Congress to appoint a cunning and determined officer to form yet another Continental army in the southern colonies to oppose Cornwallis. British efforts in the Carolinas throughout the winter and spring of 1781 concentrated on eliminating this new threat rather than Americanizing the war.

CHAPTER 11

The Rebel Resurgence

December brought Rebel forces in the southern colonies a month of much-needed relief. Major General Nathanael Greene, appointed by the Continental Congress to lead the American Southern Army, reorganized the remnants of Gates' demoralized forces and effectively incorporated the militia into his strategy. Greene arrived at Charlotte, North Carolina, on December 2. Along with Greene came Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, who played a crucial role in the Rebel victory at the Battle of Saratoga. Greene's strategy focused on dividing his army into two forces, with Morgan commanding the western troops.¹²⁹ Greene anticipated that Cornwallis would concentrate his attention on half of the Rebel army, allowing the other half to undertake operations against the various British strongholds, jeopardizing the safety of the Crown's friends. Greene's plan worked perfectly, resulting in two disastrous British defeats. Cornwallis felt he had no choice but to abandon the Carolinas and refocus his attention on silencing the Rebels rather than protecting the Loyalists.

In early January, Cornwallis garrisoned 5,000 troops throughout South Carolina and Georgia under the command of Lord Rawdon. The earl hoped these regulars, many of them Redcoats, would be able to protect his rear from any partisan threat.¹³⁰ On January 2, the earl dispatched Tarleton towards Ninety-Six with 1,150 men, including fifty Loyalist guides, to check Morgan's advance. Much of Tarleton's army was composed of regulars and battle hardened Provincials, including Cornwallis' light infantry. During the American Revolution, light infantry represented the elite of the British army. They underwent training to fight in wooded terrain and to operate

independently from the main force. The light infantry was positioned at the head and flanks of the army during marches in order to quickly assail any enemies lurking in ambush. The earl dispatched all his light troops against Morgan in hopes of negating the Rebel militia's advantage in the Carolina backcountry.¹³¹

By mid-January, Cornwallis broke camp at Winnsboro to invade North Carolina and threaten Greene. On January 18, General Leslie reached Cornwallis' camp with 1,500 troops, including 256 North Carolina Volunteers, which elated the earl. Though Clinton instructed Cornwallis to remain in South Carolina and protect that colony at all costs, the earl set out with new vigor. He also continued to provide assistance, though minimal, to potential North Carolina Loyalists.¹³² Cornwallis' efforts to secure North Carolina however, suffered a serious blow as Leslie marched to the earl's aid.

General Morgan was not in the immediate vicinity of Ninety-Six when Tarleton arrived, but had rather withdrawn to Cowpens. Tarleton promptly set out in pursuit. On January 17, Morgan's 1,912 men, approximately 1,250 of them militia, decimated Tarleton's force. As Tarleton's troops moved onto the battlefield, they first engaged the militia. The Rebel citizen-soldiers fired a few volleys before retreating behind Morgan's Continental infantry. Once Tarleton's men engaged the regular infantry, the militia and Continental cavalry under Lieutenant Colonel William Washington enveloped the British and inflicted heavy casualties. Tarleton's force suffered 110 killed, 200 wounded, and 712 captured, while Morgan's men suffered just twenty-five killed and 124 wounded.¹³³

The affair at Cowpens, though an overwhelming victory for the Rebels, did not reassure all their supporters. Tarleton lost many seasoned troops, yet Cornwallis remained determined to eliminate Greene's army despite this blow to his own strength.

James Lovell, a Rebel sympathizer, wrote a friend in Boston warning him to “rejoice with fear” over Morgan’s victory. He also grimly noted, “Our army there [Carolinas] is no match for Cornwallis, and if he pushes suddenly, he will ruin General Greene.”¹³⁴

Cornwallis’ aggressive reputation was not forgotten by the Rebels and Tarleton’s defeat strengthened his resolve. The day after Cowpens, the earl wrote Clinton that “nothing but the most absolute necessity” would force him “to give up the object of the Winter’s Campaign.”¹³⁵ Cornwallis’ exertions to achieve his goals however, made Loyalist security less of a priority than Greene’s defeat.

On January 24, Cornwallis’ army advanced to Ramsour’s Mill on the Little Catawba River, a branch of the Catawba. Greene had crossed the river thirty-six hours earlier, goading the earl to accelerate his movements. While at Ramsour’s Mill, Cornwallis ordered most of his wagons and supplies burned. Cornwallis even threw his own baggage and personal comforts into the flames. Ultimately, only those wagons carrying salt, ammunition, and hospital stores, along with four empty wagons for the sick and wounded, remained. The destruction of excess baggage, the earl believed, would greatly increase his mobility. The lack of baggage would also allow his remaining troops to all function like light infantry, which would replaced the British light troops lost at Cowpens.¹³⁶ Historian Matthew Spring argues that light infantry training was widespread throughout the army which permitted Cornwallis to remark to Lord George Germain after Cowpens: “The loss of my light troops could only be remedied by the activity of the whole corps.”¹³⁷ Therefore, the earl deemed it necessary to transform the rest of his army into functioning light troops to both increase speed and efficiency in the densely wooded and swampy terrain of North Carolina.

This decision placed Cornwallis in a precarious position, especially since he was moving further inland. This stretched his supply lines, forcing his army to live off the land, a land that Greene's troops had previously stripped of supplies. Cornwallis' actions may seem rash, but he had little choice. As long as Greene's army remained in the field, he would continue to gather strength, harass British supply lines and supporters, and foster resistance throughout the southern colonies. Greene, therefore, was Cornwallis' main priority. Although Cornwallis burned much of his army's supplies, his troops discovered a large cache of leather during their three days at Ramsour's Mill. Cornwallis immediately ordered all company commanders to make sure the soldiers repaired and resoled their shoes. He also directed each soldier to carry an extra pair of soles.¹³⁸ Rested and filled with greater resolve, Cornwallis' troops were finally ready to pursue Greene's force.

Upon arriving at Salisbury on February 4, Cornwallis discovered that Greene was nearby. The Rebel commander succeeded in crossing the Yadkin River later in the evening. Cornwallis hoped that the continual rains would swell the Dan River and nearby streams, halting Greene's men and allowing the earl ample time to destroy the Rebel army before it could be reinforced. On February 14, much to the earl's dismay, Greene successfully moved his army across the Dan into Virginia. Cornwallis' frustrated troops arrived at the south bank of the Dan exhausted and hungry. He decided to move to Hillsboro, North Carolina's capital, to resupply his troops and enlist the support of the many Loyalists in the region. The addition of Loyalist militia and a well fed and rested army, Cornwallis believed, would give him an advantage when Greene returned to North Carolina.¹³⁹

CHAPTER 12

Guilford Courthouse

Cornwallis entered Hillsboro with barely 1,900 men on February 20, and issued a proclamation calling all loyal subjects to rally to his standard. “I . . . invite all such faithful and loyal subjects” his proclamation read, “to repair . . . with their arms and ten days provisions.” Cornwallis assured the Loyalists they would meet “with the most friendly reception.” Additionally, he planned to “concur with them in effectual measures . . . for the reestablishment of good order and constitutional government.”¹⁴⁰ Though Colonel Tarleton noted “many hundred inhabitants of the surrounding districts” rode to Hillsboro, they were “averse to every exertion that might tend to procure” royal authority. Some of the most prominent Loyalists “promised to raise corps and regiments,” but due to the threat of the Rebels’ return, their followers refused to take “a decided part in a cause which yet appeared dangerous.” As a result, few Loyalists fulfilled their promises.¹⁴¹

In the past, Cornwallis was charged with arming and equipping the Loyalists as they entered his service. At Hillsboro, however, he instructed the Loyalists to bring their own arms and supplies. There are two explanations for the earl’s decision offering insight into his tenuous situation. First, the earl lacked sufficient supplies for his own troops, let alone the Loyalists. Since he destroyed his baggage at Ramsour’s Mill, he had brought along no spare arms or food supplies. As he continued to move away from his bases in South Carolina and the Royal Navy on the coast, it took longer for any shipments to reach him. He therefore had to rely on foraging in a land already stripped by Greene’s men. Secondly, Cornwallis’ deepening frustration with the Loyalists left him reluctant to supply them. He realized that any weapons he handed to unproven

Loyalists could fall into Rebel hands. Cornwallis' proclamation indicated that he had relegated the Loyalists a lesser role in securing the southern colonies than at the outset of his campaign. The meager turnout of new American recruits also reflected how much more cautious southern Loyalists had grown.

The lack of overt support troubled many British leaders. Brigadier General Charles O'Hara, one of the earl's most senior and trusted commanders, observed, "We never had with us at any one time One Hundred Men in Arms." That led O'Hara to pose the question, "when will Government see these People [Loyalists] thro' the proper medium?" Then he answered his own question, "I am persuaded never."¹⁴² Although Cornwallis found meager pickings at Hillsboro, Colonel John Pyle managed to gather a Loyalist militia force of 400 from the outlying areas. Cornwallis dispatched Tarleton on February 23 with 200 cavalry and 250 infantry to secure safe passage for Pyle's force. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee and a detachment of Rebel cavalry crossed the Dan at the same time and encountered Pyle's force first.¹⁴³

Lee's dragoons dressed in green coats and the Loyalists mistook them for Tarleton's Legion. As Lee shook Pyle's hand and began to reveal his true identity, Rebel Major Joseph Eggleston asked a Loyalist "Whose man are you?" The Loyalist replied, "A friend of his majesty." Eggleston sabered the man to death sparking a massacre in which about ninety Loyalists died and many others suffered ghastly wounds. Some of the wounded eventually reached Tarleton's force, but his troops mistook a few for the enemy and killed them.¹⁴⁴ Sir Henry Clinton remarked in his memoir that Pyle's defeat "did infinite mischief to the royal cause throughout North Carolina."¹⁴⁵ Along with Pyle's massacre, the "distressed and scanty appearance of the King's troops . . . who

seemed to stand more in need of assistance themselves” gave potential Loyalist volunteers further incentive to stay home.¹⁴⁶

Between February 22 and March 5, Cornwallis concentrated his efforts toward gathering any Loyalist corps that could be mustered. While the British army regrouped at Hillsboro, Lieutenant Colonel John Hamilton issued a warrant to William Chandler to raise a company “of no less than 50” men. The unit would serve in the Royal North Carolina Regiment for a minimum of eighteen months and Chandler was promised a captain’s commission.¹⁴⁷ Though Chandler was from New Jersey, he was able to rally fellow Loyalists in North Carolina after Cornwallis decided to march into Virginia.¹⁴⁸ Cornwallis also drafted blank warrants for Provincial companies consisting of eight commissioned and non-commissioned officers along with fifty-three privates. These units would serve in the Carolinas and Virginia and the warrants promised monetary pay and frontier land grants.¹⁴⁹ On February 26, Cornwallis issued a warrant, which offered the same rewards as the aforementioned blanks, to Muster Master General Brice Rigdon. Cornwallis then dispensed three more warrants on March 1 to James Monroe, Thomas Brazier, and James Osborne. Four more men, Eli Branston, Stephen Lewis, Michael Robins, and Abraham Williams, received warrants on March 5.¹⁵⁰

It is unclear whether these men accepted the warrants and if they did, were successful in recruiting the specified units. In earlier warrants, Cornwallis rarely spelled out payment terms or promised land grants. The addition of these incentives not only shows Cornwallis’ determination to rally the Loyalists, but also his belief that a sense of duty was no longer enough to produce desired results. His appeals however, failed to stir the Loyalists to action in any consequential numbers.

At the same time Cornwallis issued his warrants, Greene reentered North Carolina commanding 2,600 men, 1,000 of which were Continentals. Over the next few weeks, Greene's ranks swelled to between 4,600 and 5,000 troops, including 400 additional Continentals. Greene, confident in his army's potency, skirmished with the British army throughout March, determined to bring Cornwallis to battle. Greene lured the British to Guilford Courthouse, where the Quaker general had contemplated engaging Cornwallis over a month before. Greene deployed his army in accordance with Daniel Morgan's suggestions, posting his troops in three successive lines, just as Morgan had at Cowpens. Like Morgan, Greene used militia to compose his first two lines, reserving battle hardened Continentals for the third. If Greene's plan worked, Cornwallis' army of regulars and Provincials would be exhausted from engaging the militia before running head on into fresh Continentals.¹⁵¹

On March 15, Cornwallis' army of 1,900 forced Greene to retreat from the battlefield, but suffered nearly 25 percent casualties in the process.¹⁵² Though historians often fault Cornwallis for winning a Pyrrhic victory, biographers Franklin and Mary Wickwire argue he was the only British commander who could have achieved any type of victory at Guilford. They postulate that "had the Cornwallis of Camden and Guilford been in command . . . instead of Howe" earlier in the war, he "would not merely have defeated Washington in battle, but would have utterly crushed him."¹⁵³ Regardless of such speculation, Cornwallis lost a significant numbers of regulars, including many officers. This setback, coupled with his earlier detachment of 5,000 troops to garrison his rear, left the earl's army in a critical situation. Exhausted and badly mauled, Cornwallis

marched his army nearly two hundred miles southeast to Wilmington, North Carolina, and contemplated his future.

CHAPTER 13

Desperation

Two days after his costly victory at Guilford, Cornwallis issued a desperate plea to North Carolina's doughty Highlanders. "Now is the time" to join the army, the proclamation declared, and Cornwallis included a pledge that the Scots of Cumberland, Bladen, and Anson counties would not serve outside the southern colonies.¹⁵⁴ Cornwallis was optimistic concerning the Highlanders' response. As Governor Martin remarked in 1777, many, if not all of the Highlanders, "had wives, and families, dwellings, and means of living in North Carolina; all of which they abandoned, on firm principles of Loyalty, and attachment to their Sovereign."¹⁵⁵ The next day, Cornwallis addressed a proclamation to the inhabitants along the Little River in the Pedee district of South Carolina. Cornwallis urged them to "stand forth and assist in securing their ancient rights and liberties."¹⁵⁶ Cornwallis' direct appeal to the Loyalists' political heritage as Englishmen rather than monetary compensation or land grants was a final effort to reverse a long line of disappointments.

Cornwallis finally arrived at Wilmington on April 7. The same day, the earl received news that Clinton had dispatched Major General William Phillips to Chesapeake Bay with approximately 2,000 veteran troops. Cornwallis now contemplated a tough decision; should he return to South Carolina and reinforce Lord Rawdon and the 5,000 British troops he left behind, or should he join Phillips and prosecute the war from Virginia, curtailing Washington's ability to send men and supplies south? Cornwallis subtly revealed his answer to Clinton on April 10, expressing his hope "that the Chesapeake may become the seat of war, even (if necessary) at the expense of abandoning

New York.”¹⁵⁷ Cornwallis refused to wait for Clinton’s reply and set about preparing his men to march north.

The earl, disgusted with operations in North Carolina, characterized that colony as the “most difficult to attack” because of the lack of material assistance from its inhabitants.¹⁵⁸ The same day, Cornwallis wrote to Phillips that he wanted their two forces to rendezvous by land. He preferred this plan because “the idea of our friends rising in any number and to any purpose totally failed” and the earl was “quite tired of marching about the country in quest of adventures.”¹⁵⁹ The earl also lost faith in those Loyalist militiamen still under his command. Upon a request from Lieutenant Colonel Christian du Buy, commander of the Regiment von Bose, for new firearms, Cornwallis immediately acquiesced instructing du Buy to take as many of the new weapons from England as he wanted. The earl also ordered du Buy to give his old and often useless Hessian muskets to the Loyalist militia at Wilmington, who “would only desert with them and make little use of them.”¹⁶⁰ After just over a year of arduous campaigning in the Carolinas, Cornwallis had abandoned the Loyalists without remorse.

Cornwallis embarked on April 25 with 1,500 men and crossed the Roanoke River into Virginia on May 13. As historian Gregory Urwin astutely notes, Cornwallis ceased “putting his trust in the Loyalists” and ordered British supporters to “stay out of his way.”¹⁶¹ In a directive to Major General Leslie, Cornwallis wished his inferior to “assure the people of the Eastern Shore of every protection” while discouraging them from making “any open declaration.” “Indian Corn,” Cornwallis noted “is what we want from that quarter,” not the military assistance of the Loyalists.¹⁶² In August, Cornwallis issued a sterner proclamation to the inhabitants of Elizabeth City and York and Warwick

Counties.¹⁶³ Cornwallis commanded the people “to deliver up their Arms, and to give their Paroles” by August 20. He also instructed them to “bring to Market the Provisions that they can spare,” but those who failed to comply would be imprisoned and “their Corn and Cattle . . . seized for the use of the Troops.”¹⁶⁴ Cornwallis was no longer interested in winning the hearts and minds of the colonists.

Cornwallis’ scorn for the Loyalists forced him to look elsewhere to replace the services they often rendered. As the earl marched through North Carolina into Virginia, many slaves fled their masters and joined his army. As Deputy Secretary of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History Dr. Jeffrey Crow explained, “once Cornwallis came in range, the trickle of runaways became a flood.”¹⁶⁵ For much of the southern campaign, slaves played a minor part in British operations. The British did encourage slaves of known Rebels to desert, namely to hinder the economy of the southern colonies and incite a fear of slave rebellion among Rebel supporters.¹⁶⁶ Though some served as bakers or spies, many slaves were employed as foragers, much like the white Loyalists who accompanied Cornwallis’ march to Winnsboro. Jean Blair, wife of Rebel supporter George Blair, wrote in awe of the massive black Loyalist foraging parties sent out by Cornwallis. In a letter to James Iredell, a prominent Rebel in North Carolina, Blair marveled at the “six hundred Negros . . . sent out by L Cornwallis to plunder and get provisions.” Blair relayed reports that “there are two thousand of them out in different Partys.”¹⁶⁷ The aid of the former slaves to the British helped offset the loss of white Loyalists.

As the earl settled into Yorktown, he utilized every man at his disposal to rapidly complete the fortifications necessary to make it a viable British post. Cornwallis ordered

the black Loyalists to work around the clock and they suffered harshly for their exertions. The excessive heat and the cramped conditions at Yorktown increased the spread of disease, especially smallpox. The influx of black Loyalists also put a strain on Cornwallis' logistical situation. Just as the earl was charged with clothing, feeding, and arming the southern white Loyalists, he too needed to, at the very least, feed the black Loyalists under his protection. Cornwallis failed a second time to solve his logistical problems and lamented to Clinton in late August that the "consumption of provisions is considerably increased . . . by Negroes that are employed."¹⁶⁸

Despite the exertions of the black Loyalists, the fortifications at Yorktown remained incomplete and failed to deter a combined force of 14,000 Rebels and Frenchmen. Having departed New York on August 19, General George Washington rendezvoused with his French allies on September 26. Almost immediately, the Allies assaulted Yorktown's unfinished works with men and cannon. Cornwallis could do little to prevent his impending surrender.¹⁶⁹

CHAPTER 14

Conclusion

October 19 marked the final end for Cornwallis in the American colonies. His surrender to General George Washington effectively ended the military dimension of the Revolutionary War and set the Rebels and British on the road to a peace settlement. When Virginia Loyalist Lieutenant Colonel John Connolly joined Cornwallis at Yorktown in May, he noted that there were only 114 Loyalists, mostly North Carolinian and Virginia militia, still under the earl's command. Tarleton's British Legion and the Queens Rangers, commanded by Major John Simcoe, were stationed across the York River at Gloucester and they too were made up of Loyalists.¹⁷⁰ Their status as Provincial units equated them more with regulars rather than Loyalist militia as perceived by British officers. It is probable that Lieutenant Colonel Connolly was unaware of their presence at Gloucester. Even with the addition of the British Legion and Queens Rangers, approximately 800 men, the number of white Loyalists paled in comparison to the approximately 2,000 black Loyalists that Cornwallis retained at the time of his surrender.¹⁷¹ The Loyalist militia, once the focal point of Cornwallis' campaign, were no longer essential for Cornwallis' operations and the services they rendered were replaced by runaway slaves seeking freedom in the British lines.

The overwhelming Allied victory at Yorktown also secured Cornwallis' place in the annals of American history as a failure. His efforts are characterized as debacles by some scholars, especially in terms of his interactions with southern Loyalists. Though Cornwallis later blamed Clinton for the British disaster, indicting him for failing to

provide timely relief, he still receives harsh criticism for his conduct, though the dire situation at Yorktown was not entirely of his making.¹⁷²

There is no doubt that the Loyalists figured prominently into the British plans for pacifying the thirteen colonies. Royal governors continuously pleaded with British military and political leaders for military assistance to secure a large number of loyal colonists. Though some British officers regarded those claims with suspicion, a significant Loyalist population did exist throughout the colonies, especially in the south. Lord Charles Cornwallis had considerable dealings with many of these Loyalists and was charged with their safety after the fall of Charleston.

Many times throughout Cornwallis' career in the American Revolution, Loyalists promised to rise in large numbers and join the British army. Frequently the Loyalists turned out prematurely and suffered many defeats. In other instances, such as in New Jersey and the interior of the Carolinas, professed Loyalists defected to the Rebel militia, bringing with them arms and supplies obtained from British magazines and intelligence on British operations. Repeated Loyalist defeats, along with the threat of retaliation by roaming Rebel militia, greatly discouraged other Americans from casting their lots with the British army or furnishing it with supplies and intelligence. Therefore, from the outset of Cornwallis' southern command, he was faced with trying to rally, organize, and protect a militarily inexperienced, cautiously minded, and geographically dispersed people, all the while trying to eliminate the presence of armed Rebel forces in the south.

Cornwallis attempted to solve this dichotomy by utilizing the Loyalists militarily, delegating recruitment to "active" and "spirited" local men. Cornwallis hoped that the Loyalist militia would pacify local areas and reestablish royal government, allowing him

the freedom to use his regulars actively in battle. He also relegated the militia companies to flank guard positions around baggage during his marches, which his orderly book noted was “usual.” This custom suggested that he placed little hope in their combat capacities as the war progressed.¹⁷³ Cornwallis also issued a host of proclamations aimed at reassuring Loyalists of his commitment to their security, promising protection in exchange for military aid and provisions. His plan, though judicious and persistent, ultimately failed. That forced Cornwallis to parcel out regular troops from his army to protect a string of posts running throughout South Carolina and northern Georgia. The inability of Loyalist militiamen to protect themselves and reassert any semblance of stable British governmental authority consistently angered Cornwallis and helped convince him to undertake operations in Virginia, even though General Greene and his Continental army reentered the Carolinas after the battle at Guilford Courthouse.

The negative picture of the Loyalists presented here should not mask their services to the British throughout the conflict. The war in the south, essentially a civil war, pitted neighbor against neighbor. Cornwallis and the rest of the British military failed to recognize this fact, which significantly hampered their ability to subdue the colonies. Relying on traditional military methods, Cornwallis tried his best to empower the Loyalists and instill in them a sense of vigor and duty. When his efforts failed to achieve positive results, Cornwallis modified his strategy in hopes of finally gaining the upper hand against a resilient foe. The earl failed to implement widespread and thorough training to bolster the Loyalist militia’s combat effectiveness. Although Cornwallis did abandon the King’s supporters in their greatest time of need, his lack of numerical strength and the continual flow of men and supplies to his southern Rebel foes made it

necessary to re-evaluate the objectives of the southern campaign. Cornwallis' story shows the complex nature of insurrectionary war and the many troubles military leaders must overcome to achieve ultimate victory.

ABBREVIATIONS

Cornwallis Papers – CP

David Library of the American Revolution – DLAR

Documents of the American Revolution – *DAR*

Papers of the American Loyalist Claims Commission – PALCC

Public Records Office (Great Britain) – PRO

South Carolina Historical Magazine – *SCHM*

¹Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 172. Cornwallis has long shouldered some, if not all, responsibility for Britain's defeat at Yorktown in the fall of 1781. Cornwallis testified in a House of Commons Inquiry after the war that General Sir Henry Clinton, his immediate superior in America, was ultimately responsible for the defeat at Yorktown because he failed to provide promised reinforcements and did not divert General George Washington's army from marching southward. Clinton placed the blame on Cornwallis and the British navy. His *Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Clinton, K.B. relative to his conduct during part of his command of the King's troops in North-America; particularly to that which respects the unfortunate issue of the campaign in 1781* indicts the Royal Navy for failing to save Cornwallis once he established himself at Yorktown. He added that Cornwallis would not have been in that perilous position had he not moved his entire force into Virginia, contrary to Clinton's orders.

²William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), vx.

³For more information on the shared responsibility between Clinton and Cornwallis see William Willcox, "The British Road to Yorktown: A Study in Divided Command" in *American Historical Review* 52 (October 1946): 1-35, Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), John R. Alden, *A History of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf INC., 1976). For more information on logistical problems see Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America: 1775-1783* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); H.T. Dickinson, introduction to *Britain and the American Revolution*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 1-20. For a combination of factors, including logistical problems, George III's policies, and a general critique of the British high command, see Richard M. Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown: The Campaign that Won the Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004).

⁴For more information, see Hugh Rankin and George F. Scheer, *Rebels and Redcoats* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1957), Hugh Rankin, "Charles Lord Cornwallis: Study in Frustration," in *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution* edited by George Billias (New York: William Morrow and Company, INC., 1969), 193-232, and William Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1962).

⁵John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 211.

⁶Ibid, 18.

⁷John A. Tilley, *The British Navy and the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 278-81.

⁸Jeremy Black, *War for America: The First for Independence 1775-1783* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 233.

⁹John R. Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 197.

¹⁰William Campbell to Earl of Dartmouth, July 19 and 20, 1775, in *Documents of the American Revolution*, ed. K.G. Davies, 11: 50.

¹¹Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 200-201; Martin Cann, "Prelude to War: The First Battle of Ninety-Six: November 19-21, 1775," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 76 (October 1975): 207-13.

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- ¹² Sir Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents*, edited by William Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 26.
- ¹³ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 79-82; Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, 197.
- ¹⁴ Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 23.
- ¹⁵ Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 25-6.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27; William Howe, *The Narrative of Lieutenant General Sir William Howe, in A Committee of the House of Commons, on the 29th of April 1779, Relative to His Conduct during His Late Command of the King's Troops in North America: to which are Added, Some Observations Upon a Pamphlet, Entitled, Letters to a Nobleman* (London: H. Baldwin, 1781), 4.
- ¹⁷ Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 27.
- ¹⁸ David Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain's Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 45-54.
- ¹⁹ Hugh Rankin, "Charles Lord Cornwallis: Study in Frustration" in *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution*, ed. George Athan Billias (New York: William Morrow and Company, INC., 1969), 196; Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 90-95.
- ²⁰ William Franklin to Earl of Dartmouth, August 2, 1775, *DAR*, 11:66.
- ²¹ Howe, *Narrative of Lieutenant General Sir William Howe*, 9.
- ²² General Orders of Sir William Howe, December 14, 1776 in *Collections of the New York Historical Society For the Year 1883* (New York: New York Historical Society Publication Fund, 1884), 425.
- ²³ Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, 56.
- ²⁴ Parliamentary Inquiry of Cornwallis regarding the Conduct of the Howe Brothers found in Great Britain. State Papers. Domestic State Papers, George III 1761-1781 SP 37, Vol. 18, 7. When using Cornwallis' testimony during the Parliamentary Inquiry, one must be careful because at certain times, Howe directed the questioning. As Ira Gruber has skillfully noted, the questions asked of Cornwallis were tailored to generate responses clearing Howe from any blame. See Ira Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 342.
- ²⁵ According to Howe, while he was waiting off Staten Island at Sandy Hook, William Tryon, the royal governor of New York, boarded the General's flagship and relayed "information of the disposition of the people of" New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. However, as Howe lamented, "The event proved, that they were too sanguine in those expectations," suggesting that the reports of the loyalty of the inhabitants were not as solid as previously thought. Quoted in William Howe, *The Narrative of Lieutenant General Sir William Howe*, 50-1.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ²⁷ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 99-115.
- ²⁸ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, 200.
- ²⁹ Piecuch, *Three People's, One King*, 185.

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- ³⁰ Lord Germain to Henry Clinton, August 5, 1779 in Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 415-16.
- ³¹ Henry Clinton to Lord Germain, August 21, 1779 in Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 418-19.
- ³² Henry Clinton to Admiral Arbuthnot, October 22, 1779 in Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 428.
- ³³ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 126.
- ³⁴ The basic element of Vauban style siege warfare is a series of trenches. After the customary acknowledgement of the attacker's intention of taking the fort and the defender's honorable defiance, the attacking army moves beyond cannon range. Then it digs a series of zigzagging trenches towards the fort. First, they dig a parallel trench, opposite one of the fortress walls and then dig a sap, or approach trench, towards the wall. After the sap is complete, the besiegers dig another parallel trench, followed by another sap. This process continues until cannon, hauled through the trenches, are close enough to form breaching batteries. During this time, the fort's cannon rain shells on the approaching army, accompanied by musket fire. Eventually, the breaching batteries create a giant hole in the side of the fort, allowing the rest of the army to enter. However, the defending commander usually surrenders before the attacking army storms the fort, receiving an honorable surrender. Clinton, however, refused the American commander of Charleston, Major General Benjamin Lincoln the honors of war when he surrendered. See Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 250-53.
- ³⁵ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 44-70.
- ³⁶ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 129-31.
- ³⁷ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 70.
- ³⁸ *London Gazette*, July 25-29, 1780.
- ³⁹ Johann Ewald, *Diary of Captain Johann Ewald in The Siege of Charleston: With an Account of the Province of South Carolina: Diaries and Letters of Hessian Officers from the von Jungkenn Papers in the William L. Clements Library*, trans. and ed. Bernard Uhlendorf (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 99.
- ⁴⁰ Major William von Wilmowsky to Baron von Jungkenn, June 4, 1780 in Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, 419. Wilmowsky also notes that a majority of Loyalists would gladly fight against the Spanish and French.
- ⁴¹ "Cornwallis" Orderly Book, May 20, 1781, Orderly Book Collection, 1764-1815, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- ⁴² Clinton's proclamation released paroles who had surrendered themselves to the British, but were not part of the Rebel military at the time of capitulation. The proclamation required all those released from parole to swear allegiance to the British and those that refused, even if they were not actively in arms against the British, would be considered enemies and suffer the corresponding punishments. See *London Gazette*, July 4-8, 1780 for a full version of the proclamation.
- ⁴³ Charles Cornwallis to James Patterson, June 10, 1780, Cornwallis Papers, Public Records Office 30/11/77, 3-4.
- ⁴⁴ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, June 2, 1780 in *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, ed. Charles Ross (London: John Murray, 1859), 1:45.
- ⁴⁵ Patrick Ferguson is a controversial figure among historians. Some historians argue that Cornwallis distrusted Ferguson because he was appointed by Clinton and did not give him a chance to perform to the

best of his abilities. For more information see Hugh Rankin, "Charles Lord Cornwallis: Study in Frustration," in *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution* edited by George Billias (New York: William Morrow and Company, INC., 1969), 93-232, and Piecuch, *Three People's, One King*, 227. Some British officers distrusted Ferguson and openly expressed their opinions to Cornwallis. For Colonel Nesbit Balfour and Colonel Francis Rawdon's negative opinions see John Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 93. For a vindication of Ferguson, see Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 200-16.

⁴⁶ Henry Clinton to Patrick Ferguson, May 22, 1780 in Clinton, *American Rebellion*, 441.

⁴⁷ Charles Cornwallis to Patrick Ferguson June 2, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/77, 2.

⁴⁸ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 108.

⁴⁹ Clinton, *American Rebellion*, xlv.

⁵⁰ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, June 30, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/72, 18-19.

⁵¹ Alexander Innes to Charles Cornwallis, June 14, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/2, 149.

⁵² Charles Cornwallis to Alexander Innes, June 16, 1780 in Ross, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, 1:47.

⁵³ Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 95, and Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 107.

⁵⁴ Sullivan's Island housed the American prisoners of war. Charles Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, June 29, 1780 in Ross, *Correspondence*, I:49.

⁵⁵ Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, (1787, reprint, New York: New York Times, 1968), 91.

⁵⁶ Robert Elder of the Camden district joined the Loyalist militia in 1780 and, according to his claim, was charged with gathering provisions for the troops. Papers of the American Loyalist Claims Commission, Audit Office, 12/48/195-200.

⁵⁷ Tarleton, *History*, 121-22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 122.

⁵⁹ PALCC, AO, 12/48/135.

⁶⁰ PALCC, AO, 12/47/202.

⁶¹ PALCC, AO, 12/73/129-34.

⁶² PALCC, AO, 12/110/171, 12/111/5.

⁶³ PALCC, AO, 12/72/239.

⁶⁴ PALCC, AO, 12/51/82-3.

⁶⁵ PALCC, AO, 13/90/390-91.

⁶⁶ PALCC, AO, 12/3/342.

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- ⁶⁷ Johann Hinrichs, May 13, 1780 in *Diary of Captain Hinrichs in The Siege of Charleston*, 297-99.
- ⁶⁸ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, June 30, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/72, 19.
- ⁶⁹ PALCC, AO, 12/99/314, 12/35/155.
- ⁷⁰ PALCC, AO, 13/121/355.
- ⁷¹ Charles Cornwallis to Alured Clarke, July 2, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/78, 1.
- ⁷² Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, July 15, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/78, 16-17 and Charles Cornwallis to James Wemyss, July 18, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/78, 32.
- ⁷³ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 111-12 and Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 96.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 112-15; *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 115.
- ⁷⁶ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, July 15, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/72, 30.
- ⁷⁷ Robert Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 128 and Tarleton, *History*, 93.
- ⁷⁸ Charles Cornwallis to John Cruger, August 5, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/79, 12.
- ⁷⁹ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 188.
- ⁸⁰ Charles Cornwallis to Frederick DePeyster, August 31, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/79, 52.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, 128-9 and Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 190.
- ⁸³ Lord Rawdon's column was composed of two Provincial units, his own Irish Volunteers and Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarteton's famed British Legion infantry along with about 300 Loyalist militia.
- ⁸⁴ John Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 157-72 and John Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 101-7.
- ⁸⁵ Charles Cornwallis to Lord Germain, September 19, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/76, 17.
- ⁸⁶ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 177-9.
- ⁸⁷ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, July 14, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/72, 29.
- ⁸⁸ Charles Cornwallis to John Cruger, August 27, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/79, 39.
- ⁸⁹ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, August 29, 1780 in *Correspondence*, I:58-9.
- ⁹⁰ Charles Cornwallis to Nesbit Balfour, August 29, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/79, 45.
- ⁹¹ Charles Cornwallis to John Cruger, September 4, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 5.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 6 and Charles Cornwallis to Alexander Innes, September 11, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 15.

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- ⁹³ September 6, 1780 in Tarleton, *History*, 187.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 187-90.
- ⁹⁵ Charles Cornwallis to Nesbit Balfour, September 15, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 23.
- ⁹⁶ Charles Cornwallis to George Campbell, September 20, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 29. George Campbell was Commandant of Georgetown at the time. Mathew Floyd was a Pennsylvania Loyalist that commanded the militia at the Battle of Williamson's Plantation on July 12, 1780. See Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day it Rained Militia: Huck's Defeat and the Revolution in the South Carolina Backcountry May-July 1780* (Charleston: History Press, 2005).
- ⁹⁷ Charles Cornwallis to John Wemyss, September 26, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 47.
- ⁹⁸ Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, September 27, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/80, 52-3.
- ⁹⁹ Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, October 2, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/81, 8.
- ¹⁰⁰ Charles Cornwallis to John Wemyss, October 7, 1780, CP, PRO, 30/11/81, 26A-27.
- ¹⁰¹ Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, 138-9.
- ¹⁰² Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 198.
- ¹⁰³ Tarleton, *History*, 163-4.
- ¹⁰⁴ James Collins, *A Revolutionary Soldier*, (1859, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1979), 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 229-37; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 118-20.
- ¹⁰⁶ Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, 226.
- ¹⁰⁷ Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton, November 15, 1780, in George Rogers, ed., "Letters of Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 65 (1964):169.
- ¹⁰⁸ Francis Rawdon to Henry Clinton, October 29, 1780 in *Correspondence*, 1: 62.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 63.
- ¹¹⁰ Francis Rawdon to Henry Clinton, October 29, 1780 in *Correspondence*, I:63.
- ¹¹¹ Marion successfully captured Georgetown, but could not dislodge the Loyalist garrison from a strong redoubt surrounding a brick jail. As a result, he was forced to vacate Georgetown almost as fast as he captured it. By October 26, Marion had tracked down Colonel Samuel Tynes' Loyalist militia near the Santee High Hills. Attacking Tynes with 150 men, Marion's force inflicted twenty casualties and captured twenty-three Loyalists. Most of the captives asked to join his militia. See Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 245-6 and Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 123.
- ¹¹² Tarleton, *History*, 174.
- ¹¹³ Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 231.
- ¹¹⁴ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 254-7 and Tarleton, *History*, 175-81.

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- ¹¹⁵ Charles Cornwallis to Nesbit Balfour, November 4, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/82, 6-7.
- ¹¹⁶ Charles Cornwallis to Nesbit Balfour, November 19, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/82, 63.
- ¹¹⁷ Charles Cornwallis to John Cruger, November 11, 1780, in Ross, *Correspondence*, I:67-68.
- ¹¹⁸ Charles Cornwallis to Alexander Leslie, November 12, 1780, in Ross, *Correspondence*, I: 69.
- ¹¹⁹ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 226.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid. 226-7; Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King*, 234.
- ¹²¹ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 302.
- ¹²² Charles Cornwallis to Archibald McArthur, December 17, 1780, CP, RO 30/11/83, 52.
- ¹²³ Charles Cornwallis to Moses Kirkwood, November 13, 1780, in Ross, *Correspondence*, I: 69.
- ¹²⁴ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 226.
- ¹²⁵ Charles Cornwallis to George Turnbull, October 5, 1780, CP, PRO 30/11/81, 21.
- ¹²⁶ Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War* (Dublin, 1794), 2:248-9.
- ¹²⁷ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 233.
- ¹²⁸ Stedman, *History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War*, 2: 249.
- ¹²⁹ Nathanael Greene to Abner Nash, January 7, 1781 in *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, ed. Richard Showman, Dennis Conrad, Roger Parks, and Elizabeth Stevens (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 7:64.
- ¹³⁰ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 251.
- ¹³¹ Matthew Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 246-62.
- ¹³² Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 334.
- ¹³³ During the battle, an incident occurred that suggests some of the Provincials in the British Legion cavalry may not have been fully committed to the British. The 71st Regiment of Foot, known as Fraser's Highlanders, forced the Continentals to slowly retreat. At this time, the Highlanders were supported by a detachment of the Legion cavalry under Captain David Ogilvie. At the same time, the Virginia light infantry under Captain Andrew Wallace started to retreat due to a confusion of orders. Seeing this, Tarleton ordered his reserve cavalry to charge. The reserve, however, refused to charge and watched the rest of the engagement from militia ridge. A Loyalist remarked after the battle that the British Legion "was filled up from prisoners taken at the battle of Camden" and "on seeing their own Regt opposed to them in the rear [they] would not proceed against it." On further investigation, historian Lawrence Babits found that the British Legion did enlist American prisoners after Camden, suggesting that it is possible that some joined the British to escape the prisons rather than a sense of loyalty to the British cause. Lawrence Babits and Joshua Howard, "Continental in Tarleton's British Legion, May 1780 – October 1781" (paper presented at the Tarleton Symposium, Camden, South Carolina, April 27, 2002) and Lawrence Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill: The University of North

Carolina Press, 1998), 100-136. For a listing of Tarleton's order of battle see page 9. For a listing of the Rebel order of battle see pages ranging from 27-175.

¹³⁴ James Lovell to Samuel Holten, February 8, 1781. Sol Feinstone Collection, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania.

¹³⁵ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, January 18, 1780, in *The Campaign in Virginia, 1781: an Exact Reprint of Six Rare Pamphlets on the Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*, ed. Benjamin Stevens (London, 1888), 1:321.

¹³⁶ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 276 and Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 340-1.

¹³⁷ Spring, *With Zeal and Bayonets Only*, 245-62 and Charles Cornwallis to George Germain March 17, 1781, in Ross, *Correspondence*, I: 503.

¹³⁸ Buchanan, *Road to Guilford Courthouse*, 341.

¹³⁹ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 283-4.

¹⁴⁰ Tarleton, *History*, 256.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

¹⁴² Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton, April 20, 1781, in Rodgers, "Letters of Charles O'Hara," 177.

¹⁴³ Tarleton, *History*, 231-2.

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Babits and Joshua Howard, *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 38-9.

¹⁴⁵ Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, 264.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ John Hamilton to William Chandler, February 22, 1781, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 7.

¹⁴⁸ Todd Braisted, "An Introduction to North Carolina Loyalist Units," *The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies*, accessed April 4, 2011, <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/ncindcoy/ncintro.htm>.

¹⁴⁹ Charles Cornwallis, Warrant to Raise an Independent Company in North Carolina, February 22, 1781, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 8-9.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Cornwallis, List of Persons to Whom Warrants for Raising Companies Have Been Granted, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 19-20.

¹⁵¹ Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 177-8.

¹⁵² A majority of the militia that made up Greene's first line of battle fired two volleys before falling back, while some fired three, others one and still others immediately fled through the woods. A gap developed between the British left and center as well as on the right and Cornwallis committed all his reserves to push through the first line. The British generally fired one volley before charging with bayonets, pushing the

militia to the second line. The fighting in the second line of battle was intense and caused numerous casualties on both sides, including many British officers. The British had a more difficult time as they progressed northward on the battlefield. The most intense fighting occurred at the second line, due to the wooded terrain. Cornwallis, in order to continue the advance of his army, ordered the artillery to fire into the woods on both British and American troops. The end result of the second line fighting was that the tired and weakened British with little ammunition, fighting as individual units, came upon fresh Continental infantry. As the British approached the third line, they did so in piecemeal fashion, allowing the Continentals to concentrate their fire on individual units. The rest of the British force eventually arrived, and after Cornwallis reorganized them into lines, they were able to push back the militia and then the Continentals. Though Cornwallis claimed victory because Greene's force retreated, he had essentially sustained a defeat. He was forced to retreat through North Carolina and eventually leave the Carolinas due logistical problems and a deficiency in troop strength. Taken from Lawrence Babits and Joshua Howard, *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 50-189.

¹⁵³ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 310.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Cornwallis, Proclamation, March 17, 1781, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Josiah Martin to George German, March 7, 1782 in Great Britain, Colonial Office, North Carolina: Original Correspondence, CO 5/331, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Charles Cornwallis, Proclamation, March 18, 1781, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 26.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, April 10, 1781 in Ross, *Correspondence*, I: 87.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Charles Cornwallis to William Philips, April 10, 1781 in Ross, *Correspondence*, I: 87.

¹⁶⁰ Christian du Buy to Wilhelm von Knyhausen, April 24, 1781, Reports of the North American War under the Command of General von Knyhausen, 1781-1873, Vol. IV, Fiche 710-78, Letter GG, Part 2.

¹⁶¹ Gregory Urwin, "When Freedom Wore a Red Coat: How Cornwallis' 1781 Campaign Threatened the Revolution in Virginia," *Army History* 68 (Summer 2008): 10.

¹⁶² Charles Cornwallis to Alexander Leslie, July 14, 1781, CP, PRO30/11/88, 12.

¹⁶³ The counties of Elizabeth City, York, and Warwick were at the head of the Virginia Peninsula, east of Yorktown and across the James River from the Loyalist strongholds of Norfolk and Portsmouth. The Norfolk area, according to Adele Hast, "had been the scene of Loyalist ferment" between 1777 and 1781 and the Loyalists "actively aided the British" by raiding Whig supporters, carrying off prisoners, selling produce, providing information, and refusing to join the Whig's when the militia threatened. See Hast, *Loyalism in Revolutionary Virginia*, 110-1.

¹⁶⁴ Charles Cornwallis, CP, PRO 30/11/101, 34.

¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey Crow, *The Black Experience in Revolutionary North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996), 76.

¹⁶⁶ Ellen Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), 22.

¹⁶⁷ Jean Blair to James Iredell, July 21, 1781, in *The Papers of James Iredell*, ed. Daniel Higginbotham (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1976), 2:266.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, August 22, 1781, CP, PRO 30/11/74, 75.

¹⁶⁹ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure*, 352-71.

¹⁷⁰ Thirty-three Loyalists were from North Carolina, a similar amount from Virginia, and the rest were Provincials from the Royal York Volunteers. Thomas Fleming, *Beat the Last Drum: The Siege of Yorktown, 1781* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 175.

¹⁷¹ Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 42.

¹⁷² For Cornwallis' defense see Charles Cornwallis, *An Answer to that part of the Narrative of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton, K.B. Which relates to the Conduct of Lieutenant General Earl Cornwallis, during the Campaign in North American, in the year 1781* (London: 1783). For criticism for Cornwallis' movement into Virginia see George Kyte, "Strategic Blunder: Lord Cornwallis Abandons the Carolinas, 1781," *Historian* 22 (1960): 129-44.

¹⁷³ "Cornwallis" Orderly Book, March 10, 1781.

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