

## The Uneasy Lull, 1770–1772

While North Carolina was going through bloody internal conflict, the rest of the colonies had settled into uneasy stability with regard to Great Britain. The lull came with the repeal of the Townshend duties and the collapse of nonimportation in late 1770. But Boston and Massachusetts still served as the focal point of trouble and dispute. Massachusetts continued feeling restive over talk in England of such drastic changes as substituting a royally appointed Council for an elected one, and abolishing the Massachusetts town meeting. The stationing of British instead of provincial troops at Castle William, coupled with the British navy in Boston harbor, was seen as a harbinger of such an unwanted change.

Another feared change was that the British themselves would pay the salaries of American officials, thereby putting the latter beyond the control of colonial assemblies. This would lead to stricter enforcement of the trade and revenue laws. The first step in this crucial change was the decision of Britain in early 1771 to pay the full salary of Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts. Hutchinson was of course jubilant over this development and over the stationing of the military in the harbor, but Sam Adams perceived that the governor was now independent of popular check or control.

There is no question that the grip of the radical-liberals on the people of Massachusetts declined considerably during this lull, this period of "sullen silence" (as Adams put it), and Adams could not succeed in rousing the people against the Hutchinson salary. But despite hints of defection by John Hancock and others, the liberal party held together in the 1771 elections, and the House strongly denounced the Hutchinson salary payment.

The Tories of course tried their best to exploit this period of quiescence by

splitting and weakening the liberals. The opposition to Britain, they thundered, was trying to lead the colonists into a "state of anarchy" under the name of "liberty." The grand old colony of the Puritans, the Tories warned, was now permitting itself to be misled by such "virulent opposers of our holy RELIGION" as Dr. Thomas Young and William Molineux, leading rationalists and deists. Sam Adams, a devout Congregationalist and an advocate of old Puritan virtues, could not be baited for his supposed atheism. Unassailable on this charge, he sprang to the defense of Dr. Young. Young, Adams reminded his readers, was an "unwearied asserter of the rights of his countrymen," a man who should be judged rather by his political than by his religious views. Of course, the man most hated by the Tories was Sam Adams, and Hutchinson charged that the "incendiary" Adams "wishes the destruction of every Friend to Government in America."

The crowning effort by Hutchinson and the Tories to crush the radicals during the lull period took place in the Massachusetts elections in 1772. A concerted effort to defeat Sam Adams failed, but it did succeed in reducing his vote to thirty percent below that of his colleagues, Thomas Cushing and John Hancock. And of these, Cushing had always been a conservative opportunist, and John Hancock was seriously flirting with desertion of the liberal cause. Hancock, indeed, had shifted toward a relatively neutral position. Furthermore, James Otis, in moments of sanity, drifted in the conservative direction; John Adams withdrew to the quiet of private life; a disheartened Dr. Thomas Young left Massachusetts for North Carolina; and another of Sam Adams' leading followers, Dr. Benjamin Church, secretly sold out his colleagues and attacked his own Whig writings in the Tory press. And Sam Adams was rebuffed by such other American leaders as John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, when he urged them to help him keep alive the spirit of opposition to British encroachments. Yet Adams remained undaunted, writing that "where there is a spark of patriotic fire, we will enkindle it." Perhaps he realized that no revolutionary movement has ever proceeded in a straight-line fashion; rather, it runs a zigzag course, with periodic bursts of intensity alternating with periods of lull and consolidation, and even partial retreat.

Indeed, just as the liberal movement was being forced into partial retreat, the seeds of the next great advance were being sown. It soon became clear that the British were laying plans. Following the wedge in the door achieved by their payment of Hutchinson's salary, the British would proceed to the far more serious step of paying the Massachusetts judges' salaries as well. In short, Great Britain claimed the right not merely to tax the people of Massachusetts without their consent, but also to make judges independent of the colonists by means of the very taxes extracted from them. This move by the Crown was also a reward for the judges' tenderness toward the British troops in the Boston Massacre cases. The British move was particularly unpopular because Hutchinson had filled the principal posts of the Massachusetts judi-

ary with his own Tory-minded relatives: Lyndes, Cottons, and Olivers. With Hancock and Adams now reconciled, the Boston Town Meeting promptly denounced this plan. The issue next went to the Massachusetts Assembly, which affirmed that such a proposal infringed the constitutional rights of the Assembly, and, at the end of June 1772, passed this resolution by a vote of 85 to 19. Typically, Hutchinson dissolved the General Court.

Although Massachusetts found itself in a period of troubled quiet, the resentment against Britain remained alive in that other radical colony: South Carolina. A long-continuing dispute arose over the appropriation by the House at the end of 1769 of a gift of 1,500 pounds sterling to the English radical leader John Wilkes. The enraged Crown ordered the governor of South Carolina to veto any further revenue bills that did not expressly delimit the uses of appropriated money and that failed to penalize the colony's treasurer if he should spend treasury funds without consent of the governor and Council as well as of the House. In short, the House was ordered to agree to stripping itself of its vital power over all appropriations in the colony. This the House, led by Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden, and John Rutledge, flatly refused to do.

This impasse with the Crown, and with the royally appointed governor and Council pitted against the House, continued beyond the end of the Townshend Act crisis. The South Carolina House steadfastly refused to pass any revenue bill complying with the royal instructions, that is, any bill inconsistent with "the proper rights of the people." So radicalized was the South Carolina oligarchy by this bitter struggle that even a cautious trimmer like Henry Laurens wrote at the end of 1771 that he would rather have "no tax bill for seven years" and even "forfeit [his] whole estate" than surrender, for the issue involved was "nothing less than the very essence of true liberty." The royal instruction to South Carolina was, to Laurens, a threat equal to the hated Stamp tax.\*

Lord Hillsborough, typically, was, determined to grant no concession to South Carolina, and the South Carolina House was repeatedly dissolved. Notwithstanding, the South Carolina House would not yield. The latter's resistance, in fact, was stiffened by a vote of confidence by the electorate in the spring 1772 elections.

\*See Jack P. Greene, "Bridge to Revolution: The Wilkes Fund Controversy in South Carolina, 1769-1775," *Journal of Southern History* (February 1963): 32-33.

## The *Gaspée* Incident

During the period of relative calm, trouble had not only been stirred by British aggressiveness against Massachusetts and South Carolina. The restrictive trade and Navigation Acts, to which were now added the sugar and tea duties, were always in danger of being enforced now that the era of salutary neglect was gone forever. Underneath the seeming calm there remained the inner contradictions of potential conflict over enforcement. Only a spark, only a minor incident, was needed to bring this potential to the surface.

Customs enforcement had intensified since late 1771. Already in November two incidents of resistance against the officials had occurred. The controller of customs at Falmouth, Massachusetts, had been forced by a mob to tell them the name of an informer. And off Philadelphia, thirty armed men captured the crew of a customs schooner and rescued a confiscated merchant vessel.

It is not surprising, however, that the culminating crisis should have burst forth in prickly, steadfastly independent little Rhode Island. Here was a colony that valued its trade so much as to have proved a poor security risk during the days of nonimportation. But this very spirit led the Rhode Islanders to resent with particular bitterness British customs collectors' trespassing upon their freedom of trade. Rhode Island had had a stirring recent history of conflict with customs officials. We have already seen its struggles with the hated John Robinson. After Robinson became one of Boston's customs commissioners in late 1767, he was replaced as Rhode Island collector of customs by Charles Dudley, Jr., and the Rhode Island resistance continued. In May 1769, the customs commissioners sent to Newport the *Liberty*, which had been converted to a naval sloop after being seized from John Hancock. The *Liberty*, commanded by the zealous captain William Reid, promptly began to seize merchant vessels right and left.

This intensification of customs enforcement in Rhode Island swelled the resentment of its citizens. In mid-June 1769, Dudley's deputy collector, Jessie Saville, was seized as an informer by an angry mob and nearly beaten to death. Whereupon the fiery *Providence Gazette* trenchantly declared that Saville "was treated with more tenderness and lenity than is perhaps due an *Informer*." In mid-July, Captain Reid called the attention of the townspeople of Newport to the depredations of his sloop. For, in the harbor, the *Liberty* fired brutally upon one of the ships it had seized, even firing upon the captain escaping in an open boat. The next night the angry people of Newport rose up; forcing Reid to remove his crew from the *Liberty*, they grounded, scuttled, and then burned the customs sloop to the ground. The seized vessels naturally took the opportunity to escape. True to Rhode Island tradition, nothing was done by the democratically elected government to apprehend the leaders of the mob. Finally, by the spring of 1771, Rhode Islanders were moved to proceed against Dudley himself; the highest representative of royal authority in Rhode Island was beaten almost to death.

Thus the stage was set in Rhode Island for the smashing of the relative lull of 1770-72. In March 1772, there sailed into Rhode Island waters the British naval schooner *Gaspée*, commanded by Lieutenant William Dudingston, known to Rhode Islanders for having savagely beaten up a defenseless fisherman in Pennsylvania three years before. Dudingston lost no time in impressing his personality upon the public. Without even notifying Governor Joseph Wanton, Dudingston illegally launched a systematic campaign of hounding local vessels. Soon Dudingston intensified the drive and arrogantly stopped, searched, or fired upon everything afloat on the pretext of rigorously enforcing the laws. Dudingston and his men also stole livestock from Rhode Island farms, and lumber from woodsmen. The public was understandably hard put to distinguish the British sailors from mere pirates. The Rhode Island merchants proposed to outfit an armed ship to rescue any vessels seized by the *Gaspée*, but Admiral John Montagu, based at Boston, scotched the plan by threatening to hang all concerned as pirates.

On June 9, 1772, the hated *Gaspée* ran aground off Warwick in the course of a fierce pursuit of a merchant vessel. When the people of Providence heard the good news, the town's wealthiest merchant and a Son of Liberty, John Brown, organized a joyous party of citizens to finish the job begun by nature. Brown and his party, which included James Sabin and Captain Abraham Whipple, sailed to the *Gaspée*, shot and wounded Lieutenant Dudingston, removed the crew, and burned the *Gaspée* to the ground. A satisfactory night's work done, the people of Providence then went about their business.

Ever since the attack on the British vessel *St. John* eight years earlier, Rhode Islanders had been steeped in the pleasant tradition of a lack of strenuous search by the government for the parties responsible for such incidents. But, in early September, the Crown suddenly decided to bypass Rhode Island authorities and to send the guilty parties to England for high treason. A

Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed to find the culprits, deliver them to England via the Royal Navy, and to call on General Gage's troops, if necessary, for support. Appointed to the commission was Governor Wanton of Rhode Island, who could be depended upon not to search too hard. But he was more than offset by the other members: four of the top royally appointed judges in the colonies—specifically, Robert Auchmuty, who was the vice admiralty judge at Boston, and the chief justices of New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York.

Now here, in the escalation of law enforcement into the hands of British authorities by setting up a star-chamber procedure and threatening trials for treason in England, was not only a dramatic incident of conflict, but also a serious threat to colonial liberties. The *Pennsylvania Journal*, representing American sentiment, warned that such a commission could make the lot of the colonists worse than the subjects of "the most despotic power on earth."

Thus, in June 1772, the people of Rhode Island burned the British schooner *Gaspée*, and the British reacted ominously by appointing a Royal Commission of Inquiry in early September. The latter move was followed later in the month by a step long feared by the citizens of Massachusetts: the announcement of a decision by the Crown to pay judicial salaries in Massachusetts out of customs revenue. No longer would judges be paid by and, therefore, subject to the control of the colonial Assembly. Specifically, the salaries to be paid permanently and securely by the Crown were those of the attorney general and the solicitor general of Massachusetts and the five judges of the superior court of the colony—a reward to precisely those officials who had shown their tenderness for the British troops responsible for the Boston Massacre. It is not surprising that these deeds—especially the appointing of the *Gaspée* commission—should have aroused the dormant radical movement in America, or that the first sign of revival should have come in Massachusetts, or that its first spokesman should have been Samuel Adams.

## The Committees of Correspondence

As soon as the judges' salary decision became known, Sam Adams mounted a campaign of pressure for a Boston Town Meeting on the issue. Writing in the *Boston Gazette*, Adams asked whether it was "not high time for the people of this country explicitly to declare, whether they would be freemen or slaves." He concluded: "Let associations and combinations be everywhere set up to consult and recover our just rights." But Adams' campaign faced once again the opposition of his conservative colleagues, led now by John Hancock and other Boston selectmen. Finally, by October 28, the determined Adams had pushed through a town meeting. At a final meeting on November 2, and after great difficulty, Adams won support for his plan for a permanent committee of correspondence.

As a standing committee of Boston, it was to expound the rights of the colonists and to communicate its declarations to other towns and colonies. There had been several other committees of correspondence, especially as standing committees of colonial assemblies in America, but those had been *ad hoc*, for specific tasks of protest. Adams was the first to propose and secure a committee of correspondence on a permanent footing. Its purpose, as Edward Collins wrote, was "to organize, in such a way that it could be utilized, that spirit of suspicion, discontent, and rebellion which he had long been fomenting in Massachusetts."\*

Election to the twenty-one man Committee of Correspondence was spurned by the conservative leaders of the American resistance—Hancock, Speaker Thomas Cushing, and several selectmen and wealthy merchants. As a result,

\*Edward D. Collins, "Committees of Correspondence of the American Revolution," *American Historical Association, Annual Report* (1901), p. 247.

the leadership of the committee devolved upon determined radical spirits: Sam Adams, the returned Dr. Thomas Young, and William Cooper. Eighteen of the committee members were Sons of Liberty. James Otis, as front man, was made original chairman, but Otis's insanity soon forced Adams to take up the chairmanship. Assurances of support for Boston's militant leadership were secured by Adams from such eminent friends and allies as Elbridge Gerry of the town of Marblehead and James Warren of Plymouth.

Sam Adams was now in his element, and on November 20 this driving libertarian leader presented, from the committee to the Boston Town Meeting, the Boston Resolves. The Resolves consisted essentially of a "State of the Rights of the Colonists," written by Adams himself, and a "List of Infringements and Violation of Those Rights," drawn up by young Dr. Joseph Warren. Adams stunned the Tories by going beyond mere positive law to rest his case for liberty squarely upon that old clarion call to revolution, natural rights. For if rights were derived by man from his nature, then any body of positive law violating those rights can be and indeed must be challenged. Adams asserted man's natural rights bluntly and lucidly:

Among the natural rights of the colonies are these: First, a right to *life*; secondly to *liberty*; thirdly to *property*; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can—Those are evident branches of, rather than deductions from the duty of self preservation, commonly called the first law of nature—

All men have a right to remain in a state of nature as long as they please: And in case of intolerable oppression, civil or religious, to leave the society they belong to, and enter into another. . . .

Every natural right not explicitly given up or from the nature of a social compact necessarily ceded remains. . . .

The list of infringements summed up the specific grievances of the colonists against the British for violations of their rights: assumption by Parliament of the power to legislate for the Americans without their consent, and to tax them without their consent; the appointment of a corps of royal customs officials, supported by fleets, and by troops quartered in Boston and New York without their consent; payment from taxes of gubernatorial and judicial salaries by Britain rather than by the assemblies; extension of the powers of vice admiralty courts; restriction of American iron and hat manufacturing; and attempts to impose an Anglican episcopate in America.

The determined opposition of the conservative patriots to Adams' campaign proved to be the peevish expression of a small minority of the people of Massachusetts. The 300 members of the Boston Town Meeting of November 20 voted unanimously to approve and disseminate these Resolves. What is more, the resolutions had immediate success in other towns throughout Massachusetts, and spread like wildfire, along with the idea of permanent commit-

tees of correspondence. Massachusetts opinion was set ablaze, and even as cautious a liberal as John Adams was moved to declare that "there was no more justice left in Britain than there was in Hell; that I wished for war." Town after town endorsed the Boston Resolves. Of the 240 towns in Massachusetts, eighty, including the major towns, quickly voted support, while most of the others prepared to follow. Along with this approval, each town appointed its own permanent committee of correspondence, led by Plymouth, then Cambridge, Marblehead, Charlestown, and Newburyport. And the town of Pembroke enthusiastically made the Adams resolutions even more explicit; the American people, it declared, "are warranted by the laws of God and nature, in the use of every rightful act and energy of *policy, stratagem, and force.*"

In that era, being poor was deemed rather a disgrace than a badge of merit. Hence Tories (such as Thomas Hutchinson, whose interpretation of the history of Massachusetts has greatly influenced later historians) were wont to pillory the resistance movement as a collection of poor and lowly rabble. In reality, however, this was a true mass movement led by the bulk of the propertied in almost every town of Massachusetts, small or large. Only a few towns of varying size, such as Salem and Weston, failed to join the ranks.

Alarmed by the rapid spread of popular rebellious agitation, and seeing the implication of the Resolves for revolution and independence, Governor Hutchinson called together the General Court in early 1773, and tried to browbeat it into acknowledging absolute parliamentary authority. But this only succeeded in fanning higher the revolutionary flames; the General Court and the Boston Town Meeting flatly repulsed his efforts. To Hutchinson's accusations of thoughts of revolution and independence, Sam Adams and Boston countered with the great and overriding natural law of self-preservation and liberty.

In the Massachusetts spring elections of 1773, the radicals swept all before them. No longer did Adams receive significantly fewer votes than his colleagues in the House; and the towns reaffirmed their instructions in behalf of liberty. In Andover, the wealthiest citizen, Councillor Samuel Phillips, led the popular movement for the Resolves, and even Hatfield replaced its Tory representative, Israel Williams, with an eminent liberal of the town. The popular liberals also ousted two Tories from the Council, asked to have Hutchinson and Lieutenant Governor Oliver recalled, and threatened to impeach the judges should they dare to accept salaries from the Crown. Hutchinson responded by dissolving the General Court.

The Boston Resolves and news of the creation of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, were spread to other colonies by the committee, and had immediate impact. Undoubtedly by this time Sam Adams and other farsighted radicals, realizing the implications of natural-rights theory, were toying with the idea of American independence. Samuel Parsons of Providence wrote to Adams, in March 1773, that the "idea of unalterable allegiance to any prince

or state is . . . inadmissible." Our seventeenth-century ancestors, he added, were virtually independent of Great Britain; was this not a useful hint for the future?

Adams intended to urge the sending of a circular letter to all the other colonies, calling for committees of correspondence in all the provincial assemblies. But here he was anticipated by the radical leaders of Virginia, who were inspired by Boston's committee to establish a committee of correspondence of the provincial House. Six years earlier, Richard Henry Lee had proposed intercolonial committees of correspondence. Now Lee, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson led the Virginia House of Burgesses, on March 12, 1773, to create the first standing committee of correspondence of a provincial Assembly. The Virginia committee was to concentrate naturally on the *Gaspée* inquiry rather than on Massachusetts judicial salaries.

The first Assembly to follow Virginia's example was Rhode Island, which, in mid-May, chose a committee of leading merchants and politicians of the colony, including Stephen Hopkins, Moses Brown, and Henry Ward. Rhode Island was quickly followed by the lower houses of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, led of course by Sam Adams. Thus, by June 1773, New England and Virginia had established Assembly committees of correspondence.

The other colonies were slower to join in the campaign. First came South Carolina in July, and by the end of the year all colonial assemblies except New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania had selected committees of correspondence. New York and New Jersey joined in the first two months of 1774, but Pennsylvania's House, run by the Tory Speaker Joseph Galloway, failed completely to respond.

The provincial committees of correspondence, however, proved to be of little importance. Necessarily bureaucratic and slow-moving organizations tied to approval of their assemblies, and unable to meet when their governing body was not in session, the provincial committees proved too staid and cumbersome to be effective. Instead it was the local committees, begun in Boston by Sam Adams, that proved to be the important and efficient engines of agitation and revolution. These freewheeling local committees were the major instruments of revolution. For a successful revolution not only needs ideology, leadership, and mass support and enthusiasm; it needs also institutions and organization. That organization was now being supplied by the local committees of correspondence, in which the old Sons of Liberty were glad to submerge.

Meanwhile, the Royal Commission of Inquiry, whose menace had touched off such intense reaction, was mired in ignominious failure. The commission, denounced as an *inquisition at every hand*, could not haul convicts to England unless they were caught; and how could evidence of crime be gathered when virtually the entire colony approved the deed? Furthermore, the commission

was dependent on the local authorities for warrants for information and for enforcing arrests; but local authority was elected by the populace and in wholehearted sympathy with the alleged criminals in the *Gaspée* affair. Even if the authorities had cooperated, the Crown could have done little about the stubborn refusal of the people of Providence to point out the guilty parties in the burning of the *Gaspée*. Remarkably, not a single informer could be found. After holding meetings in January and May, the *Gaspée* commission acknowledged defeat and disbanded in June 1773.\* As a corollary, Lieutenant Dudingston was successfully sued by some merchants for confiscating their rum and sugar. Customs officials throughout the colonies relaxed their enforcement, and seizures declined by nearly three-fifths.

In sum, by mid-1773, the American revolutionary movement had progressed far beyond where it was the year before. Massachusetts and South Carolina were embroiled in chronic problems with Great Britain. But more important, the British revenue ship *Gaspée* had been burned and its Royal Commission of Inquiry cleverly thwarted by the people of Rhode Island. And rising out of this victory was the rapid development of a crucial network of committees of correspondence that embraced towns, counties, and assemblies of the colonies. Spurred into being by the *Gaspée* affair, these committees remained as continuing expressions of public opinion and revolutionary pressure.

\*The disbanding of the commission was aided by Lord Dartmouth's opposition to any trials in England. A Whig, Dartmouth had succeeded Lord Hillsborough as secretary of state for the colonies in the fall of 1772. See Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution*, pp. 84-86.

## Tea Launches the Final Crisis

The duty on tea—a modest levy of threepence per pound—was the only Townshend duty not repealed in 1770. The American boycott on British tea continued after 1770. Although the boycott was only partially observed in most of the ports, it *was* strictly maintained in the two major tea-buying ports of New York and Philadelphia, which shifted to buying smuggled tea from Holland and the Dutch West Indies. Here was a happy marriage of principle and economic self-interest, for the price of smuggled tea was considerably lower than that imported from Great Britain. During 1771 and 1772, the Americans imported 580,000 pounds of British tea, of which Boston imported 375,000 pounds and the southern ports most of the remainder. In contrast to this average annual import of dutiable tea of 290,000 pounds, total American consumption per year was estimated at six and a half million pounds. Even reducing the sum to half, British tea was not in these years able to capture over eight percent of the vast American tea market.

The British tea price could have been far more competitive with Dutch tea, even with the three-penny burden, because the Townshend Act had removed the shilling tax on imports of tea into England for all tea reexported to America. In 1769, however, the East India Company, to which Britain had granted a monopoly on the import of tea (the tea was imported from China), followed the typical path of monopoly and raised the upset price it charged at auction from about two shillings threepence a pound to three shillings. Since tea in Holland sold for less than two shillings, the uneconomic status of British tea in the colonies became evident.

The structure of the English tea trade was as follows: the East India Company monopoly imported tea from Canton, China, using its full governmental

powers to rule India as the trading base for the lucrative China commerce. The company sold the tea at public auction, setting the minimum, or upset, price. English merchants bought it at auction and sold the tea to American importing merchants who in turn sold it to the retailers. American purchase of British tea was discouraged not only by the high price, but also by the irregular timing of the East India auctions, which did not permit proper advance planning by American merchants.

The price-raising by the East India Company was a reflection as much of its growing financial difficulties as of its privileged monopoly status. The East India Company did not enjoy prosperity during the widespread economic boom of 1769–72. Its high price, coupled with the American tea boycott, caused millions of pounds of tea to pile up unsold in East India warehouses. Moreover, a powerful clique of speculators in East India stock insisted on paying a high dividend, thus hazardously running up the stock far above what was justified by the actual operations of the company. They paid the high dividend even though this burdened the company further by legally obligating it to pay an annual sum of four hundred thousand pounds to the Crown. Furthermore, the company was legally liable for reimbursing the Crown for revenues forgone from exempting it from duties on tea reexported to America; the loss of the American market caused the unpaid liability to pile up, reaching over seven hundred thousand pounds by September 1772. The company's dwindling sales, its overpurchase of tea in relation to the actual American market, and its heavy expenses in running the government of Bengal all contributed to making its position precarious.\* An act of June 1772 eliminated any further need for company reimbursement of the government for loss of tax revenue; it also replaced two-fifths of the former import duty levied on the company's reexported tea. But since little tea was being reexported to America anyway, this extra burden proved to be academic.

Finally, in mid-June, the great economic boom of 1770–72 followed the usual path of booms based upon credit expansion: financial crash and depression. A wave of failures of leading banks in London and Scotland brought about distress and a stock market crash (the stock boom had been fueled by bank credit expansion) in London, Amsterdam, and Paris. The general credit crash of mid-1772 hit particularly at the heavily overinflated East India shares, the price of which fell by sixty percent in the month of July alone. The crash of East India stock was also aggravated by attacks in Parliament upon the company in the spring of 1772, attacks because of its tyranny, plunder, and rapacity as a private monopoly vested with state power in India. Neither the Whig calls for vigorous reform of the monopoly nor the Crown's drive for tight governmental control over its own creature was calculated to aid its financial fortunes. In September, the company passed its dividend and

\*The East India Company lost money in Bengal, but the company bureaucrats there were able to garner large personal fortunes by plundering the natives.

also defaulted on customs payments to the Treasury. Since these payments were important to the Treasury, the British government itself was now in deep financial trouble.

The Crown then decided to effect a twofold plan: to relieve the affairs of the East India Company and save it from imminent bankruptcy, and to move as a kind of *quid pro quo* to take over control of its unruly creature. The best way to relieve the company, in addition to a large parliamentary loan, seemed to be to sell some of the seventeen-million-pound surplus inventory of East India tea to the long-lost American market. And what better way to dump the tea than by lowering its price and expanding East India Company operations to direct sales to the colonies? Hence the Tea Act of May 1773. The Tea Act, first, restored the full exemption (or "drawback") of duties paid on tea imported into England and then reexported to America. Second, it continued the old threepence duty on American tea imports, despite the pleas of the East India Company, in order to gain some revenue and to preserve the principle of parliamentary taxation of American trade. But these provisions were relatively unimportant, as they merely continued policies that had prevailed since 1767 and had provoked little clamor. The radical innovation—the deed that alarmed and provoked the Americans—was to extend the hated and feared East Indian monopoly to American shores. For the Tea Act authorized the East India Company to obtain a license from the Treasury and to export tea to America on its own account and from its own warehouses. These sales, on all inventory of tea over ten million pounds, could be made either to merchants it designated or to branch houses of its own in America.

Here was a grievous threat indeed to the merchants of America. The East India Company could now employ its monopoly power to cut prices even below smuggling prices, and to arrogate the entire American tea trade to a new vast network of its own agents, branches, and favored merchants. New York and Philadelphia merchants, in particular, feared imminent ruin of their flourishing trade in smuggled Dutch tea. But the fears of American merchants were hardly confined to tea; they knew full well that the East India Company imported into England vast quantities of other commodities: silks, calicoes, spices, chinaware, etc. And if now the East India Company were to take over the American tea business, could these commodities be far behind? Indeed, such a scheme was already being proposed to England by the Tory merchant of Philadelphia, Thomas Wharton. Philadelphia had already had bitter experience with East India Company machinations in other commodities than tea. In 1771, when chinaware first began to be manufactured successfully in Philadelphia, the East India Company—monopoly importers of chinaware into England—managed to manipulate the price to fall by one-fourth in order to destroy its newfound American competition.

It is the curious position of some historians that to focus on mercantile opposition to the East India monopoly means to charge such hostility to the

Tea Act with lacking principle, with being confined to economic self-interests, and with lacking the support of the bulk of the people. On the contrary, there is no necessary contradiction between political principle and economic self-interest. Opposition to a governmentally privileged monopoly is itself a high principle, which can be and was upheld by the American populace as well as by the merchants. The fact that the competing merchants would also have been driven to the wall by the East India monopoly was certainly a compelling reason for mercantile opposition to the Tea Act; but it did not conflict with the libertarian principles that generally animated American opinion. Quite the opposite. Defense of one's property and commerce against a privileged monopoly is *required* by libertarian principle. Liberty *implies* property rights and free trade; it does not contradict them.\*

Another vital factor in the colonists' opposition to the East India invasion was their horror at the brutal and rapacious record of East India Company government in Bengal—its depredations, monopoly, and ruinous taxation—a record that had led directly to the disastrous Bengal famine of 1769–71. One of the most terrible famines in history, it killed millions, eradicating a full one-third of the population of Bengal. The specter of that famine and of the East India Company tyranny that had brought it about was in the minds of the American people as they confronted the prospect of the East India Company extending its tentacles to America. This horror at the record of the East India Company was expressed most forcefully and eloquently in the widely circulated pamphlet of Pennsylvania's eminent liberal leader, John Dickinson:

Their [the East India Company's] conduct in Asia, for some years past, has given ample proof, how little they regard the laws of nations, the rights, liberties, or lives of men. They have levied war, excited rebellions, dethroned princes, and sacrificed millions for the sake of gain. The revenue of mighty kingdoms have centered in their coffers. And these not being sufficient to glut their avarice, they have, by the most unparalleled barbarities, extortions and monopolies, stripped the miserable inhabitants of their property, and reduced whole provinces to indigence and ruin. Fifteen hundred thousand . . . perished by famine in one year, not because the earth denied its fruits,

\*Historians as disparate as Robert E. Brown and James Truslow Adams agree in upholding this spurious contradiction. Thus Adams, generally pro-British, sneers at the antimonopoly focus as involving "absolutely no principle," presumably since defense of one's economic rights can never be conjoined with high principles. Brown, determinedly anti-British and accepting this fallacious dichotomy, tries oddly and unsuccessfully to assert that the main focus of American opposition to the Tea Act was on the tea tax and not on monopoly. In this way he hopes to salvage democratic principle in what would otherwise be a supposedly narrow, selfish economic ground for American resistance. But his attempt ignores the fact that the tea tax had been quietly on the books since 1767, and that no new tax—or even more rigorous enforcement—was here being imposed. See Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy*, p. 312n. Contrast this discussion of the tea crisis with Arthur M. Schlesinger's in *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763–1776* (New York: Ungar, 1917), pp. 244–51, 262–304.

but this company and its servants engrossed all the necessaries of life, and set them at so high a rate, that the poor could not purchase them. Thus having drained the sources of that immense wealth . . . they now, it seems, cast their eyes to America, as a new threat, whereon to exercise their talents of rapine, oppression and cruelty. The monopoly of tea is, I dare say, but a small part of the plan they have formed to strip us of our property.

In coming to the aid of the near bankrupt East India Company, the British government did not neglect its *quid pro quo*. In two companion acts to the Tea Act, it took care to grant itself control of East India affairs and patronage. Thus, the top governors of India were now to be named by the government. This takeover, too, had grave repercussions in the colonies. For this involved a violation of the East India Company charter by Great Britain, and the Americans feared nothing more than a threat of tampering with their precious colonial charters. Yet here was clear precedent for large-scale intervention.

American opposition, particularly New York opposition, to the new tea policy was whipped up by the brilliant theoretician of the Rockingham Whigs, Edmund Burke. Burke was appointed New York's London agent in late 1770 and his correspondence had great influence in forming opinion in that colony. Opposed to the record of the East India Company and especially to the Crown's takeover, Burke bitterly attacked the King's Friends and the Tories who were behind the Tea Act. He urged Americans to resist, pledging the full support of the English Whigs in that effort.

## The Boston Tea Party

The first concrete step of the East India Company to invade the American market came at the end of August 1773, and was published in the American press in September. Aiming eventually to construct a factory in Philadelphia and its own warehouse in each of three leading American ports, the company decided to begin by shipping six hundred thousand pounds of tea to a few favored merchants as agents, or consignees, in the four leading ports of America.

The merchants of the four ports quickly mobilized against this threat and were backed by the press and the bulk of the populace. It was clear to the resisters that the best way to meet the tea invasion was in the same way that the hated stamps had been repulsed—by revolutionary mob violence or the threat thereof against the few favored distributors of the commodity. In 1765 the appointed stamp distributors had been “persuaded” by force to resign their posts; now it was the few consignees designated by the company to receive the tea. After securing their resignation, the next step was to prevent the East India tea from landing on American shores. The British government had no idea that the Tea Act would cause any particular stir, much less that violence against its agents, direct or indirect, would be resumed.

Not surprisingly, matters came to a head in Boston. That great center of Anglo-American confrontations faced a British fleet and troops stationed offshore; moreover, it had as governor the flint-hearted Tory Thomas Hutchinson. Opinion had been inflamed against Hutchinson the previous spring when the wily Benjamin Franklin, to ingratiate himself with his employers, the Massachusetts Assembly, secretly sent them old letters of Hutchinson and of his henchman Andrew Oliver expressing Tory views and calling on Britain

for tough policies against the colonies. Sam Adams' publication of the letters in June polarized the silent conflict between Massachusetts and its governor, and provoked him to be more intransigent than ever. Three of the Boston tea consignees, by no coincidence, turned out to be two sons and a nephew of Hutchinson, in a firm of which the governor himself was a member and probable partner. Hutchinson's personal interest in East India tea simply strengthened his Tory resolve to give not an inch to the colonists. Thus, whereas the executive officials of the three other colonies, lacking specific instructions to the contrary, were happy to look the other way while mob pressure was put upon the consignees, Hutchinson resolved to back the consignees to the hilt.

On November 3 a Boston mob gathered at the Liberty Tree to witness an expected resignation by the consignees. Thwarted by their refusal, the mob stormed the store of Richard Clarke (Hutchinson's nephew) and was only driven off after a prolonged struggle by a group of friends of the consignees. Two days later, on November 5 and 6, a Boston Town Meeting was assembled and presided over by John Hancock. The meeting unanimously adopted resolutions demanding that no merchants import any British tea, and appointed a committee including such radical leaders as Sam Adams, William Molineux, and Dr. Joseph Warren to pressure the resignation of the consignees. But the consignees were emboldened by Hutchinson's support and repeatedly refused to resign. When the tea arrived, they, along with the harassed customs commissioners, took secure refuge with the British troops at Castle William.

With the consignees refusing to resign, stopping the landing of the tea became ever more important to the Americans. Transcending the bounds of Boston, Sam Adams called a joint meeting of the committees of correspondence of the towns of Boston, Roxbury, Brookline, and Cambridge for November 22. The meeting resolved unanimously to prevent the landing and sale of the tea, and the Boston committee was instructed to raise the town to "immediate and effectual opposition." The Boston Town Meeting, furthermore, was now superseded by the unofficial, flexible, and more powerful revolutionary institution: the "body meeting"—a recurring mass meeting of the body of all inhabitants of Boston and Roxbury, Brookline, and Cambridge.

The first tea ship, the *Dartmouth*, arrived at Boston harbor on November 27; two other East India tea ships followed a few days later. Promptly, two great mass meetings of the "body" met through November 29 and 30, presided over by the eminent merchant Jonathan Williams. The mass meeting adopted unanimously the resolution of Sam Adams that the tea be shipped back by the East India Company and that no duty whatever be paid on the tea. The latter demand represented an advance in American goals. Hutchinson sent the sheriff to disperse the "unlawful" assemblage, but he was hissed down by the meeting. While the consignees discreetly repaired to Castle William, Hutchinson responded to the popular demand by refusing the ships per-

mission to leave the harbor unless duty were paid. Thus the East India ships were caught between two swords.

On receiving word of the situation from their committees of correspondence, town after town in Massachusetts resolved to back the Boston mass meeting to the hilt, including Cambridge, Brookline, Roxbury, Charlestown, Marblehead, Plymouth, Malden, Gloucester, Lexington, Groton, Newburyport, Lynn, and Medford.

The deadlock at the port could not continue indefinitely. The tea ships' entry into port made the vessels liable to seizure by the customs officers after twenty days for nonpayment of duty. The rebels were afraid that once the customs officers had the tea, they could land it, sell it secretly to the people, and use the money to pay the salaries of the appointed officials of the colony.

Meanwhile, the Boston Committee of Correspondence provided a military guard on the tea ships to make sure that the tea was not landed in secret. Clearly the tea must be destroyed before its confiscation by customs, and the period of grace for the *Dartmouth* was up on December 17. The last chance for the colonists was therefore on December 16. That day, the 16th, a great mass meeting of the "body" of eight thousand people learned of Hutchinson's refusal to allow the *Dartmouth* to sail home. The meeting heard the news with great restiveness and anger. Several angry speeches ensued. The prominent merchant John Rowe asked meaningfully: "Who knows how tea will mingle with salt water?" Finally, Sam Adams arose to give the signal that angry words must now give way to deeds: "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country." Thereupon, a remarkably disciplined ginger group of Sons of Liberty, disguised as Mohawk Indians, rushed to Griffin's Wharf, boarded all three tea ships, and spent several hours of the night dumping every bit of East India tea into Boston harbor. No other property and no person was at all harmed. This was the famous and electrifying Boston Tea Party. The heroic band of "Mohawks" that defied British armed might numbered over a hundred and represented a cross section of the populace: from leading merchants to farmers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. The band also probably included such prominent radical leaders as the merchants William Molineux and Henry Bass, the engraver Paul Revere, the young clerk and writer James Swan, the old South End gang leader Ebenezer Mackintosh, and the ardent radical theoretician Dr. Thomas Young, who had previously made the first public suggestion for dumping the tea overboard.

The "Mohawks" had done their work well, and Hutchinson soon found that no Americans, whether the Council, grand juries, justices of the peace, sheriffs, or the militia, would help to track down the culprits. Only one witness to the Tea Party was willing to testify—but only if the trial took place in England. John Adams hailed the Tea Party as "an epoch in history" and as "the most magnificent movement" of all the actions of the "patriot" forces before the outbreak of the Revolution.

Many Massachusetts towns leaped to the support of the Tea Party. Many were sufficiently radicalized by the occasion to deny Parliament's rights to legislate for and to tax the colonies, and to pay for the salaries of colonial officials. These included the towns of Hadley, Braintree, Sheffield, Andover, and Worcester. On the other hand, a few towns were frightened by the radical deed and dissolved their committees of correspondence.

## The Other Colonies Resist Tea

The rebels had an easier time of it in the other colonies. With no Hutchinson or British fleet to hinder them, and with the inspiring example of the Boston Tea Party before them, the consignees and tea ships put up little resistance to popular pressure. The first public meeting of protest in the colonies against the Tea Act took place in Philadelphia on October 16. The citizens of Philadelphia adopted a comprehensive set of resolutions that served as a model for Boston and the other colonies. The Tea Act and tea duty were denounced, and a committee was appointed to demand resignation of the consignees. The consignees, including Thomas Wharton, saw the way the wind blew and soon resigned. A second public meeting warned against the landing of the tea.

The tea ship sailed up the Delaware on December 25. The vessel was stopped four miles from Philadelphia, thus avoiding the Boston problem of the customs duty. The captain was deeply impressed with the intense feeling of the public against landing the tea. Two days later, a huge public meeting of eight thousand assembled in the town and demanded that the captain sail immediately for England. The meeting also voiced its resounding approval of the Boston Tea Party, doing so over the opposition of its more conservative resolutions committee. The captain of the tea ship agreed to bow to the public will and promptly returned to England. Philadelphia had repulsed the tea threat.

In New York, the story blended many of the same elements of the Philadelphia and Boston episodes. In preparation for the tea ship, an "Association of the Sons of Liberty" was drawn up on November 29, which association called for a boycott against any enemies to its country. Enemies were those

who might aid in introducing the British tea into the country or who might buy or sell the tea after it had landed. A boycott was also called against those who had failed to boycott the transgressors. The association was signed by the leading lawyers, merchants and merchant shipmasters, landowners, and mechanics of New York. A committee of the newly formed Sons then pressured the three New York consignees to resign, aided by a public threat of violence issued by the radical "Mohawks," a direct-action group formed by the Sons of Liberty. Under this pressure and realizing that mass opinion was solidly against them, the consignees resigned their posts on December 1. The Sons then held a mass meeting of two thousand on December 17, headed by the veteran radical leader, the merchant John Lamb. The meeting denounced the landing of any tea and decided to appoint a committee of correspondence to write to other colonies. Harbor pilots were warned against guiding any tea ships into port. The meeting derisively spurned the mayor's suggestion that the British tea be stored at the local fort.

In reaction to this meeting, the conservative Isaac Low launched a movement to renounce the use of force in opposing the landing of the tea, but this movement was swept aside by popular enthusiasm upon receipt of the news of the Boston Tea Party. When a tea ship arrived off New York the following April, the captain, heeding the counsel of the committee of correspondence, promised not to enter the port and sailed away. A few days later, however, another sea captain was planning to sneak eighteen chests of tea into New York. The angry citizens, on discovering the ruse, emulated the Bostonians by boarding the ship and dumping the tea into the sea. The treacherous captain promptly fled to another vessel and sailed back to England.

The final port to be sent the tea was Charleston. There the radicals were in more difficult straits than elsewhere, since Charleston had not been an important center of the tea trade and the merchants were not as directly threatened. The tea ship *London* arrived on December 2, precipitating a mass meeting the following day. The meeting, headed by Christopher Gadsden, succeeded in persuading the tea consignees to resign their commissions. It further agreed to circulate among the merchants of Charleston a petition pledging the nonimportation of British tea. Gadsden and the others found, however, that while the planters and artisans (soon to form a "John Wilkes Club") were eager to pledge a boycott of merchants importing dutiable tea, the merchants themselves were reluctant to join the ranks. A showdown meeting of merchants, planters, and mechanics was held on December 17, each of the three groups having privately caucused in preparation for the critical meeting. The radicals passed a resolution for nonimportation of dutiable teas, but the conservative merchants managed to weaken the resolve by including *all* teas in the interdict—including smuggled Dutch teas—and allowing six months for consumption of their current stocks of dutiable British tea.

While the struggles continued over a boycott, the tea ships remained in the

harbor; the twenty-day period for payment of duty would soon expire, after which nonpaying ships were subject to seizure. Would the people of Charleston follow the Bostonians in a bold tea party? On the contrary, the merchants' opposition discouraged the radicals, and the customs officials seized and landed the tea on December 22 without any opposition. Nothing happened thereafter, however; the easygoing government officials made no attempt to sell the tea and it remained safely in the government warehouse until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Thus, in every one of the four colonies, determined action by the resisting Americans prevented any of the East Indian tea from reaching its consignees. Once again the rebellious Americans had been successful in forcibly thwarting British designs. Moreover, tea parties continued during 1774, and the Americans soon radicalized their opposition to include the tea tax and therefore all dutied tea, even that of private merchants. A group of Boston "Mohawks" destroyed a cargo of tea in March, and tea cargoes were burned during the year at Charleston, Greenwich, Annapolis, and in New Jersey. Indeed, so fiercely did the Americans concentrate upon tea that *all tea*, even smuggled tea, soon became boycotted and shunned for fear that the tea *might* be English. Tea, which had been a staple drink throughout America, soon vanished from the colonies. As early as January 30, the Boston tea dealers agreed to suspend the sale of all tea, and the movement soon spread to other towns and provinces.

## The Coercive Acts

News of the Boston Tea Party and the other resistance to East India tea hit the British like a thunderclap. Since the repeal of the Townshend duties over three years earlier, news of the American colonies had dropped out of the British press, and while Massachusetts had continued to be a slight irritant, it was generally assumed that everything was tranquil in the colonies. Hence, no one in Britain had an inkling of the furor that the Tea Act would cause.

Suddenly America erupted again, and now the British saw that the colonial problems had never been really quieted. They also began to see something more: that generally only the "extreme" poles are logical or viable, and that in-between states are logically self-contradictory and unstable mixtures that impel persistently toward one pole or the other. And so the British began to realize that continued drift and repeated near conflicts with Americans were unworkable, and that Great Britain must finally choose—either to pursue appeasement and go back to the salutary neglect and colonial quasi-independence of the pre-Seven Years' War era, or to take the hard line and crush the colonists and impose absolute British rule. The choice was appeasement and peaceful co-existence on the one hand, or maximum force for total victory on the other. In keeping with its nature, of course, the Tory imperialist ruling clique opted unhesitatingly for coercion and the mailed fist.

When the news of the crisis came to London, Benjamin Franklin was amid an unhappy imbroglio. While trying as agent for Massachusetts to present a Massachusetts petition for removal of Hutchinson and Oliver, the news of Franklin's responsibility for unearthing the Hutchinson-Oliver letters and sending them to Boston came to light. Reaction to Franklin's underhanded methods was widespread and understandably bitter, especially because of

Franklin's presumed Tory leanings. When news of the Tea Party arrived shortly thereafter, it was not difficult for the British to leap to the absurd conclusion that the whole affair was a diabolical plot conceived by the sinister, subversive devil Dr. Franklin. Franklin became the general scapegoat and whipping boy, was quickly dismissed from his lucrative royal post as deputy postmaster general of America, and was roundly denounced as a "viper . . . festering the bosom" of the English government, an "old dotard" who had schemed to make himself dictator of an independent Massachusetts. As John Adams later wrote, in reaction to the continuing hold of this myth on the minds of the British, "The history of our revolution will be one continued lie from one end to the other. The essence of the whole will be that *Dr. Franklin's electrical rod smote the earth and out sprang General Washington.*"

To compound the irony, Franklin, at the same time, was sending his stern Tory disapproval of the Tea Party to the Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence. Franklin denounced the extremism of destroying what he chose to call "private property"—a designation that surely stretched the concept of "private" to the breaking point. Franklin also vainly demanded that Massachusetts repair the damages and pay compensation to the company.

Within the cabinet, the ministry prepared to crush the rebellious Americans. The Bedfordites, the Grenvillites, the King's Friends, and King George himself howled for revenge and suppression. Only Lord North himself and the Whiggish Lord Dartmouth, half brother of North and secretary of state for the colonies (who had replaced Hillsborough a year and a half earlier), pleaded for confining the mailed fist to rebellious Boston. They largely won the day. But this old policy of isolating and smashing the leading center of resistance could no longer work; the American colonists were too united from years of struggle and from the growth of such revolutionary institutions as a network of local committees of correspondence.

The Crown called Parliament into session in early March 1774 and presented a series of four Coercive Acts designed to bring Britain's might to bear upon Boston. First came the Boston Port Act, which brutally closed the port of Boston to all commerce until the town granted compensation for the lost tea to the East India Company, and paid the forgone duties to the Crown. The act also transferred the royal customhouse from Boston to Salem for the duration of the act. No ships were to load or unload at Boston except for military stores and whatever food or fuel might be cleared by the customs authorities.

Opposition in Great Britain was revitalized: the Chathamites and the bulk of the Whigs had condemned the Tea Party, but they could not sanction coercion of the colonies. One of the few British supporters of the Tea Party had been the Wilkite radical MP, Alderman Bull, who urged clearing Boston of British soldiers—"brutes that have too long been suffered to live there." The plan supposedly to isolate and then coerce Boston into submission had

stemmed from Lord Dartmouth and his undersecretary, John Pownall. Chatham, in opposition, urged a demand for reparation before coercion; but the most effective opposition came from the Whigs: Edmund Burke, William Dowdeswell, the West Indian merchant Rose Fuller, and young Charles James Fox. But the opposition was in vain. With even Colonel Barré and General Conway speaking in favor of the bill, the Boston port bill was quickly passed on March 30, was approved by the king the following day, and became effective on June 1.\* Great Britain added to the injury of the people of Massachusetts by the seeming kindness of removing Hutchinson—but replaced him as governor and captain-general by General Thomas Gage, who was sent to Boston to announce the stormy tidings and to put the bill into effect. Gage was also to transfer the seat of Massachusetts government from Boston to Salem.

The Boston Port Act was soon followed in early April by the Massachusetts Government Act. North and Dartmouth had hoped to end their coercive measures with the presumably temporary rap on the knuckles of the Port Act. They now allowed themselves to be pressured into approving this second and drastically permanent act of suppression—a task made easy by the growing mental instability of Lord North. Following the counsel and guidance of former Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard, the Tories were about to see their old dream of destroying the preciously guarded Massachusetts charter come true. The Massachusetts Government Act changed the Massachusetts Council to a body appointed by the king, each councillor continuing in office at the king's pleasure. The Massachusetts governor was now given exclusive power to appoint and dismiss all executive and inferior judicial officers, including justices of the peace and sheriffs. Superior court judges were to be nominated by the governor for appointment by the king. Juries would now be chosen by the sheriff instead of democratically elected by the people of the towns. Finally, to crush the local radical centers of colonial resistance, the act barred town meetings from being held or an agenda acted upon except by express permission of the governor. The only minor victory for moderation was Dartmouth's deletion of an original proposal to bring the tea rioters to trial in Great Britain.

This savage act had been staunchly opposed by some of the leading Whigs and liberals: Sir George Savile, Colonel Barré, who had reluctantly supported the Port Act, Charles James Fox, General Conway, and Edmund Burke. Notwithstanding, it passed by a large majority, was approved on May 20, and became effective on July 1 and August 1 (different provisions taking effect on the two dates).

\*Charles Van, MP from Wales, was the most extreme proponent, calling for the destruction of Boston, "that nest of locusts"; "*delenda est Carthago*." See Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution*, p. 106; and Benjamin W. Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 188, 207.

This was as far as North and Dartmouth wanted to go. But meanwhile, severe pressure for still further measures descended upon them from the rest of the cabinet, led by the Grenvillite lord privy seal, the Earl of Suffolk, and the Earl of Sandwich, a Bedfordite. Sandwich and Suffolk pushed through the Administration of Justice Act, introduced in mid-April. This act provided exemption from any high crimes committed in Massachusetts by royal officials in the course of their duties. Any royal official committing a capital crime in the course of collecting revenue or suppressing a riot would now have his trial transferred from the local courts to Great Britain, provided that the governor and Council decided that the official could not receive a fair trial in Massachusetts. This exemption act passed overwhelmingly, despite the opposition of Colonel Barré and others, and the king signed it on May 20.

No other act could have been more calculated to arouse the fears and hostilities of the colonists than the fourth Coercive Act, the Quartering Act, which revived the troubles over quartering British troops on the colonists. This act applied to *all* the colonies and forced the provinces to supply unoccupied houses and dwellings to quarter British troops at the location desired by the latter, for example, to put up the troops in Boston proper rather than at government barracks at Castle William. The Quartering Act, introduced at the same time as the third Coercive Act, whipped through Commons without debate and was opposed in the House of Lords only by Chatham. The measure received royal approval on June 7.

The beleaguered Whigs heroically tried to counterattack during the passage of the Coercive Acts. In mid-April, Rose Fuller moved repeal of the Tea Act and was backed by Fox, Barré, and an eloquent and widely circulated speech by Edmund Burke. However, the motion was voted down by an overwhelming majority.

## The Quebec Act

A fifth act passed concurrently in the same session was regarded by the colonists and by the Rockingham Whigs as part of the coercive series. The Quebec Act was introduced in early May and passed and approved by the king at the end of June, over the vigorous opposition of Barré, Fox, Burke, and Chatham. The bulk of present-day historians have chided Whigs and Americans for their opposition and “fantasies” about the bill and have praised the Quebec Act as a wise and “statesmanlike” measure. The Quebec Act had two basic parts: fastening a permanent frame of government on the people of Quebec, and aggressively expanding the province’s borders. The latter provision arbitrarily but provisionally extended the domain of Quebec to the French communities in the Ohio Valley and Illinois Country. Although such extension threatened to interfere with speculative claims to the western lands, the act’s rather vague clause occasioned little protest, because the land involved was a virtually unpopulated area concerning which the Crown, beset by conflicting speculative interests, had never been able to make up its mind on a proper land policy.

The really intense opposition to the Quebec Act, in both England and America, centered on its “domestic provisions”—its permanent frame of government for the hapless French who had been conquered in the French and Indian War and governed only in tentative, makeshift fashion since. The root premise of this supposedly statesmanlike measure was the ingrained English view that the French Canadians were an inferior race, unfit for self-government and fit only to be governed by an English ruling class. (There was at that time only a handful of English in Canada, mainly merchants and royal bureaucrats.) The Quebec Act deprived Quebec completely of any elected

Assembly (even the previously existing Assembly for the handful of English there) and of any right to trial by jury in civil cases. Full legislative authority was vested in a royally appointed Council, but even the acts of this creature of the Crown were subject to royal veto. Moreover, the power to levy all but purely local taxes upon the Canadians was vested in Parliament itself. Executive power was to accrue to a royally appointed military governor. Furthermore, a supplementary act levied duties on imports into Quebec to pay the salaries of the royally appointed officials.

The chill that this schema sent up the American colonists' spine can well be imagined. For in this there seemed to be a model of the ultimate aim of Great Britain: to reduce *all* the American colonies to abject creatures totally ruled by instruments of Parliament and the Crown. English or natural liberties such as trial by jury, no taxation without consent by representation, and Assembly control over executive salaries were arrogantly swept away. And there was in the Quebec Act not even a hint of any future self-government for Canada.

The Quebec Act, to be sure, disestablished the Anglican church and removed the grievous disabilities under which the French Catholics had suffered since the British conquest. But instead of allowing simple religious liberty, the Quebec Act reimposed the Roman Catholic church as the established religious communion, thus restoring the feudal political privileges to the seigneurs and the church against which the poor *habitants* had been struggling for many years. The compulsory re-establishment of the Catholic church was no service either to the people of Quebec or to the church itself. For, as in so many cases in history, the *quid pro quo* exacted for special privilege was special *control*. Under the act, the Catholic church and its revenues were placed under Crown control and the Catholic church of Quebec was to be completely severed from the Roman See. As Lord North promised, "No bishop will be there under papal authority, because . . . Great Britain will not permit any papal authority whatever in the country."

Current historians attribute the English and American horror at these provisions to simple anti-Catholic prejudice. Although this certainly played an ample role, the Whigs—the leading English opponents of the Quebec Act—were long-time champions of religious liberty for Quebec as well as Britain. They had fought valiantly for absolute toleration of the Catholic church in religious matters, including even permission for a resident bishop. Their objection to the religious provisions of the Quebec Act was the reimposition of an established church and of corollary feudalism. They realized that the North ministry was seeking to gain the political support of the Quebec clergy by granting them special political privileges.

The Whigs also denounced the Quebec Act's limitation on rights of jury trial, and its replacing an elected Assembly with a royally appointed Council. And their main protest at the extension of Quebec to the western lands was the consequent extension of these evil and despotic principles to the vast areas

of the west. Edmund Burke did yeoman work in alerting New York to the nature and implications of the Quebec Act, as well as to its threat to New York's own western land claims—a service that helped greatly in radicalizing opinion in that often conservative province.

One of the fruits, in fact, of Burke's opposition to all the Coercive Acts was his election to Parliament in the autumn from Bristol, the second greatest port of England and the metropolis of west England, and the home of leading merchants in the American trade. Bristol bitterly opposed the coercive measures, and Wilkite radicalism grew rapidly there—in fact, the other newly elected representative from Bristol was the prominent New York merchant and ardent radical, Henry Cruger, Jr. Aside from Bristol, however, the fall election was a triumph for the government and a defeat for the Whigs; no check on British power would emanate from that quarter.

## Boston Calls for the Solemn League and Covenant

The four Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act—soon to be called by the colonists the Intolerable Acts—struck the Americans with the force of a thunderclap. The savage repression of Boston was to the American colonies the hurling down of the gauntlet. The embattled colonists, sharpened and increasingly unified by the years of struggle for liberty against Great Britain, hastened to accept that challenge.

The shocking news of the Boston Port Act—the first Coercive Act—reached Boston on May 11, 1774. It was immediately clear that the fate of Boston, and of the entire American resistance movement, of which Boston was the leader, now hinged on the all-important question: Would the other American towns and colonies come to the aid of Boston in this great crisis? On hearing the news, the Boston Town Meeting and neighboring committees of correspondence met to decide their course. The frightened conservatives attacked the Tea Party as being mob violence and urged submission by paying for the tea. The radicals, however, firmly declared that they would see Boston burned before paying a farthing to the East India Company. The May 13 Boston Town Meeting, led by Sam Adams, resolved to appeal to other Americans for united action against Great Britain. It urged a joint American boycott not only of all imports from Great Britain, but of exports as well, until the Port Act was repealed. The Boston Committee of Correspondence was instructed to inform the other colonies. The same day, May 13, the committee joined other committees of eight neighboring towns to urge upon all other colonies the total boycott of trade with Britain. The radical Boston engraver and courier Paul Revere was then sent to the critical ports of New York and Philadelphia with Boston's appeal. Boston urgently impressed upon its corre-

spondents that it was the first line of defense of the liberty of all Americans, and that it was being singled out for punishment simply because it had long been the vanguard of that defense.

First to respond and rally to Boston's support were the other towns of Massachusetts, including even the towns of Salem and Marblehead, which presumably would have benefited by the closing of Boston and the shifting of the site of government and customs officials. Liberal donations of food and money soon poured into suffering Boston from towns and provinces as far away as South Carolina. When the black day of June 1 dawned and the Port Act went into effect, angry demonstrations took place throughout the colonies. In Philadelphia, church bells tolled and shops closed. In New York, effigies of Lord North, Hutchinson, and the devil were paraded through the streets and burned. In Connecticut, the Port Act was publicly burned and executed. Newport, which had had its differences with Boston in the past, pledged its aid to the Bostonians, "who have so nobly stood as a barrier against slavery." This unification was indeed spurred by the fact that the other leading ports knew they had treated the British tea as roughly, if not nearly as dramatically, as had Boston.

As the fateful day of June 1, 1774, drew near, the conservatives of Boston made a last-ditch attempt to reverse the tide. But the town meeting of May 30 resolved not to consume any British manufactures and to boycott any violators. As Hutchinson prepared to leave office, however, 124 Boston conservatives signed a petition praising the administration of Hutchinson (and another welcoming General Gage), and promised to pay their share of the damage for the destroyed East India tea. About a quarter of the signers were merchants, many of them wealthy.

The Boston merchants had been persuaded by the committee of correspondence to agree to a total boycott of Britain, provided that merchants of other American colonies would agree to join. In early June, the radicals were dismayed to find merchants of other towns refusing to agree, and the conservative merchants of Boston then hastened to abrogate their agreement. The eminent liberal Congregational minister, the Reverend Charles Chauncy of Boston, angrily denounced the defecting merchants: "So many of them are so mercenary as to find within themselves a readiness to become slaves themselves, as well as to be accessory to the slavery of others, if they imagine they may by this means serve their own private separate interest."

Sam Adams and the radicals had learned better during the Townshend struggles than to rely on merchants to boycott for principle; now, the whole body of consumers was to engage in the boycott. Counterattacking, the Boston Committee of Correspondence adopted on June 5 the "Solemn League and Covenant," drawn up by Dr. Joseph Warren and other radicals. The Solemn League urged *all* Americans to sign a pledge to boycott immediately all trade with Great Britain, and to bar all purchases and all consumption of British

products after October 1. It also pledged in turn to boycott forever any American who refused to sign such a covenant. Dependence on the merchants was bypassed for reliance on the voluntary actions of the masses of the people.

Conservative Boston merchants counterattacked vigorously and tried to challenge the committee. The Boston Town Meeting endorsed the Solemn League and Covenant on June 17, but a final battle between conservatives and liberals took place in the Boston Town Meeting of June 27–28. The meeting overwhelmingly defeated a motion of censure and voted approval of the actions of its committee of correspondence. In contrast, Governor Gage ordered magistrates to arrest any persons circulating the “traitorous” covenant. Defying this proclamation, nearly every Bostonian signed the pledge.

The Massachusetts towns were quick to rally to the Solemn League and Covenant. The town of Worcester, in fact, strengthened the covenant by advancing the date of nonimportation from October 1 to August 1. The covenant was adopted by fourteen other Massachusetts towns, among them Gloucester, Braintree, and Shrewsbury; towns outside the province announced their support, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, being one. Furthermore, special county conventions in Massachusetts endorsed the total boycott, including those of Berkshire, Suffolk, Plymouth, and Bristol.

Meanwhile, other towns were responding to Boston’s boycott appeal of May 13. The town meeting of Providence, Rhode Island, on May 17 introduced an important and creative new proposal: a congress of representatives from all the colonies to conduct and unite the American boycott and resistance. In addition, Providence expressed willingness to enter into a joint boycott, as did Newport and New Haven. The real problem was the reaction of Philadelphia and New York to Boston’s plea; hence the importance of Paul Revere’s speeding the transmission of Boston’s circular letter to those cities.

New York’s radicals in control of its committees of correspondence were as eager as Boston’s to join the boycott and pledge their support. But the radicals in New York faced far stronger conservative opposition in that oligarchy-ridden province, and they sadly lacked a revolutionary leader with the brilliance and dedication of Sam Adams. The radicals had called a series of meetings of merchants and mechanics on May 13. At the meeting a committee of twenty-five was set up that included conservatives but was dominated by the old committee of the Sons of Liberty. At a public meeting of merchants on May 16, however, radical leaders Isaac Sears and Alexander MacDougall saw to their dismay a successful vote to oust the existing committee of correspondence and to replace it with a new and larger committee that had enough conservatives to put it under right-wing control. Fully half the merchants on the new committee had been zealous in breaking the nonimportation agreement in 1770, and twenty of the fifty-one members were later to choose the Tory side in the Revolution.

On May 19 a public mass meeting of the inhabitants of the city and county

met to act on the nominations made at the merchants' meeting of three days before. The conservative merchants demonstrated their dominance by making their leader—and chairman of the new committee of correspondence—Isaac Low, chairman of the meeting. Aside from agreeing to add one radical to the committee, the conservatives swept the meeting. Whereupon Governor Cadwallader Colden was moved to write exultantly to the Earl of Dartmouth that the new Committee of Fifty-one was made up of some of the wisest and most prudent citizens of New York.

The decision of how to reply to Boston's appeal was now in the hands of New York's conservatives, who decided to use Providence's call for a general congress—meant to implement the boycott—as a tactic for delaying any effective action. The new Committee of Fifty-one therefore answered Boston on May 23 that all action should be postponed until an interprovincial congress could be held. Boston vainly replied by urging immediate nonintercourse with Britain rather than wait many months for a congress; but New York was adamant. It was such responses as New York's that drove the Boston radicals to endorse the Solemn League and Covenant, by which the masses could impose a total boycott over the heads of recalcitrant merchants.\*

The Committee of Fifty-one tried to prod new committees of correspondence from the New York towns into being, but the few that did appear—in Suffolk County, Orange County, and Cumberland County—urged the radical Boston program of immediate boycott.

To counteract the conservative coup, the radicals held their own meeting, denounced the Port Act, urged an immediate nonimportation agreement, and named their own committee of correspondence. The Sons of Liberty also countered the Committee of Fifty-one by creating a new Committee of Mechanics to operate as a center of radical pressure.

A similar conservative victory had occurred at the same time in the other major port of Philadelphia. The strong group of conservatives wished to confine American protest to a timorous petition of grievances to Great Britain. On the other hand, the radicals, led by the Philadelphia iron manufacturer and distiller Charles Thomson, wished to heed Boston's appeal. When Paul Revere brought Boston's letter, the radical leaders—Thomson, already known as the "Sam Adams of Philadelphia," and the young Quaker Thomas Mifflin—called a public meeting for the next day, May 20, and tried desperately to enlist the great John Dickinson in their cause. But it often happens to pioneers in a revolutionary movement that the movement's dynamic advance leaves them behind in a kind of crabbed *cul-de-sac*. Such had recently been

\*John C. Miller is completely in error when he asserts at length that the New York, and Philadelphia, conservatives were here reacting against the Solemn League and Covenant. For these meetings, calling for postponement until a congress should open, took place several weeks *before* the covenant was drawn up. In truth, the covenant was a reaction against the conservative decisions in New York and Philadelphia. See John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 363ff.

happening to Dickinson, who caviled at the Boston Tea Party and at the bold resistance movement required by current conditions. At the meeting of May 20, Thomson and Mifflin urged an immediate declaration making common cause with Boston; instead, Dickinson and Joseph Reed gained the day with an unhappy bit of stalling, pleading with the governor for a special session of the Assembly to petition for redress of grievances. Furthermore, the committee of correspondence selected by the meeting to answer Boston was also dominated by the conservative forces. In its letter to Boston of May 21, the Philadelphia committee showed itself even more conservative than New York: it had the bad taste to denounce the Tea Party, it pressed Massachusetts to compensate the East India Company, it called for varying the boycott plan by reserving it for a last resort, and it urged that a general congress be strictly confined to petitioning the Crown. The letter was drawn up by the highly conservative and Tory Anglican minister Dr. William Smith, head of the College of Philadelphia. This response also contributed to Boston's adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant.

The only recourse left to the Pennsylvania radicals was to exploit the governor's rejection of the petition for a special session of the Assembly. When the expected rejection was announced, radicals forced a new committee of correspondence upon the old committee by calling a meeting of two hundred angry mechanics (artisans) for June 9. This artisan pressure forced the old committee to call a general mass meeting of Philadelphia City and County for an enlarged committee on June 18. But the conservatives moved skillfully behind the scenes to control the mass meeting in advance: the caucus selected a new committee comprising the old committee and twenty-seven representatives of religious sects in the city. The proposed committee was strongly under the control of the conservatives, who cleverly chose the eminent John Dickinson to be chairman, and thus to serve as a front man for their designs. The meeting proved easily amenable to manipulation by the conservative-religious caucus. The handpicked Committee of Forty-three was selected, and an inter-colonial congress proposed to petition for redress of grievances. No mention was made of Boston's appeal for a boycott of Great Britain. During the next three weeks, most counties in Pennsylvania created committees of correspondence and obediently adopted the Philadelphia resolution for an interprovincial congress.

Thus, Boston's appeal for immediate and total nonintercourse with Britain had been shunted aside by the victorious conservative forces of New York and Philadelphia, who instead took up and perverted Providence's proposal for a general congress. The conservatives had two aims in mind: to delay any action for the many months' time necessary to call and hold a congress; and, second, to limit the congress to a peaceful—and innocuous—petition of Great Britain and to keep it from such radical measures as a total boycott. The desperate response of the Boston radicals was the Solemn League and Covenant,

calling for a general public boycott of Britain to override the merchants and the local governments. But while many towns of Massachusetts approved the covenant, other towns of the province, including Marblehead, Salem, Charlestown, and Springfield, decided to wait for the congress as did most of the towns in Connecticut.

It was swiftly evident to the Boston leaders that the covenant could not be pushed through immediately, and that the conservatives had at least achieved their objective of delay. The Boston radicals were unyielding in matters of principle; but they were eminently adaptable and realistic in matters of tactics. And so they quickly cut their losses and decided to join the movement for an intercolonial congress. The official call for the congress accordingly came from the Massachusetts Assembly on June 17; the "Continental Congress" was to meet at Philadelphia on September 5. The great struggles within the American revolutionary movement were now to be waged for the soul of the Continental Congress.

Meanwhile, the pressing emergency was the shutdown of the port of Boston by the nearby British fleet. Generous donations of food and supplies from all the colonies kept the Bostonians from acutely suffering from the British blockade. The passage of the later Coercive Acts helped to radicalize American opinion still further, and the Boston Committee of Correspondence urged civil disobedience against the invalid abrogation of the Massachusetts charter and the innovation of a royally appointed Council. The new councilors found themselves beset by American mobs and by social ostracism, and they were soon forced to flee to Boston and the arms of General Gage. The judges and sheriffs newly appointed by Gage also soon joined their Tory colleagues. In addition, the general threat to the liberty of the other colonies from the Coercive Acts appeared to be reinforced by the Quebec Act, which also seemed to raise the old specter of "popery."

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## Selecting Delegates to the First Continental Congress

From mid-June until the opening of the Congress, the major struggles were waged over the selection of delegates in the various colonies and the lining up of support for or opposition to a total boycott of trade with Great Britain. Massachusetts' delegates were chosen by the Assembly on the day of the call, June 17, and in defiance of General Gage. Makeup of the delegates, including Sam Adams and John Adams, as well as the conservative Thomas Cushing, ensured Massachusetts' leadership of the radical forces in the Congress.

In New York the radicals, now centered in the Committee of Mechanics, prepared to do battle over delegates with the conservative Committee of Fifty-one. At a meeting of the latter committee on July 4, the radicals' proposal for a concurrent choice of delegates by the two committees was beaten by a two-to-one majority, and the Committee of Fifty-one thus gained the exclusive privilege of naming delegates. Nominated as delegates were four staunch conservatives: Isaac Low, James Duane, John Alsop, and the very young lawyer John Jay, as well as the middle-of-the-road merchant Philip Livingston. The embittered radicals struck back and called a meeting of their own on July 6, at which Boston was energetically supported and the forthcoming Congress urged to agree to nonimportation. The radical pressure forced a general mass meeting of July 7 to vote to poll all the taxpayers, freeholders, and freemen of New York City on the delegates, under joint supervision of the two rival committees. The radicals were to run leaders Alexander MacDougall and Leonard Lispenard against Alsop and Duane. But the Committee of Fifty-one immediately reneged on the agreement to hold a general election, and eleven radical members of the committee heatedly resigned the next day. Ignoring the radicals, the committee resolved on July 13 to keep the original

slate of five, and instructed them not to call for a boycott. But the public meeting called by the committee for July 19 bitterly overruled the Committee of Fifty-one, created a new committee of ten radicals and five conservatives, and substituted two radicals, "unexceptionable friends of liberty," for Livingston and Duane. But the Committee of Fifty-one again scorned a public meeting, this time one called by itself, and now pressed forward plans for a general election. The conservatives managed to defeat radical resolutions at a public meeting of July 25 and went ahead with a public election of delegates on July 28. In exchange for the rather feeble statement by the five candidates that a "faithfully observed" general nonimportation agreement seemed to be the most effective measure for the Congress to take, the radicals suddenly capitulated, and the five conservative choices were unanimously selected as delegates from the city and county of New York.

Of the thirteen other counties of New York province, six took no action at all in securing representation in the Congress, while four counties (Albany, Westchester, Dutchess, Ulster) gladly authorized the conservative city delegates to act for them. Only three counties proceeded to elect delegates of their own: Suffolk and Orange counties, where the towns had supported a boycott, and Kings County, where two liberal citizens selected one of their number to be the delegate from the entire county.

Thus, New York's internecine struggle resulted in a largely conservative delegation. Pennsylvania's problems, however, were rather different. The Committee of Forty-three, to be sure, was largely in conservative hands, under the middle-of-the-road chairmanship of John Dickinson. But in Pennsylvania, much farther right than these conservatives was the arch-Tory faction headed by the wily and powerful Speaker of the House Joseph Galloway. To Galloway, all popular resistance going beyond humble petitioning of Parliament was rank anarchy. Galloway similarly insisted that the delegates to the Congress be chosen by the legally constituted provincial Assembly; any other method would be popular and hence revolutionary—and not subject to the control of Joseph Galloway. To combat the Galloway threat and also to push its own extralegal case, the Committee of Forty-three decided on June 27 to call a convention of county committees to advise the Assembly on a choice of delegates. Such a convention, not subject to the undemocratic weighting of representation in behalf of the eastern counties, was bound to be more radical than the Assembly.

An extralegal and hence revolutionary provincial convention of county committees was called by the Committee of Forty-three for July 15. Press controversy raged, meanwhile, over the Boston boycott proposal, and a radical artisan-and-trader meeting in Philadelphia urging a boycott was ignored by the Committee of Forty-three. The Pennsylvania Convention, meeting on July 15–20 under the guidance of John Dickinson and the committee, labored mightily to bring forth a mouse. Boycott was urged as only a last resort after

petitioning, but any boycott agreed upon by the Congress would receive full support. Pennsylvania delegates were instructed to ask for redress of the various American grievances, in return for which Americans would pay an annual revenue to the king and pay all damages to the East India Company. In response to this highly tame resolution the Galloway faction denounced the illegal convention as "setting up anarchy above order . . . THE BEGINNING OF REPUBLICANISM." Galloway ignored the tortured pleas of the convention and selected delegates exclusively from the Assembly itself; but the liberals managed to add Dickinson to the list late in the proceedings of the Assembly.

In New England the radicals had little trouble in dominating the selection of delegates. In Connecticut, delegates were chosen by the Assembly's committee of correspondence. In Rhode Island, they were chosen by the General Assembly. Looking forward to a "firm and inviolable union of all the colonies," Rhode Island chose Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward, leaders of the two hostile political factions in the province, as its two delegates. But this gesture of unity was to be overshadowed by the apparent desire of Ward and Hopkins to disagree with each other on all vital matters. As to New Hampshire, when Governor Wentworth prevented the House from choosing delegates, the representatives called an extralegal convention of the towns to choose the delegates from that colony.

Back in the middle colonies, New Jersey's Assembly, as well as meetings of eleven of the province's thirteen counties, sturdily endorsed nonimportation and nonconsumption and "perhaps nonexportation." Delegates to the Congress were chosen by provincial convention of county committees of correspondence, which recommended nonimportation and nonconsumption. In Delaware, mass meetings in the three counties selected representatives to a convention at New Castle, which chose delegates to the Congress.

In the South, the first province to react to the crisis in Boston was Maryland. The inhabitants of Annapolis met on May 25 and adopted an impeccably radical set of resolutions, pledging to join an association for immediate nonimportation and nonexportation with Great Britain. Any province not agreeing was in turn to be boycotted. The meeting further urged lawyers not to bring suits for recovery of debt due to Britain until the Port Act was repealed. Within a few weeks, eight of Maryland's sixteen counties followed the lead of Annapolis, the bulk of them favoring a total boycott and half of them suspension of debt collections. On June 22, a provincewide convention of county committees of correspondence (chosen by the county meetings) met at Annapolis. Every county in the province was represented, with each county being allocated one vote. The convention urged the Congress to adopt boycott agreements and pledged to follow its lead.

Virginia was particularly exercised at the brutal treatment meted out to Boston. On hearing news of the Port Act, Richard Henry Lee was dissuaded only with difficulty from pressing for an immediate declaration in behalf of

Boston. On May 24 the House of Burgesses, adopting an idea of the brilliant young lawyer and planter Thomas Jefferson, unanimously set aside the fateful first of June as a "day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer." Governor Dunmore retaliated by dissolving the House, but the burgesses met as supposedly private citizens on the 27th and formed an association to boycott the use of tea, and suggested an annual general congress. This was a feeble resolution indeed. But when Boston's circular letter arrived at the end of May, Peyton Randolph gathered the remaining burgesses together, and this rump, divided on tactics, called a meeting of burgesses for August 1 to decide Virginia's course.

To guide this extralegal provincial convention, thirty-one counties of Virginia held public meetings to frame instructions and resolutions. Of the thirty-one, twenty counties declared for absolute boycott of Great Britain jointly with other provinces, while eight others advocated nonimportation only. Three Virginia counties (Accomack, Dinwiddie, Isle of Wight) were conservative enough to leave all matters up to the provincial convention. Eight counties wished to couple suspension of debt collection with nonexportation. Six of the counties took the occasion to denounce the importation of slaves from Africa and two (Fairfax and Hanover) actually condemned slavery itself as immoral.

The period of June and July was particularly appropriate for forming public opinion. In it two important contributions to the public debate advanced the American cause far beyond where even the radicals were officially prepared to go. Particularly important was a Virginia contribution by Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. This widely circulated pamphlet proposed instructions for the Virginia delegates, and rejected all parliamentary authority whatever over the colonies, acknowledging that allegiance was owed only to the king. Since the British king could not impose legislation or taxation without Parliament, such allegiance would necessarily be more ceremonial and *pro forma* than anything else, and signified an advance to virtual independence from Great Britain. Jefferson grounded his case not only on legal and historical claims but especially on the Lockean natural rights of man. The libertarian rights of the colonists included freedom of trade with all parts of the world, and this right invalidated even parliamentary attempts to regulate American trade. Even the king himself was warned to desist from tyranny: ". . . kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people. Open your breast, sire, to liberal and expanded thought. Let not the name of George III be a blot on the page of history."

It might be noted that shortly after publication of Jefferson's pamphlet, a rising young Pennsylvania lawyer, James Wilson, issued an updated version of an unpublished paper of six years before. Wilson's *Considerations on the Nature and Extent of the Legislative Authority of the British Parliament* also espoused independence of parliamentary authority. Legislatures must them-

selves be regulated by natural law, wrote Wilson, who added: "All men are, by nature, equal and free: No one has a right to any authority over another without his consent. . . ." Citing the Swiss political theorist Jean Jacques Burlamaqui, Wilson proclaimed that "all power is derived from the people—that their happiness is the end of government," and that any invasions of this principle were illegitimate acts of government. From what source, then, does the alleged sovereignty of Parliament flow? "Have they a natural right to make laws, by which we may be deprived of our properties, of our liberties, of our lives? . . . What act of ours has rendered us subject to those, to whom we were formerly equal? Do those, who embark, free men, in Great Britain, disembark, slaves, in America . . .?"

Another important and trenchantly radical essay in Virginia was a series of pseudonymous articles in the *Virginia Gazette* by the eminent lawyer and planter Thomson Mason. Mason denied Parliament's power to legislate for the colonies, but his major stress was on the methods for Americans to pursue—on tactics rather than basic philosophic principles. Brilliantly rejecting total boycott as a temporizing and rather vulnerable measure, Thomson Mason boldly cut straight to the heart of the matter: Congress should flatly refuse every law, regulation, and tax imposed by Parliament. And should this total civil disobedience to Great Britain be challenged by British arms, it should press onward to armed resistance and outright secession if necessary. For Mason realized that more was at stake than nonintercourse with Britain; far more important would be civil disobedience at least to the anti-Massachusetts laws and perhaps to all the others as well.

The Virginia Convention met on August 1–6. Spurred by Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and the radical planters George Mason, George Washington, and Richard Henry Lee, the convention proceeded to top all previous colonial gatherings, save that of Massachusetts and its Solemn League and Covenant, by refusing to wait for the Congress to impose a boycott. The convention boldly adopted the Virginia Association, which pledged: (1) immediate nonimportation and nonuse of any kind of tea; (2) an absolute boycott of all direct or indirect imports from Great Britain (including slaves from Africa or the West Indies) except medicines, beginning on November 1; and (3) absolute nonexportation direct or indirect to Great Britain, beginning on August 10, 1775. The total boycott would remain in effect until all the grievances named by the Congress were redressed. To supervise enforcement of the association, a committee was chosen in each county, and nonsigning or violating merchants and traders were publicly boycotted and severed from all dealings with the public.

North Carolina followed after Virginia and thus came under radical control. A six-county meeting was held at Wilmington on July 21, under the chairmanship of a young ex-Bostonian lawyer, William Hooper. A provincial convention representing the counties was then called for August 25. Governor

Josiah Martin proclaimed his prohibition of this scheduled "illegal meeting," but the North Carolinians simply ignored the decree. The provincial convention met on schedule at New Bern, with thirty-two of the thirty-eight counties and two of the six towns represented. The convention adopted a slightly modified variant of the Virginia Association: East India tea was not to be used after September 10, all British imports except medicine were to stop after January 1 (no slaves imported after November 1, 1774), and no exports to Great Britain after October 1, 1775. In one respect, North Carolina went slightly beyond its sister colony, for it pledged a boycott of any province, town, or individual that failed to abide by any plan adopted by the Continental Congress.

In South Carolina the radical leaders, notable as they were, had a far more difficult time. On hearing of the Boston Port Act, Peter Timothy and his *South Carolina Gazette* called for a general nonimportation and perhaps nonexportation with Britain. Christopher Gadsden, "the Sam Adams of South Carolina," was of course ready to plunge wholeheartedly into the fray, even at the risk of his entire considerable mercantile fortune. However, the merchants and factors were generally recalcitrant, and the rice planters, heavily dependent on export of their staple, were strongly opposed to any nonexport agreement. A plea to wait for Congress to act therefore exerted great effect in South Carolina.

On June 13 the General Committee of Charleston called a general meeting, representing the people of South Carolina, for July 6. Articles in Timothy's *Gazette* called insistently for boycott instructions to the delegates at the Congress, but the newly formed chamber of commerce bitterly opposed any boycott measure and drew up a slate of delegate nominations that pledged to support the chamber's views.

The extralegal general provincial meeting took place at Charleston, July 6-8. Appointment of representatives was haphazard and chaotic, but the meeting soon clearly divided into two factions. The radicals favored adopting the Boston boycott idea immediately, and allowing South Carolina's delegates to the Congress full power to vote. The conservatives wanted restricted powers for the delegates and a postponement of all action until Congress made its decision. The first step of the convention was to reject any immediate boycott. Following this, the convention vested the delegation with full power to vote for any measures at the Congress.

The struggle now shifted to the personnel of the South Carolina delegation. Here every freeman of the entire province was declared to be entitled to vote. However, the radicals proved themselves even more tactically inept than in New York; for although the radical slate won the election by over four hundred votes, the radicals had oddly chosen, on their slate of five, no less than three conservatives. Thus a conservative majority was assured for South Carolina's delegation to the Congress. Only conservative Edward Rutledge's

status as son-in-law to Gadsden seems to account for his place (and that of his brother John) on the radical slate. On August 2 the Commons House of Assembly officially ratified the slate of delegates and voted money for their expenses.

By the end of August, twelve American colonies had selected delegates to the Continental Congress—with Massachusetts, Virginia, and North Carolina leading the radical cause, having already pledged a comprehensive boycott of trade with Great Britain. Only one colony sent no delegates: the newest, smallest, and southernmost province of Georgia.

The task of the radicals in Georgia proved insurmountable. In the first place, Georgia received a generous annual subsidy from Parliament and as a result was hagridden by as many placemen and government bureaucrats as the most populous of colonies. It received one million dollars a year in general subsidy as well as lavish bounties for growing silk and indigo. The vested economic interests created in the tiny colony by this lavish spending by the British government proved too much to overcome. Furthermore, back-country Georgians hankered after British troops to aid them in fighting the numerous Creeks and other Indians in the back country, as well as, perhaps, heavily armed Spanish Louisiana. Finally, Georgia was the only colony with no charter and therefore with no legal rights recognized by Great Britain. Georgians were thus at the mercy of their royally appointed governor.

The small group of radicals in Georgia were concentrated in Christ Church Parish, including the seaport of Savannah, and St. John's Parish directly to the south, which contained former citizens of Dorchester, Massachusetts, who had founded the settlements of Midway and Sunbury. The latter was later to be renamed, appropriately, "Liberty County." Toward the end of July, the Georgia radicals, under the plotting of their South Carolina confreres, peppered the *Georgia Gazette* with propaganda defending the Boston cause. Hastily, on July 20, the *Gazette* called for a provincial meeting at Savannah on July 27. This meeting first rejected, then fraudulently drove through the appointment of a committee to draw up resolutions. The meeting, seeing itself beleaguered and outnumbered, called a systematically selected, though extralegal, provincial convention at Savannah for August 10. Sir James Wright followed the usual precedent of provincial governors by interdicting the forthcoming meeting, while forty-six inhabitants of St. Paul Parish (Augusta) attacked any solidarity with Boston and called for British troops to aid in fighting Indians.

The convention of August 10 condemned the Coercive Acts and pledged Georgia's support to measures of redress adopted by the other colonies. For the first time in an American province, a motion to select delegates to the Continental Congress was rejected—this despite numerous irregular practices committed by the desperate radicals. From Savannah to the back country, numerous protests poured in against the secrecy, fraud, and misrepresentation

practiced by the radicals, but all these practices were to no avail. The intrepid radicals of St. John's Parish, in a last desperate try, held a convention of St. John's, St. George's (Waynesboro), and St. David's parishes, and chose Dr. Lyman Hall as delegate, provided that the other parishes would agree. But nothing ever came of this plea. Georgia alone remained unrepresented at the Continental Congress of 1774.

## Resistance in Massachusetts

While the Congress prepared to meet, revolutionary struggles were greatly intensifying in Massachusetts. General Gage had reoccupied Boston with four regiments of British troops sent from Ireland; additional regiments were also transferred to Boston. The people of Boston did not attempt to meet the troops head-on. Instead they engaged in a thoroughgoing campaign of mass noncooperation, of nonviolent resistance to the British troops. First, the town refused to provide barracks for the soldiery, obliging them to camp out on Boston Common for the remainder of 1774. A voluntary boycott was instituted against the British: the Boston Committee of Correspondence ordered carpenters not to help erect barracks; lumber was cut off; and merchants refused to sell the British tools or supplies of any kind. Sabotage of materials also disrupted Gage's plans. Gage was forced to bring construction workers from Nova Scotia to build the barracks. All in all, the British soldiers were surrounded with a wall of hostility. And the liberal press kept up a drumfire of propaganda about the rapes and robberies committed by the "bloody soldiery."

Mass resistance in Massachusetts also extended to the body of the Coercive Acts. In August, Gage published a list of thirty-six new royally appointed "Mandamus Councillors," who succeeded the old councillors in accordance with the Massachusetts Government Act. A meeting of delegates from the towns declared them unconstitutional and suggested a new revolutionary provincial congress to become the new government of Massachusetts. The knot of notorious Tories chosen for the new Council was subjected to intense mob pressure, which forced the councillors either to resign or to take refuge in the arms of British troops in Boston. Abijah Williams, Lieutenant Gover-

nor Thomas Oliver, Justice Peter Oliver, Foster Hutchinson, and eleven others were forced to resign. So extensive was the use of Boston as a place of refuge for Tory officials that the Whig leader Edmund Burke caustically taunted the British in Parliament, saying, "He had often heard of such places for thieves, rogues, and female orphans; but it was the first time he ever heard of an asylum for magistrates." General Gage contemplated sending troops into the countryside to protect councillors and judges from popular wrath, but threw up his hands at the universality of opposition to these appointees.

The royal courts were also subject to harassment now that judges were removable at pleasure rather than for ill behavior. The Pittsfield Town Meeting urged the people to resist the Coercive Acts "to the last extremity," and resolved that no courts should sit until the Massachusetts Government Act was repealed. Indeed, all courts were stopped throughout Massachusetts by methods ranging from persuasion to outright coercion. In Boston, the chief justice and sheriffs were unable to find a juror who would be sworn so that the superior court could meet.

To settle its special problems as the center of conflict with Great Britain, Massachusetts, during the summer, was preparing for an extralegal provincial congress in the autumn. County conventions overwhelmingly protested the Coercive Acts and attacked the appointment of officials at royal pleasure, the destruction of trial by jury, and the payment of government salaries apart from any control by the representatives of the people. All implied that even armed resistance would be justified to prevent enforcement of the Coercive Acts and called for a provincial congress to organize the opposition. Town meetings did the same and ratified the county conventions, and Brookline voted to indemnify any town official for any penalty incurred from violating the Coercive Acts.

As Massachusetts' resistance grew and deepened, and a wall of resistance—nonviolent at least in relation to the British army and navy—built up against the Coercive Acts, General Gage became increasingly frightened and trigger-happy. He was under increasing pressure by his superiors to reflect the chauvinist contempt of the British for the Americans. The British leaders held that a mere show of force, a mere cleaving to a hard line and eschewing the temptation to appeasement, would quickly drum the numerous but craven colonials into line. The military men were eager to crush the Americans, and believed, with the narrowness and vainglory of the military mind, that this could be accomplished easily. Gage began to follow the classic and fateful path of a minority in power that is faced with the determined and largely nonviolent resistance of the majority: recourse to aggressive use of state violence against the people. Thus Gage tried to use troops to prevent a Salem Town Meeting called to select delegates to a county convention of protest; his attempt failed. Later, on September 1, Gage sent troops into Charlestown and Cambridge to seize cannon and ammunition belonging to the province of

Massachusetts. Twenty thousand men of the western towns of Massachusetts quickly gathered in Cambridge to march on Boston, but were persuaded to turn back by cooler heads who realized that American unity had not yet been sufficiently forged to back up such a direct attack on the armed forces of Great Britain. But meanwhile, town meetings and county conventions in Massachusetts were calling for more military training for its militia, in preparation for possible armed resistance.

Despite General Gage's increasing reliance on aggressiveness and bluster, he recognized that his concrete military situation was precarious. He urged Britain to send reinforcements and decided in early September to fortify Boston Neck. Reacting to the latter plan, Boston workers boycotted the project and refused to help build the fortifications. Learning that Gage would apply at New York, Boston's Committee of Mechanics successfully warned the New Yorkers not to export carpenters to Boston.

## The First Continental Congress

On September 5, 1774, there met at Philadelphia the most fateful and momentous assemblage ever gathered in the colonies: the Continental Congress. Brilliant and distinguished, the colonial leaders had come to decide the course of the colonies. They were, besides being eminent, young and vigorous, the average age of the delegates being only forty-five.

It soon became evident that there were two polar groups at the Congress: the radicals, determined on resistance to the British; and the conservatives, bent on more securely fastening the British yoke upon the colonies. It was sensibly determined that with the number of delegates varying greatly from each colony, the colonies would vote as separate units. Leading the radical forces were Massachusetts, headed by the brilliant father of the revolution Sam Adams and graced by his rising young distant cousin John Adams, and Virginia, whose delegation included the eminent young leaders Patrick Henry, George Washington, and Richard Henry Lee. North Carolina and the rest of New England dependably followed the radical lead, but Rhode Island's inherent split between Hopkins and Ward served to cancel each other's votes, and the blunder of the South Carolina radicals in selecting their delegates made matters difficult for the revolutionaries. Heading the Tory forces was the wily, shrewd Joseph Galloway of Philadelphia, seconded by the New York delegation, especially the young lawyer James Duane.

The Congress conducted its deliberations in secret. It began in committee by debating two vital questions: the philosophical groundwork of the American stand, and how far it would deny the authority of Parliament. The radicals on the committee, led by John Adams and Richard Henry Lee, insisted on grounding the American case on the ultimacy of natural law and natural

rights. The conservatives, on the other hand, were most anxious to ignore natural law and its profoundly radical implications and to confine the American statement of grievances to legalistic discussions of the British constitution. Joseph Galloway, James Duane, and Edward Rutledge led this attempt, but the radicals prevailed in cleaving to natural law.

During this early formative period of the Congress, Sam Adams engineered a masterstroke that electrified the meeting. Adams had the radicals of Suffolk County (including Boston) meet to draw up county resolves such as Middlesex and other counties had done. Prevented by the British authorities from meeting in Boston, the radicals met at a village outside the metropolis on September 9 and adopted a set of resolves drawn up by Dr. Joseph Warren. Known as the Suffolk Resolves, they were sped down to Philadelphia by Paul Revere, reaching there on September 16. The Resolves bitterly opposed the recent acts of Parliament and called ringingly for mass civil disobedience. "No obedience is due from this province to either or any part" of the Coercive Acts, they asserted. Furthermore, no taxes would be paid to the constituted government until it became truly valid. In short, the Resolves implicitly called upon the people of Massachusetts to set up a dual government that would cease to obey, and indeed ignore, the British-appointed authorities. In addition, the resistance would use violence only defensively, and only if the British attempted to enforce the Coercive Acts upon the people. Besides the specific civil disobedience in Massachusetts, the Suffolk Resolves urged the Continental Congress to organize a general voluntary boycott of all trade relations with Britain.

The Suffolk Resolves struck the Congress with overwhelming force. The day after they were received, the Congress voted to endorse them enthusiastically. Adams' brilliant strategy had thus gotten the Congress committed to civil disobedience in Massachusetts and to the principle of an absolute boycott of Great Britain. John Adams, deeply moved, wrote in his diary that "this was one of the happiest days of my life." Now he *knew* that "America will support Massachusetts or perish with her." Sam Adams supported that judgment. Five days later, on September 22, the Congress specifically endorsed the Suffolk clause for a boycott of Great Britain.

But, it soon became clear, the radicals had not yet won the day. The Congress was not ready to endorse dual courts or legislatures to be set up by the people in Massachusetts, much less to think of absolute independence. Indeed, Joseph Galloway was now ready to play his last Tory trump. The wily Galloway introduced to the Congress his "Plan of the Proposed Union Between Great Britain and the Colonies." Galloway's plan pursued the old Tory dream, proposed since the late seventeenth century, of a centralized government for all the colonies. Under the tempting facade of colonial unity, Great Britain was finally to unite the colonies under one imperial yoke. Each colony was to retain its present form of rule over its local affairs. The central

government for the several colonies was to consist of a president-general appointed by the king, subject to the king's veto, and holding office at the king's pleasure, and of a grand council chosen by the assembly of each province. The grand council's actions were to be subject to the president-general's veto. This central organ of president and Council was, furthermore, to constitute an inferior branch of the British legislature, and measures dealing with America could originate either with this body or with the rest of Parliament, each of which would have to agree with the measure.

The similarities of Galloway's plan to Franklin's Albany Plan, at the Albany Congress of 1754, are obvious. Galloway, however, would have even more solidly cemented the ties between America and Britain. The central authority was to act as a transmission belt of rule between Britain and the separate colonies. And with the new central body inducted, as it were, into the British Parliament, the plea of no taxation without representation would no longer hold.

Joseph Galloway's lethal but sugarcoated pill constituted the big conservative drive of the Congress. Galloway opined that every society "must" have one supreme legislature and executive as its authority, that every individual of a society "must be subordinate to [the] supreme will" of this authority, and that, in the present case, this authority was the British Parliament. Supporting the Galloway plan were Duane and the two youngest delegates to the Congress, Edward Rutledge (25) and New York's John Jay (29). Leading the opposition were Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee. Galloway's plan was just barely defeated by a vote of six to five (Rhode Island producing a tie between its two delegates). Although the vote was secret, it is safe to guess that Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Virginia, and North Carolina voted nay, while Pennsylvania, New York (dominated by the conservative New York City delegates), and South Carolina voted in favor. This means that one of the middle colonies—New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland—voted against the plan.

This vote was the high-water mark for conservatism at the Congress. The victorious radicals tried to eliminate all traces of the close balloting. On October 8 the Congress became still more explicit in support of Massachusetts' resistance, specifically applauding that province's moves and urging all America to come to the aid of Massachusetts should Britain try to impose upon it an enforcement of the Coercive Acts. Galloway and Duane tried unsuccessfully to have their opposition to this resolution recorded in the minutes of the Congress.

That the Congress should issue a declaration of grievances and petition Britain for redress was agreed upon by all, liberal and conservative alike. The philosophical groundwork of rights and the admitted scope of parliamentary authority had now to be determined. With Duane largely responsible for its writing, the Declaration of Rights, adopted on October 14, played down the

inalienable, natural rights of life, liberty, and property, and stressed instead the far more restricted rights of petition, assembly, and jury trial, as well as freedom from a standing army without consent of an Assembly. The position taken on Parliament was also rather backward for the dynamic situation of the time. The old orthodox and weak American position was simply reiterated: Parliament had the right to regulate American trade but not to tax the colonies internally or externally, or to govern their domestic affairs. The Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act were condemned, and repeal was urged of thirteen invasive parliamentary acts that had been in effect since 1763. The Congress also requested the termination of British standing armies occupying American towns, of the dissolutions of colonial assemblies, and of the aggrandizement of the vice admiralty courts. The Congress's address to the king, drawn up by the moderate John Dickinson, carefully followed the customs of rendering obeisance to the king and pinning the blame on his advisers and underlings alone.

Having endorsed Massachusetts' resistance, urged redress of grievances, and rejected Galloway's plan for a central government, the Congress took up its final—and vital—matter of business: deciding the general American means of waging the struggle against Britain; specifically, the question of a continental boycott. On October 18, the Congress agreed to the Continental Association, closely patterned after the Virginia Association of early August. The colonies jointly pledged an absolute boycott of trade with Great Britain: nonimportation after December 1 (including no slave trade after that date); nonconsumption of British products after March 1, 1775; and no exports to Britain after September 1, 1775. Because of the threat of the South Carolina delegation (with the exception of the redoubtable Gadsden) not to sign, the Congress reluctantly agreed to exempt South Carolina's staple, rice, from the ban on exports to Britain. Most ardent for total boycott were Thomas Cushing of Massachusetts, young Samuel Chase of Maryland, and Eliphalet Dyer of Connecticut, who urged *immediate* nonimportation, nonconsumption, and nonexportation, but they were overruled by the necessity of gaining the support of Virginia's tobacco planters.

The Continental Association was to remain in effect until all the listed grievances had been redressed. It was to be enforced by rigorous but nonviolent methods of persuasion and expression. Any trader violating the boycott would be ostracized and boycotted by every colony; as to enforcement, every town, city, and county would select a committee to oversee the boycott, publicize the names of violators, and then denounce them as "enemies of American liberty." Furthermore, any colony violating or failing to agree to the Association would be denounced and itself be boycotted.

The Continental Congress had on the whole done its work well. Despite a lack of enthusiasm (again excepting Christopher Gadsden) for taking the offensive against British troops, for American independence, and even for

denying the authority of Parliament to regulate trade, and despite the strong conservative bloc and its machinations, the Congress stood squarely behind Massachusetts and took steps to come to its aid. Civil disobedience and defensive resistance by the people of Massachusetts were endorsed, and the Continental Association was pledged to boycott British trade until the grievances of Massachusetts and other Americans should be allayed. Charles Thomson, the Philadelphia radical leader who had been chosen secretary of the Congress, expressed a common sentiment upon adjournment: "I hope [the] administration will . . . be convinced that it is not a little faction but the whole body of American freeholders . . . that now complain and apply for redress: and who, I am sure, will resist rather than submit . . . even yet the wound may be healed and peace and law restored. But we are at the brink of a precipice."

Finally, before adjourning on October 26, the Continental Congress resolved to meet again the following May 10 if its grievances had not yet been relieved. Thus a permanent revolutionary assembly was here created. It should be noted, however, that since the measures of enforcement of the boycott were to be purely local and voluntary among the people, the First Continental Congress could in no proper sense be regarded as a dual *governmental* institution.

## The Continental Association

As the Congress ended, the colonists hastened to ratify the results at provincial congresses, which were extralegal revolutionary bodies, whose composition was very much like the official assemblies. Localities throughout the colonies created committees of inspection, observation, or "public safety" to oversee and enforce the Association agreement. In Massachusetts, General Gage's refusal to permit the Assembly to meet brought about the institution of a provincial congress, which endorsed the Congress's measures in early December. Weeks earlier, Marblehead and Newburyport had taken the lead in forming local committees of inspection. The Boston Town Meeting selected a committee of sixty-three, including Cushing, Hancock, Sam Adams, Paul Revere, and Henry Bass, to enforce the Association. In Massachusetts, few towns needed to establish new commissions of inspection, as they would simply continue committees already chosen to enforce the now superseded Solemn League and Covenant. Only the town of Marshfield refused to agree to the Association. New Hampshire's provincial congress unanimously endorsed the Association in late January, and many towns appointed local committees.

In Rhode Island and Connecticut, there was no need for special congresses, since the official assemblies were uniquely free from British control; hence the assemblies themselves ratified the boycott. In Connecticut, resistance to the Association centered in the small Anglican elements of many small towns in Fairfield County—Ridgefield, Newtown, and Redding among them. New Jersey, on the other hand, had little trouble in ratifying and setting up local committees; the provincial Assembly itself approved the Congress's proceedings at the end of January.

The situation in Pennsylvania, in contrast, was highly delicate but soon proved successful. The radicals realized that to enforce the Association the conservative Committee of Forty-three and the Philadelphia politics that it dominated had to be bypassed. On November 14, the radicals held their own mass meeting and decided to hold elections by ballot, with the city and county of Philadelphia each electing its own committee. In the election, the radical committee slate won an overwhelming victory in the city; as a result, the new Committee of Sixty-six was far more radical than the old Philadelphia Committee of Forty-three. The counties also chose committees of inspection to enforce the Association. Finally, the Pennsylvania Assembly itself ratified the Continental Association and then set up a provincial congress that endorsed the Continental Congress in late January. As for Delaware, its Assembly unanimously endorsed the Congress, but Anglican Sussex County refused to select a committee of inspection.

Maryland was the first of the southern colonies to act. Many of its counties chose committees of inspection and a provincial convention unanimously endorsed the Congress in early December. Virginia too acted quickly in forming committees; its provincial convention endorsed the Congress's proceedings at the end of March. North Carolina also began early, its enforcement committees, particularly at Wilmington and the Tidewater counties, being established in early December. However, North Carolina's provincial convention did not endorse the Congress until the following April.

In South Carolina, the battle for ratification and enforcement of the Association was led by the liberal General Committee of Charleston. Radical-liberals, led by Gadsden and the *South Carolina Gazette*, urged ratification without the galling and discriminatory exemption for rice exports, while from the right the indigo planters wanted to include South Carolina's other staple in the exemption. At the South Carolina provincial congress in mid-January, the magnificent Gadsden argued against special privilege for rice, while John Rutledge pleaded hardship and dependence of the colony on the export of rice to Britain. Furthermore, to purchase the support of the indigo interests, the General Committee had suggested that privileged rice growers compensate the indigo planters by buying a certain proportion of the latter crop. The indigo subsidy was defended by the Rutledges, William Henry Drayton, and even Thomas Lynch, while Gadsden cuttingly asked why only the *indigo* growers, and not other people, in the province should benefit from the rice exemption. Finally, the compensation was extended to other agricultural commodities.

South Carolina's provincial congress set up an unusually systematic set of local enforcement committees. In every parish and district, members of the congress composed a majority of the committee, and future vacancies were to be filled in elections by the inhabitants.

Two colonies failed to ratify the Association: New York and Georgia.

Many of New York's conservative intellectuals, such as the Anglican ministers Samuel Seabury and Thomas Chandler, removed themselves in disgust from the Association movement, openly denouncing it, and being branded as Tories in return. But the bulk of conservatives determined to stay within the popular movement in New York and thereby to guide and emasculate it. The conservative Committee of Fifty-one, however, was forced to dissolve and yield to the clamor of the radical Committee of Mechanics for a public election of a new committee. At a public meeting on November 22, the newly elected Committee of Sixty was dominated by the radicals, including Isaac Sears and Alexander MacDougall. However, the landlord-run rural counties remained apathetic to the revolutionary movement, and only Suffolk, Ulster, and Albany counties endorsed the Association. In Suffolk, particularly, the several towns hastened to appoint enforcement committees. Radicals attempted to form committees of inspection in Queens and Tryon counties but with little success; thus, when committees in Jamaica and Newtown, Queens, were appointed, the committees were speedily repudiated by many of their citizens. In upcountry Dutchess County, a Tory association openly combatted the boycott, and the majority of freeholders swore to obey the constituted laws of the land and to enforce obedience to the rightful authority of king and Parliament. A majority of Jamaica freeholders signed a loyalist oath, and Oyster Bay was largely Tory. A public meeting of freeholders of Albany County pledged loyalty to established government and a Loyalty Pole was constructed in Ulster County.

The radicals made a determined effort to get the New York Assembly to ratify the Association, but failed—by one vote. Notwithstanding, the radical Committee of Sixty proved sufficient in controlling the course of the trade in New York City.

In Georgia, conditions in late 1774 were more favorable for ratification; the looming Indian war had faded and rice had received its exemption from the Continental Congress. But now many of the radical leaders in Georgia began to lose their nerve. The Savannah and the Assembly radicals proposed to endorse the Association only if more time were granted for launching nonimportation and nonexportation. Only the pure radicals of St. John's Parish, led by Dr. Lyman Hall, adopted the Association without deviation, on December 1.

A provincial congress met in Georgia on January 18. Only five of the twelve parishes sent delegates, and these represented only small minorities of their parishes. The congress, then, lacking self-confidence, decided to submit its extralegal decisions to the official Georgia Assembly. The congress proceeded to ratify the Association but with modifications: postponing nonimportation to March 15 and nonexportation to December 1, 1775. Governor Wright dissolved the Assembly before it could ratify, but the congress tried to redeem itself by publishing its decisions. It did not, however, go so far as to ratify undiluted the actual measures of the Continental Congress.

Local committees in every province began immediately to enforce nonimportation after December 1, and nonconsumption the following March. In addition to boycotting and ostracizing violators, the same methods were used against persons of known Tory leanings. While historians have remarked on the paradox of a libertarian movement using coercive measures against dissidents, the remarkable thing is the degree of libertarian means that this movement used in pursuit of its ends. Never before in history had so much reliance been placed on such nonviolent methods of mass struggle as the boycott, and on such libertarian and nonviolent means of enforcing the boycott as secondary boycotts, social ostracism, blacklists, and public obloquy. This unprecedented constancy of libertarian ends and means, especially for a revolutionary mass movement of such size and scope, was marred only around the edges by such minor excesses as the use of the tarpot, the rail, and the feathers. The whole Association movement of 1774–75 is a remarkable testament to the strength of libertarian ideals permeating the revolutionary era.

One of the earliest examples of organized voluntary boycott took place in Worcester, Massachusetts, in early November, when over forty blacksmiths of the county pledged to refuse to sell their services to all who violated the Association in any way. They also resolved to do no further work for specified persons and families with Tory leanings, particularly Timothy Ruggles and others who had been trying to form a Tory association supported by Governor Gage, and pledged each other mutual aid against a popular threat to their lives or liberties or properties. Further pressure on the Ruggles group came from the Massachusetts provincial congress on December 9, which recommended to the local committees of correspondence a widespread public notice to such associations and any people signing them that "their names be published to the world, their persons treated with that neglect, and their memories transmitted to posterity with that ignominy which such unnatural conduct must deserve." Under this pressure the Ruggles group found that it was virtually devoid of signers. Only in the incorrigible Tory town of Marshfield did a sizable number gather to sign a Loyalist association, and even they had to send a hurried call to British troops for protection.

There was little trouble about endorsing nonimportation in Massachusetts. Nonconsumption presented a more difficult enforcement problem. The Newburyport inspection committee solved the matter by requiring shopkeepers to produce a certificate from a committee of inspection, attesting that the goods were not sold in violation of the Association. Tea, a product hitherto in great demand in the colonies, was the biggest nonconsumption problem. Typical of committee vigilance was the crackdown on Thomas Lilly of Marblehead for buying tea for his own consumption. Lilly was pressured into publicly burning the English tea and publicly recanting his errors. A particular problem was the itinerant peddlers who sold East Indian tea in the country towns. A certificate here would not be practicable; hence the provincial congress in mid-February urged abstinence from all trading with peddlers.

Even before the meeting of the Continental Congress, radical editors had begun publicly blacklisting Massachusetts supporters of the Intolerable Acts and "traitors" accepting jobs in the Gage regime. The *Norwich Packet*, of Connecticut, on October 13, blasted the Reverend Samuel Peters, a Tory Anglican minister, as the "most unnatural monster" and "detestable parricide to this country." In response, the Petersham Town Meeting branded fourteen Tories "incorrigible enemies of America" for being opposed to the Continental Congress and the Association. The Marblehead Town Meeting decided to boycott a half-dozen of its citizens as "abettors of tyranny, and parricides of their country." Sometimes, of course, there were excesses, as when mob coercion forced Dr. Abraham Alden of Biddeford and John Taylor of Shrewsbury to confess their errors.

In New Hampshire, nonimportation was energetically enforced in the port of Portsmouth by the Committee of Forty-five. The main trouble was in the country towns, where peddlers violated nonimportation and nonconsumption regulations. As a solution, the towns of Exeter, Kingston, New Market, and Brentwood imposed a prohibition upon peddling. The provincial convention in late January endorsed the prohibition and extended it to the province, urging all citizens to maintain the boycott by abandoning the use of tea. Rhode Island enforced the Association very well. One excess in that province went beyond voluntary, market means: the requirement by the town of Providence that all traders show certificates of compliance with the Association.

Connecticut did little direct importing of its own; therefore, its problem was largely that of enforcing nonconsumption. The vigilant committees of inspection conducted their own private trials of people accused of violating the Association. These trials were almost always fair and impartial; they required full proof of violations according to the laws of evidence, and invited the defendant to appear voluntarily. This procedure began in Hartford County in late January and soon spread to New Haven, Fairfield, and Litchfield counties. The committee of the town of Norwich also adopted the idea of requiring dealers under pain of boycott to certify that their goods were not acquired in violation of the Association.

One problem that plagued Connecticut and many other colonies was introduced by the Continental Congress's demand that merchants and traders not take advantage of scarcity and that they hold the prices of boycotted goods to the previous year's levels. This absurd attempt at voluntary price-fixing betrayed a monumental ignorance of how the market price system operates. When goods become scarce (as under nonimportation agreements) the free market price rises to account for the greater scarcity. Putting the matter into such pseudo-moralistic terms as "taking unfair advantage" of the scarcity, completely ignores the "rationing" function of the price system. If prices do not rise to reflect increased scarcity, then the goods will soon disappear and not be available at all to those clamoring to buy. Consumers as well as producers are gravely injured by this form of price control.

In Connecticut, in late January, a joint meeting of committees of inspection of Hartford County attempted to impose fixed retail prices on imported goods, and this drive spread to the other counties as well.

New York was the great feeder port for New Jersey and Connecticut; hence its importance for enforcing nonimportation. Fortunately, the radicals on the Committee of Sixty soon took over the commercial affairs of the city, and the committee rigorously enforced the boycott. Great mobs prevented several English ships from landing. Happily, while enforcement of the boycott was rigorous, the committee showed instinctive economic sense by not insisting on prices remaining the same as the supposedly God-given prices of the previous year. In this way, the committee did not aggravate the substantial amount of Tory sentiment in New York, while allowing effective imposition of the boycott. Furthermore, the rigorous enforcement of nonimportation upon the city made unimportant the fact that nonconsumption could not begin to be enforced outside the city and Albany, Ulster, and Suffolk counties—the only areas where local inspection committees were available. Probably most of the infractions, again, occurred in the area of tea consumption. Like the Ruggles association in Massachusetts, Tory organizations did not get very far in New York. A group of Tories in ultraconservative and landlord-ridden Dutchess and Westchester counties attempted to form such associations but did not succeed.

The Association was also well enforced in New Jersey, where there were few ports. The Elizabethtown committee cooperated with their brethren in New York. Woodbridge Township and Gloucester County also enforced the boycott wholeheartedly, and a "tea party" was held by New Jersey "Indians" when East Indian tea almost landed secretly at Greenwich in Cumberland County. And in February, the committees of observation of Elizabethtown and Woodbridge decided on a complete boycott of trade with the Tory citizenry of Staten Island.

Tea drinking, a favorite pastime of Americans, again proved the most difficult part of the Association to enforce. When Silas Newcomb of Cumberland County announced rather rashly that he proposed to drink tea, all dealings were broken off with him by the Cumberland committee, and in two months he abjectly recanted.

Philadelphia, filled with conservative Quaker merchants, was the big problem area for the American rebels. Here was the weak link that threatened to collapse the entire boycott movement. In the late seventeenth century, the Quaker creed of nonviolence had been radically individualist and antistatist. But during the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania Quakers had become increasingly conservative, statist, and even warlike. Quaker nonviolence was now largely a thinly veiled camouflage for highly conservative, quasi-Tory views. The official Quaker Committee of Sufferings in Pennsylvania and New Jersey kept up a steady drumfire of agitation against the Association and other anti-

British measures, which agitation, despite its nonviolence, was supposedly in violation of Quaker religious views. A Quaker meeting for Pennsylvania and New Jersey in late January was quite explicitly Tory; it denounced "every usurpation of power and authority in opposition to the laws and government, and . . . all combinations, insurrections, conspiracies and illegal assemblages." The official Quakers were not able to silence their pro-Association brethren.

Despite these problems, the Philadelphia Committee of Sixty-six did an excellent job of enforcing nonimportation. The committee divided its membership into six districts, and one member from each district was delegated each morning to inspect all incoming vessels. This enforcement, as in New York, was greatly facilitated by a sensible laxity in fixing import prices. Despite the *de jure* pronouncements, for example, dry goods prices had increased by twenty-five to one hundred percent by March 1775.

Delaware, a small and agricultural, rather than commercial, province, was scarcely a center for nonimportation struggles and had little trouble in enforcing the boycott.

The southern colonies had particular problems in enforcing the boycott, especially where the merchants were Scots or factors of Scottish firms—Scottish zeal for the American cause was less than ardent. But with the planters heavily in debt to these merchants in the normal course of trade, the southerners had a powerful political weapon against the Tories: a threat to suspend the judicial collection of debts.

Maryland faced the problem of a score of navigable rivers where imports could enter the province, but keen vigilance by committees of radicals at the commercial centers of Baltimore and Annapolis ensured effective enforcement of the Association. In December a provincial convention resolved that all lawyers should refuse to prosecute any suits, especially collections of debt, for those who violated the boycott. In enforcing nonconsumption, tea was again the main problem. Sometimes a bit of violence was added, as in the case of the stubborn tea dealer John Parks. Parks was boycotted by the committee for Upper Frederick County, and to the boycott was added the breaking of his doors and windows by a mob. Unfortunately, the rigors of enforcement here extended to price-fixing as well, and the local and provincial committees tried, Canutelike, to hold back the tides, of which they knew nothing, by fixing precise but necessarily arbitrary markups of wholesale and retail prices over costs.

The opposition of Scottish merchants and factors was particularly strong in Virginia. That colony led in closing down collections of debts as a means of putting further pressure on British merchant-creditors for repeal of the Coercive Acts. A provincial convention in August, for that reason, closed up the county courts and successfully recommended boycott of the General Court by lawyers and witnesses in civil cases; this action was confirmed by the convention of the following March. Many historians have charged that the court

closings and indeed much of the revolutionary impetus in Virginia occurred primarily because of a desire to avoid paying debts to Great Britain. It seems clear, however, that the measure was rather a means of putting pressure on Britain to repeal the Intolerable Acts, just as similar pressure had been used against the Stamp Act a decade before. This is indicated by the fact that when some grasping planter-debtors urged a boycott of merchants not just for violating the Association but also for failing to extend credit, this attempt was immediately slapped down by the leadership. Indeed, Peyton Randolph, who had presided at the Continental Congress, sternly reminded the hotheads that the Association did not empower local committees to dictate to merchants how much credit they may give. And even for strictly political purposes against Britain, a good many of the more moderate of the Virginia leaders opposed the temporary nonpayment of debts as unjust; these included George Washington, Robert Beverley, Peyton Randolph, and Edmund Pendleton. Backing political nonpayment were the more radical George Mason, Patrick Henry, Landon Carter, and Richard Henry Lee. Both sides of the dispute, of course, were led by large tobacco planters.\*

The Virginia rebels made enforcement of the boycott much more difficult than it had to be. In the first place they frenziedly tried to prevent any price increases, and the committees arrogantly insisted on inspecting the daybooks and invoices of the merchants to make sure that prices were not increasing. Indeed, price-fixing committees were actively harassing merchants in many Virginia counties. The other unnecessary task taken up by the radicals was the decision to require every individual citizen to sign the Continental Association. This went beyond all the other colonies and forced the radicals to boycott not only violators of the Association but also any of those who were not enthusiastic enough to endorse it. All this considerably multiplied the roster of supposed delinquents and those harassed by the popular forces. As in the other colonies, open Tories were of course held up to public obloquy.

As elsewhere, the difficult article of consumption to boycott was tea. This was the product requiring enforcement. Tea parties were held at the port of Yorktown to reinforce the boycott.

North Carolina, as so often happened, largely followed the example of neighboring Virginia. Here the body of suspect Scottish merchants was compactly gathered at Wilmington. The merchants agreed to obey the boycott but understandably balked at price-fixing. The implacable committees persisted in carefully supervising prices, and committees in Pitt and Rowan counties and in Wilmington presumed to fix maximum prices for salt, dry goods, rum, and gunpowder. The Wilmington committee also followed the aggressive Virginia

\*For revision of the older emphasis on repudiation of Virginia debt as a motive for closing the courts and for revolution in Virginia, see Emory G. Evans, "Planter Indebtedness and the Coming of the Revolution in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* (October 1962): 511-33.

lead of insisting that every individual sign the Association. When eleven Scottish merchants refused to sign, they were boycotted; eight recanted and signed. The most striking example of tormenting a nonsigner was the case of Thomas Macknight of Currituck County, in the extreme northeastern part of the colony. A member of the provincial convention in April, Macknight announced that he would abide by the Association but would not endorse it; a struggle now raged at the convention on whether to harass him further. The majority favored accepting Macknight's course, but the fanatical minority threatened to withdraw from and split the convention, and thus forced through a boycott of the candid Macknight.

To put pressure on British merchants, the North Carolina liberals, again following Virginia, refused to allow the courts to operate, thus suspending collections of debts. There was little trouble, furthermore, in enforcing the nonconsumption agreement.

As could be expected, the radicals were active and zealous in South Carolina. Charleston's radical-oriented General Committee led the enforcement, and advanced beyond the Continental Association by establishing its own association for nonconsumption of tea to begin on November 1. At committee direction, the schoolboys of Charleston collected all the tea in the city and burned it publicly on Guy Fawkes Day, November 5. Merchants of Charleston were induced by the committee to dump their English-imported tea into the river. Nonimportation was enforced with great efficiency and zeal. Sometimes, as in the Macknight case, enforcement degenerated into petty absurdities. Consider, for example, the case of Robert Smyth, who returned from London to Charleston bringing with him his furniture and two horses. Immediately the ultraradicals, led by Christopher Gadsden, denounced this act as an "import" in violation of the Association. After the General Committee had narrowly approved Smyth's action, Gadsden and 250 radicals urged reconsideration; but led by Lynch and the Rutledges, the General Committee continued to endorse Smyth, but by one vote only.

As elsewhere in the South, action was taken against collection of debt by British or Tory creditors. South Carolina's provincial congress in January decided that any judicial processes for debt had to be approved by local committees of observation. The absence of anticreditor animus *per se* is seen in the instruction to the local committees to permit prosecution for debt whenever debtors were trying to evade their obligations permanently or to defraud their creditors.

Georgia did not join in the nonimportation agreement until March, and even then there was no effective enforcement in that royal-bureaucrat-ridden colony. The colonies were then faced with the problem of boycotting this lone holdout of the thirteen American colonies. Accordingly, on February 8, the Charleston General Committee decreed a boycott of trade with all citizens of Georgia. The radical enclave of St. John's Parish hastened to send delegates to

Charleston urging exemption for themselves, and the perplexed General Assembly agreed to turn the case over to the next meeting of the Continental Congress. In the meanwhile, however, the boycott of Georgia persisted, and the poor citizens of St. John's were forced against their principles to engage in limited trade with the Tory merchants of Savannah.

Quebec had also been invited to join the Association. The English merchants of Quebec were willing to join, but the overwhelming French majority was understandably loath to join with either wing of its hated oppressors, and the English merchants understandably feared that they would simply lose their trade to their French rivals. Quebec, therefore, did not join the Association. By mid-April the Philadelphia committee began the colonial boycotts of the nonsigning colonies: Georgia, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland.

The task of checking and certifying the good faith of merchants within the several colonies was not unduly difficult; local committees in the seaports performed the major tasks. But how could the genuineness of goods and merchants be assured in the *coastal* trade when the merchants of two remote colonies traded with each other? Early in the Association movement, a Salem merchant trading with Virginia hit on a happy device that served also to cement and expand the scope of the network of revolutionary popular institutions in America. The merchant asked the Salem Committee of Correspondence to issue him a certificate vouching for his devotion to the cause of American liberty. The Boston Committee of Correspondence enthusiastically welcomed the idea, and the plan, spearheaded by Providence and the Virginia counties, was soon adopted in the other provinces.

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## The Impact on Britain

Buoyed by the network of provincial conventions and local enforcement committees, the Continental Congress's boycott of British imports proved extraordinarily effective. Imports of the thirteen American colonies from Great Britain fell from 2.6 million pounds in 1774 to over 200,000 pounds in 1775. The effectiveness of the boycott is even more startling if we omit non-boycotting Georgia, where imports more than doubled, from 57,500 pounds to 135,000 pounds. Omitting Georgia, imports from Great Britain fell ninety-seven percent in one year.

The drastic decline in imports had the desired effect on the British merchants and manufacturers in the American trade. From January through March 1775, they kept up a drumfire of agitation upon Parliament to repeal the Coercive Acts. Petitions to this effect passed into Parliament from London and from such manufacturing towns as Bristol, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Nottingham, and Belfast, which all complained of business losses, bankruptcies, and unemployment. Indeed, in February, a subscription fund to send relief to the distressed people of Boston and New England was launched by merchants in London. But the Tory North ministry, far more firmly ensconced than the government of a decade before, adamantly hewed to the tough line of suppression and no appeasement. Solicitor General Alexander Wedderburn declared in April that the interests of commerce and manufacturers must bow to the higher interest of upholding supreme legislative power against open rebellion: "An enemy in the bowels of a kingdom is surely to be resisted, opposed, and conquered; notwithstanding the trade that may suffer, and the factories that may be ruined."

Indeed, rather than relent, Lord North decided to escalate the struggle and

bring the fractious Americans to heel by severe retaliation; if Americans would not trade with Britain, then, by God, they would not be *allowed* to trade with anyone else! On March 30, Parliament, over Whig and Chathamite opposition, enacted North's New England Restraining Act, prohibiting New England from trading with any place except Britain and the British West Indies after July 1, and from using the Newfoundland fisheries after July 20, until peaceful conditions were restored. When news arrived of the widespread ratification of the Continental Association, Parliament in mid-April extended the provisions of the Restraining Act to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. With petty cunning, the supposedly Tory colonies of New York, Delaware, North Carolina, and Georgia were omitted in an attempt to induce them to break with the boycott. But the time for divisive tactics had long since past.

While moving to impose a big-stick policy of escalating force, Lord North also held out a highly anemic and suspect carrot. His Conciliatory Plan, introduced into Parliament on February 20, tried to seduce the Americans into abandoning their position under the cloak of saving face. Thus, a colony was to be spared parliamentary taxation for revenue provided that it would tax itself to pay for the salaries of the royal officials. Britain—indeed, the whim of the Crown—was, in short, to tell each colony how much it must raise in taxes to pay for purposes fixed by the home country; and then the colony would have to obey. Thus, imposed taxation by Britain would remain under a new guise. North's complex and unworkable plan was consciously designed, as were his force acts, to split the American colonies. But no one was fooled. The illustrious Whig leader Edmund Burke brilliantly analyzed the plan and such of its *unworkable features as deciding on quotas of taxes for each colony as a "ransom by auction" of the colonies.* Lord North's proposal was soon rendered obsolete by the rush of events—reaching New York, for example, the day after news of Lexington and Concord.

Burke, leading the opposition in the House of Commons to the British crackdown, called for repeal and a return to the Old Whig colonial policy. In his "Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies," Burke set forth the necessity of appeasement as the prime foreign policy of a truly strong government: "I mean to give peace. Peace implies reconciliation; and . . . reconciliation does in a manner always imply concession on one part or on the other. In this state of things . . . the proposal ought to originate from us. Great and acknowledged force is not impaired, either in effect or in opinion, by an unwillingness to exert itself. The superior power may offer peace with honor and with safety." And Burke made clear that peace was precisely the desideratum, to be arrived at simply and directly, not by the paradox of pursuing the chimera of peace through waging long and bloody war: "The proposition is peace. Not peace through the medium of war; not peace to be hunted through the labyrinth of intricate and endless negotiations; not peace to arise out of universal

discord, fomented from principle . . . not peace to depend on the juridical determination of perplexing questions . . . it is simple peace, sought in its natural course, and in its ordinary haunts. It is peace sought in the spirit of peace; laid in principles purely pacific."

Burke saluted American achievements and economic development, which had not been "squeezed into this happy form by the constraints of watchful and suspicious government, but that, through a wise and salutary neglect, a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection." He added, "When I see how profitable they have been to us, I feel all the pride of power sink, and all presumption in the wisdom of human contrivances melt, and die away within me." In this way Burke harked back to the crucial distinction he had made in his first work, *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), between the benefits of natural voluntary actions in society ("natural government"), and the mischievous effects of the coercive intervention of the state ("artificial government").\*

Burke hailed the "fierce spirit of liberty" that had grown up among the Americans, a result of their remoteness, their religion and customs, their English tradition of liberty and revolution, and their education in legal and political theory. Now the spirit of liberty in America was in collision with the spirit of power in England. Burke saw with acute perception the radically new nature of what the Americans had recently been doing. He saw that they had been creating, in their network of local and provincial committees of correspondence, of enforcement, and conventions of delegates, both provincial and continental, an approach to a state of anarchism. For here were revolutionary institutions completely illegal and outside the legal framework, created spontaneously by the people building from the grassroots. This voluntary network of popular revolutionary organs, from town committees up to provincial conventions and even including the Congress, exercised only minimal coercive authority; its influence was in giving leadership to the voluntary actions of the mass of individuals. These institutions, for example, did not live off taxation—that coercive institution unique to the concept of government. And none printed its own money. Thus, as legal government began to break down, particularly where it was prohibited in Massachusetts, and was replaced by these popular institutions, government in America began to veer toward anarchism. As Burke phrased it:

We thought, Sir, that the utmost which the discontented colonists would do, was to disturb authority; we never dreamt they could of themselves supply

\*This hard-hitting anarchist attack on government, written pseudonymously while Burke was an impecunious and disgruntled young law student, was by him quickly repudiated as a supposed satire when his authorship became known. And yet here Burke echoes a work that was supposed to be a satire. For a brief discussion disputing the satirical nature of the *Vindication*, see Murray N. Rothbard, "A Note on Burke's *Vindication of Natural Society*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (January 1958): 114–18.

it. . . . They have formed a government sufficient for its purposes, without . . . the troublesome formality of an election. Evident necessity, and tacit consent, have done the business in an instant. So well have they done it . . . that the new institution is infinitely better obeyed than the ancient government ever was in its most fortunate period. Obedience is what makes government, and not the names by which it is called. . . . This new government has originated directly from the people; and was not transmitted through any of the ordinary artificial media of a positive constitution. It was not a manufacture ready formed, and transmitted to them in that condition from England. The evil arising from hence is this; that the colonists having once found the possibility of enjoying the advantages of order in the midst of a struggle for liberty, such struggles will not henceforward seem so terrible to the settled and sober part of mankind as they had appeared before. . . .

[And as to Massachusetts] we were confident that the first feeling, if not the very prospect of anarchy, would instantly enforce a complete submission. The experiment was tried. A new, strange, unexpected face of things appeared. Anarchy is found tolerable. A vast province has now subsisted, and subsisted in a considerable degree of health and vigor, for near a twelve-month, without governors, without judges, without executive magistrates.

## Massachusetts: Nearing the Final Conflict

The Continental Association and the mass boycott were all very well. These measures served to radicalize the entire continent and to build an intricate network of spontaneous grassroots revolutionary institutions, often virtually replacing constituted authority with quasi-anarchic leadership. But none of these measures dealt directly with the really acute focus of conflict: Boston. It was Boston and Massachusetts, after all, that were being punished, oppressed, and militarily occupied. Massachusetts necessarily had to be the focal center of struggle. The moral and material support of the other provinces was most welcome. But would they join if armed support were necessary?

At the Congress Christopher Gadsden had urged initiating armed struggle against the British troops in Boston, but it was clear to the sagacious radical strategists of Massachusetts that the rest of America would not support such an effort. As the Continental Congress made clear, only *defensive* efforts would be supported against outright aggression by British troops. Furthermore, most of the radicals naively thought that the Continental Association would suffice to bring Britain to reason; they did not see as clearly as the Adamses and the Massachusetts radicals that Britain would not be deflected from all-out suppression. They would soon learn. Meanwhile, the radicals could only wait for that lesson and tell each other, in the words of John Adams, "I expect no redress but . . . increased resentment and double vengeance. We must fight." Even those who expected armed conflict did not go so far as to anticipate actual American independence; conflict was to induce Britain to back down from its coercive imperialist policy. Indeed, the Massachusetts delegation to the Congress had to reassure even the Virginians that their aim was not independence—all the delegation, that is, except for Sam Adams, whose silence on the matter was eloquent in itself.

Soon after the opening of the Continental Congress, the provincial congress of Massachusetts assembled in a fateful meeting. General Gage had called for a meeting of the General Court in early October, but dared not lead the newly appointed mandamus councillors out from under the wings of the British troops. It was, furthermore, clear from town instructions to their representatives that the Assembly would hardly agree to the changes imposed by the Massachusetts Government Act. Most radical and frantically revolutionary were the instructions from the town of Worcester; these counseled the immediate return to the old Massachusetts charter of the seventeenth century, the (presumably forcible) opening of the port and removal of British troops, and a trial of the mandamus councillors for treason. In the light of this atmosphere of militancy, General Gage called off the meeting of the General Court.

But the Americans were prepared, and towns sent delegates to the extra-legal provincial congress that met at Concord on October 11, and later in the month at Watertown. The delegates faced a province without ports or judges or executives or legislature. Undaunted, the Massachusetts provincial congress made, as its operating executive, John Hancock president, and created a steering committee of fifteen: the Committee on the State of the Province, which included Hancock, Dr. Joseph Warren, and such leading radicals as Joseph Hawley of Northampton, James Warren of Plymouth, and Elbridge Gerry of Marblehead. Later, the four Massachusetts delegates to the Continental Congress were added to the province's steering committee.

As a continuing operating organization, the provincial congress selected a smaller, eleven-man Committee of Safety, with John Hancock chairman and Dr. Joseph Warren among its members. The committee was authorized to call out the provincial militia and to collect munitions and supplies in preparation for meeting any future aggression by the British armed forces. Concord and Worcester were selected as the principal depots for military supplies. The militia officers, furthermore, were directed to recruit the best-qualified twenty-five percent of the militia, mainly veterans of the French and Indian War, into a ginger group known as "minutemen," so called because they were expected to answer the committee's call at a moment's notice. The minutemen were formed into emergency companies of fifteen men each, and the men of each company had the power of freely electing their own officers, subject to the overall direction of the Committee of Safety. This project was based on the precedent of emergency units used as early as King Philip's War in the mid-1670s.

The Committee of Safety proceeded with dispatch and efficiency to organize an armed militia, to repel any aggressive acts of the British troops. The aim was to raise a potential army of twelve thousand men in Massachusetts, and twenty thousand additional troops at the ready were requested from the other colonies in New England. Officers were to be democratically elected by the soldiery.

The militia trained hard. This time, in contrast to their unpreparedness when British troops earlier occupied Boston, the people of Massachusetts would be ready to counter any further invasion. All the militia of the colony were soon directed to train according to Colonel Timothy Pickering's new book, *Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia* (1775). From Salem, Pickering imaginatively simplified the stodgy and ritualistic rules of British army drill and emphasized the American woodsman's habit of individual marksmanship, a practice particularly suited to an armed people's guerrilla war. Political philosophy and military tactics blended as one, for Pickering stressed that the American soldier was an individualist, a freeman, and a property owner, in contrast to professional European soldiers trained as obedient "machines." Pickering wrote that "men must see the reason and the use of any action or movement. 'Tis the boast [of European commanders] that their men are mere machines. . . . God forbid that my countrymen should be thus degraded. . . ."\*

A circular letter sent throughout the colony by the Committee of Safety asked the clergy to help raise a volunteer army. The committee, an anarchistic institution without coercive governmental powers to tax or to conscript militia, had to rely on volunteers and voluntary contributions. John Adams understood the revolutionary nature of what he was seeing: "At Watertown he had witnessed, John [Adams] told himself, a great Province governed not by police and penalty but by, as it were, two hundred and sixty volunteer consciences."\*\*

The second provincial congress of Massachusetts, meeting at Cambridge on February 1, 1775, rapidly advanced these measures of defense. It also authorized the militia to collect military stores rapidly, either by purchase or by assuming jurisdiction over the stores of the Massachusetts government. Consequently, during March and early April, large stores were collected by the Americans at Concord. The congress, consistent with its devotion to liberty, refused to levy taxes on the people; it *recommended* that they voluntarily pay the provincial tax to the new revolutionary institutions instead. Addressing the citizens of Massachusetts, the congress exhorted: "Resistance to tyranny becomes the Christian and social duty of each individual. Fleets, troops, and every implement of war are sent into the province, to wrest from you that freedom which it is your duty, even at the risk of your lives, to hand inviolate to posterity. Continue steadfast, and . . . defend those rights which heaven gave, and no man ought to take from us."

The Congregational ministry of Massachusetts was eager to take up the task offered it by the provincial congress. Eminent ministers like the veteran

\*Don Higgenbotham, *The War of American Independence* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 12-13.

\*\*Catherine Drinker Bowen, *John Adams and the American Revolution* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950), p. 509.

Charles Chauncy, William Gordon, and Peter Thacher, of Boston; Peter Whitney of Northborough; and Timothy Hilliard of Barnstable, led the clergy in exhorting the right of resistance to the British. Eloquent were the calls to rise up and wield the sword of the Lord against oppression and "slavery," in militia-mustering sermons. In Boothbay (now Maine), the Reverend John Murray, a Presbyterian, urged the right and duty of resistance to defend natural, God-given, and constitutional rights. The Reverend Samuel Eaton of Harpswell (Maine) went so far as to declaim at a militia-muster: "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood!"

Particularly important expressions of Congregational support for the rebel cause came at a convention in radical Worcester County, in the interior of Massachusetts, in late March 1775. At this meeting a delegate, the Reverend Ebenezer Chaplin of Sutton, pleaded for liberty and separation of church and state. And in a widely printed and distributed speech, the Reverend Elisha Fish of Upton defended the right of property as unalienable by man; the right of each individual to enjoy his own earnings, Fish declared, was a corollary of his God-given rights of life and liberty.

Similar preachments were made by Congregational ministers throughout New England, especially New Hampshire and eastern Connecticut. Termed by Lieutenant Governor Oliver "gutters of sedition," the Congregational clergy of New England led the revolutionary cause, and provided a stark contrast to the relatively nonpolitical clergy of New York and Philadelphia, the lukewarm support of the Baptists, and the Tory views of the Anglican clergy.

As tension mounted between the British troops and the swiftly preparing people of Massachusetts during the winter of 1774-75, several incidents brought the two sides inextricably closer to overt military conflict. On December 13, the noted courier and messenger of the Boston leadership, Paul Revere, warned the New Hampshire radicals of a British plan to garrison troops at Portsmouth. The very next day a band of troops, led by the prominent young lawyer Major John Sullivan and the young merchant John Langdon, swooped down on the British fort at Portsmouth and carried away cannons, small arms, and a hundred barrels of powder. Sullivan, a delegate to the Continental Congress, was now the major political figure in New Hampshire and leader of the popular radical forces there. Soon after the raid, Sullivan and Langdon were chosen by the provincial congress to be New Hampshire's delegates to the Second Continental Congress.

The next clash also inflicted humiliation upon the proud British troops. On February 26, several hundred British soldiers were shipped clandestinely to Salem to seize military stores from the Americans. Not finding them there, the British marched to the stores at Danvers; but there they were forced by a larger number of Americans to wait while the stores were removed and then to retreat back to their ships. In Boston, another clash occurred soon afterward when Dr. Joseph Warren delivered the annual oration in commemora-

tion of the Boston Massacre. Gathered illegally at a town meeting, moderated by Sam Adams, the townspeople heard Warren eloquently champion the liberty of Americans *and* Englishmen, and attack the sending of British troops to occupy Boston. Then Warren declared: "An independence of Great Britain is not our aim, but if pacific measures are ineffectual, and it appears that the only way to safety is through fields of blood, I know you will undauntedly press forward, until tyranny is trodden under foot."

As Warren concluded, British officers who had been courteously welcomed to the meeting began to hiss. In an obvious attempt to provoke the Americans into physical attack (which might not carry the support of the other colonies), the troops arrested a man for illegally buying a firearm offered by a British soldier. The next day the British arrogantly tarred and feathered the man, pinned on his back the label "American liberty, or a specimen of democracy," and paraded him through the streets of Boston with an armed guard and military band.

## Support from Virginia

The well-disciplined citizens of Massachusetts held themselves in check and refused to be provoked into attack; and their angry leader Sam Adams wrote: "See what indignities we suffer rather than precipitate a crisis." It took no uncommon astuteness to see that the colonies and Great Britain were on collision course.

In late March, before the Virginia convention—an enlarged House of Burgesses meeting illegally at Richmond without authorization of the governor—the golden-tongued Patrick Henry made his most famous speech. In it he prophetically warned: "The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!"

The major issue at the Virginia convention, and the occasion for Henry's speech, was his resolution to strengthen and arm the Virginia militia for the clash that Patrick Henry was sure was fast approaching. Henry openly welcomed the imminent revolutionary clash: "Let it come. I repeat, Sir, let it come!" Henry dramatically concluded: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" Henry's resolution was ably supported by the radical theoretician Richard Henry Lee and the military-minded George Washington. But the resolution to strengthen the militia met stiff conservative opposition, led by three delegates to the Continental Congress: Edmund Pendleton, Benjamin Harrison, and Richard Bland. As a result, the Henry resolution won only by a slim vote. Indeed, the delegates refused to call up any sizable number of armed men and to seize the reins of government openly; and they appointed a conservative committee, dominated by Pendleton and Harrison, to oversee the military preparations.

Nevertheless, the Virginia militia was formed in companies independent of officers appointed by the governor. Patrick Henry's militia resolution was modeled on preceding county committee resolutions in Virginia, especially one of Fairfax County, where George Washington had led the adoption of this proposal in January. Washington's resolves, in turn, had been strictly patterned upon the Maryland convention of November, which, in addition to approving the acts of the Continental Congress, urged the formation of a large-scale militia in Maryland, with officers to be elected, and with funds for the citizen-soldiery to be raised in a voluntary (and hence libertarian) manner.

North Carolina, counseled to follow the lead of Maryland and Virginia, declined to do so. One of North Carolina's problems was the high proportion of Tories in the province, including the colonies of Highland Scots around Wilmington and Cape Fear, and in the back counties of Rowan, Surry, Anson, and Guilford, where hundreds of citizens signed loyalty pledges to Great Britain. Indeed, Governor Josiah Martin urged General Gage to send him weapons and ammunition to arm the North Carolina Tories.

The Tory sentiment in the back country has led historians to believe that the North Carolina Regulators, in anger against the seaboard planters who had suppressed them and who were now rebels against Britain, had reacted by joining the Tory cause. A pretty theory, but at odds with the facts. The most recent and most careful historian of the Regulator movement estimates that of 323 Regulators whose later choice is known, 289 joined the revolution while only thirty-four, slightly over ten percent, became Tories.\*

Armed clashes between the popular and governmental troops began to occur in mid-April in the South, shortly before news of Lexington and Concord arrived. By mid-April, news had arrived of Britain's decision to crack down on New England rather than conciliate. Accordingly, Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, had twenty kegs of powder in the Virginia provincial stores at Williamsburg seized by a British naval captain on the night of April 20. The Williamsburg masses threatened to rise up and recapture the powder. Virginia seethed with indignation, and the committees of Gloucester, Henrico, Dumfries, and Albemarle counties called for restoration of the gunpowder. Lord Dunmore refused to give up the powder, summoned all people loyal to Britain to rally to him, and threatened to free all the slaves of Virginia and burn Williamsburg to the ground. Six hundred well-armed Virginians met at Fredricksburg on April 29 to press their demands, but, as in the case of the Williamsburg agitation the week before, more conservative leaders, George Washington and Peyton Randolph, persuaded the men to disperse

\*Elmer Douglas Johnson, "The War of the Regulation: Its Place in History" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1942), p. 115 and app. 3. On this as well as similar reports on the choices of the South Carolina Regulation, see Richard M. Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators*, p. 213.

and refrain from advancing upon the British troops. The redoubtable Patrick Henry, however, refused to be cowed, as had even Richard Henry Lee, and himself led a militia company from Hanover County, which managed to seize at least the monetary equivalent of the powder from the British. Lord Dunmore declared Patrick Henry an outlaw, which more than ever made him a hero of the enraged people of Virginia.

The night after Dunmore's raid on the powder, South Carolina rebels, joined in a secret committee of the South Carolina provincial congress headed by William Henry Drayton, staged a raid on the government armory, and carried off arms and ammunition. By the time of Lexington and Concord, much of the South, and especially Virginia, was at fever pitch.

## “The Shot Heard Round the World”: The Final Conflict Begins

Despite the mounting tension in the South, the main focus of potential revolutionary conflict was still Massachusetts. The British authorities, ever more attracted to a hard line, were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the timorousness and caution of General Gage, who had actually asked for heavy reinforcements when everyone knew that the scurvy Americans could be routed by a mere show of force from the superb British army. Four hundred Royal Marines and several new regiments were sent to Gage, but the king, one of the leaders of coercion sentiment, seriously considered removing Gage from command.

There were a few voices of reason in the British government, but they were not listened to. The Whiggish secretary of war, Lord Barrington, urged reliance on the cheap and efficient method of naval blockade rather than on a land war in the large expanse and forests of America. And General Edward Harvey warned of any attempt to conquer America by a land army. But the cabinet was convinced that ten thousand British regulars, assisted by American Tories, could crush any conceivable American resistance. Underlying this conviction—and consequent British eagerness to wield armed force—was a chauvinist and quasi-racist contempt for the Americans. Thus, General James Grant sneered at the “skulking peasants” who dared to resist the Crown. Major John Pitcairn, stationed at Boston, was sure that “if he drew his sword but half out of the scabbard, the whole banditti of Massachusetts Bay would flee before him.” Particularly important was the speech in Parliament of the powerful Bedfordite, the Earl of Sandwich, first lord of the Admiralty, who sneeringly asked: “Suppose the colonies do abound in men, what does that signify? They are raw, undisciplined, cowardly men. I wish instead of . . . fifty thousand of these brave fellows, they would produce in the field at least

two hundred thousand; the more the better; the easier would be the conquest . . . the very sound of a cannon would carry them off . . . as fast as their feet could carry them.”

There was another reason, it should be noted, for Sandwich’s reluctance to use the fleet rather than the army against the enemy. While the army was to dispatch the Americans, Sandwich wished to use the fleet against France, with which he hoped and expected to be soon at war.

Accordingly, the Crown sent secret orders to Gage, reaching him on April 14. The Earl of Dartmouth rebuked Gage for being too moderate. The decision had been made; since the people of New England were clearly committed to “open rebellion” and independence of Britain, maximum and decisive force must be slammed down hard upon the Americans—immediately. While reinforcements were under way, it was important for the British troops to launch a preventive strike, by moving hard before an American revolution could be organized. Therefore, Gage decided to arrest the leaders of the Massachusetts provincial congress, especially Hancock and Sam Adams. As in so many other “preventive” first strikes in history, Great Britain itself precipitated the one thing it wished most to avoid: a successful revolution. Interestingly enough, the Massachusetts radicals were at the same time rejecting hot-headed plans for a first strike by rebel forces, who would thus be throwing away the hard-forged unity of the American colonists.

Adams and Hancock were out of town and out of reach, near Concord; so Gage decided to kill two birds with one stone by sending a military expedition to Concord to seize the large stores of rebel military supplies and to arrest the radical leaders. Gage determined to send out the force secretly, to catch the Americans by surprise; that way if armed conflict broke out, the onus for initiating the fray could be laid on the Americans. Gage also used a traitor high up in radical ranks. Dr. Benjamin Church, of Boston, whom the British supplied with funds to maintain an expensive mistress, informed on the location of the supplies and the rebel leaders. (Church’s perfidy remained undetected for many more months.) Gage learned from Church, furthermore, that the provincial congress, under the prodding of the frightened Joseph Hawley, had resolved on March 30 not to fight any armed British expedition unless it should also bring artillery. By not sending out artillery, Gage figured that the Americans would not resist the expedition.\*

Gage, however, immediately encountered what would prove a major difficulty in fighting a counterinsurgency war by a minority ruling army against insurgent forces backed by the vast majority of the people. He found that, surrounded by a sullen and hostile people, he could not keep any of his troop or fleet movements hidden. The rebels would quickly discover these movements and spread the news.

\* Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution*, pp. 182, 190.

On April 15, the day after receiving his orders, Gage relieved his best troops of duty, gathered his boats, and on the night of April 18 shipped 700 under Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith to the mainland, from which they began to march northwest to Lexington and Concord. But the Americans quickly discovered what was happening. Someone, perhaps Dr. Joseph Warren, sent Paul Revere to Lexington to warn Adams and Hancock. Hancock, emotional, wanted to join the minutemen, springing to arms; but the sober intelligence of Sam Adams reminded Hancock of his revolutionary duty as a top leader of the American forces, and they both fled to safety. Revere was soon captured, but Dr. Samuel Prescott was able to speed to Concord and bring the news that the British were coming.

As news of the British march reached the Americans, the Lexington minutemen gathered under the command of Captain John Parker. Rather absurdly, Parker drew up his handful of seventy men in open formation across the British path. When Major Pitcairn, in charge of six companies of the British advance guard, came up to confront the militia, Pitcairn brusquely ordered the Americans to lay down their arms and disperse. Parker, seeing his error, was more than willing to disperse but not to disarm. In the midst of this tense confrontation, shots rang out. No one knows who fired first; the important thing is that the British, despite Pitcairn's orders to stop, fired far longer and more heavily than necessary, mercilessly shooting at the fleeing Americans so long as they remained within range. Eight Americans were killed in the massacre (including the brave but foolish Parker who refused to flee), and eight wounded, whereas only one British soldier was slightly wounded. The exuberant and trigger-happy British troops cheered their victory; but the victory at Lexington would prove Pyrrhic indeed. The blood shed at Lexington made the restraining resolution of Joseph Hawley obsolete. The Revolutionary War had begun! Sam Adams, upon hearing the shooting from some distance away, at once realized that the fact of the open clash was more significant than who would win the skirmish. Aware that the showdown had at last arrived, Adams exclaimed, "Oh! What a glorious morning is this!"

The British troops marched happily on to Concord. This time the Americans did not try any foolhardy open confrontation with the British forces. Instead, an infinitely wiser strategy was employed. In the first place, part of the military stores were carried off by the Americans. Second, no resistance was offered to the British entry into Concord, thus lulling the troops into a further sense of security. While the British were destroying the remaining stores, three to four hundred militiamen gathered at the bridge into Concord and advanced upon the British rear guard. The British shot first, but were forced to retreat across the bridge, having suffered three killed and nine wounded. The despised Americans were beginning to make up for the massacre at Lexington.

Heedless of the ominous signs of the gathering storm, Colonel Smith, com-

manding the expedition, kept his men around Concord for hours before beginning to march back to Boston. That march was to become one of the most famous in the annals of America. Along the way, beginning a mile out of Concord, at Meriam's Corner, the embattled and neighboring farmers and militiamen employed the tactics of guerrilla warfare to devastating effect. Knowing their home terrain intimately, these undisciplined and individualistic Americans subjected the proud British troops to a continuous withering and overpowering fire from behind trees, walls, and houses. The march back soon became a nightmare of destruction for the buoyant British; their intended victory march, a headlong flight through a gauntlet. Colonel Smith was wounded and Pitcairn unhorsed. The British were saved from decimation only by a relief brigade of twelve hundred men under Earl Percy that reached them at Lexington. Still, Americans continued to join the fray and fire at the troops, despite heavy losses imposed by British flanking parties.

Despite the British reinforcements, the Americans might have slaughtered and conquered the British force if (a) they had not suffered from shortages of ammunition, (b) the British had not swerved into Charlestown and embarked for Boston under the protecting guns of the British fleet, and (c) excessive caution had not held the Americans back from a final blow at the troops on the road to Charlestown. Even so, the deadly march back to Boston was a glorious victory, physically and psychologically, for the Americans. Of some fifteen to eighteen hundred redcoats, ninety-nine were killed and missing, and 174 wounded. The exultant Americans, who numbered about four thousand irregular individuals that day, suffered ninety-three casualties. Insofar as these individuals were led that day, it was by Dr. Joseph Warren and William Heath, appointed a general by the Massachusetts provincial congress.

Events could not have gone better for the American cause: initial aggression and massacre by the arrogant redcoats, then turned to utter rout by the aroused and angry people of Massachusetts. It was truly a tale for song and story. As Willard Wallace writes, "Even now, the significance of Lexington and Concord awakens a response in Americans that goes far beyond the details of the day or the identity of the foe. An unmilitary people, at first overrun by trained might, had eventually risen in their wrath and won a hard but splendid triumph."\*

Above all, as Sam Adams was quick to realize, the stirring events of April 19, 1775, touched off a general armed conflict: the American Revolution. In the immortal lines of Emerson, penned for the fiftieth anniversary of that day:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

\*Willard M. Wallace, *Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), p. 26.