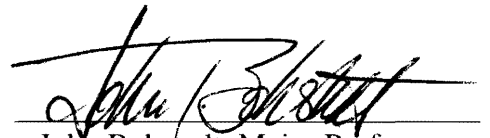
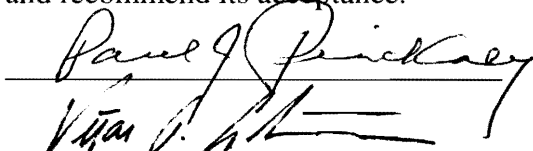
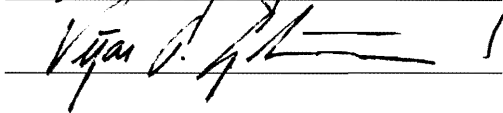


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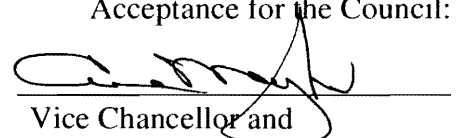
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Bradley S. Benefield entitled "Appointing Stability in an Age of Crisis: Lord Charles Cornwallis and the British Imperial Revival, 1780-1801." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.


John Bohstedt, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Acceptance for the Council:


Vice Chancellor and
Dean of Graduate
Studies

Appointing Stability in an Age of Crisis:
Lord Charles Cornwallis and the British Imperial Revival,
1780-1801

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Bradley S. Benefield
August 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have been involved in the completion of this work. It is unfortunate that they will not receive more credit than these feeble words of sincere thanks. First, I must thank the members of my committee who have offered so many helpful insights. Special acknowledgement must be accorded Dr. John Bohstedt. He has spent many long hours giving thoughtful advice and lending a practiced eye in the completion of this capstone work. To him I am truly indebted. Second, I would like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues. They have offered sound advice, timely encouragement, and the occasional comfortable couch. To Mr. Jason Wolfe, Mr. Michael Lawson, Mr. Michael Booker, and Mr. Brad Pardue I offer heartfelt thanks. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to the McClure and the Bernadotte Schmidt foundations, both of which subsidized the archival research contained within this thesis. Finally, and most important, I must acknowledge my family; Heather, Madison, and Wilson. I love you all. Their moments of labor, frustration, loneliness, and joy have mirrored my own. To each of you I dedicate this work.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the ideological impetus to the founding of the second British Empire. The loss of the thirteen North American colonies left the British Empire in a state of crisis. Yet, by the early nineteenth century, the British Empire was once again in a position of global dominance. Many historians have theorized over how Britain united to face and overcome this period of crisis. One historian, C.A. Bayly, has argued that British elites rallied behind a progressive conservative ideology, which became the prerequisite to the founding of the second British Empire.

To test this theory, this thesis will examine a case study in imperial service, Lord Charles Cornwallis's service in America, India, and Ireland. Why was Lord Cornwallis, who met so much failure in America, appointed to the crisis points around the empire? What does he symbolize to the empire? How did Lord Cornwallis stabilize the empire and play a significant role in the imperial revival?

This thesis will use official and personal correspondence, government documents, and historical research to illuminate these questions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Cornwallis, Charles, 1 st Marquis, <i>The Correspondence of Charles First Marquis Cornwallis</i> . Charles Ross ed., 3 vols. London: John Murray, 1859.
HO	Home Office
MP	Member of Parliament
PRO	British National Archives/ Public Records Office
WO	War Office

INTRODUCTION

OPENING SCENE

On October 19, 1781, Lieutenant General Lord Charles Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, to allied American and French forces under the command of George Washington after a siege that lasted weeks and an attempted British evacuation that failed. Cornwallis had requested relief from his commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Clinton, for weeks, but Clinton and his reinforcements only grudgingly moved out from New York that very day. The defeat and humiliation—and perhaps illness—weighed so heavily on Cornwallis that he did not attend capitulating ceremonies. No doubt concerns about the opinions of Parliament, king, and country tortured his mind. British generals Burgoyne and Howe, upon their return from failed leadership faced Parliamentary inquiry. Would Cornwallis too come to know crown and country's scorn? Cornwallis left America under a cloud.

Surely it seemed the fates were against Cornwallis; his troubles in late 1781 had only begun at Yorktown. *The Greyhound*, the ship that carried Cornwallis back to England, was assailed by French privateers who captured the ship, took captive its passengers, replaced the crew, and set a course for French ports. However the Frenchmen's victory was short lived. As the Atlantic Ocean is rarely hospitable in winter, a storm nearly destroyed *The Greyhound*. The ship was saved when Cornwallis convinced his French captors to put into England. He promised the privateers that their

prize, *The Greyhound*, would remain in their custody, that their captives would, through their “parole of honour,” remain non-combatants, and after landfall they could promptly sail to France.¹

The long, perilous voyage from New York to England, worsened by a privateer’s assault and rough weather, gave Cornwallis time to think. Beyond mulling over the events of his command, his thoughts probably turned to life at Culford, his family’s estate. Perhaps his wife, then dead for two years, his children, much older since he last saw them, and his fields where he rode and hunted, now filled his thoughts. The genteel country life beckoned. Cornwallis felt his public career in danger and possibly believed domestic ease in his future.

The Greyhound landed at Torbay in Devonshire. Once word of Lord Cornwallis’s arrival spread, crowds of local citizens filled the streets. No doubt, the masses of people in Torbay’s streets unsettled Cornwallis. It is hard to say with certainty what Cornwallis thought at the sight of these crowds; images of Admiral Byng’s demise may have filled his head.

In 1756 as the Seven Years War erupted around the globe, Parliament had dispatched Admiral John Byng to the Mediterranean to protect Britain’s strategic island base at Minorca. Byng had engaged a French fleet surrounding the island, but after an indecisive skirmish the Admiral retreated to Gibraltar, leaving the French in control of the island. Byng’s actions outraged Parliament, which recalled him, court-martialed him, and sentenced him to death. Although the court-martial had not intended that the

¹ Statement by master and passengers of transport *Greyhound* from New York, made prize on 14 January 1782 by the privateer *Boulogne* from St. Malo, France. Signed by Cornwallis, PRO 30/11/7/1.

sentence be executed, Byng was shot by a firing squad on his own deck in 1757. If Parliament executed Byng for losing Minorca, what might the penalty be for one who lost America?

Whatever Cornwallis's apprehensions, the crowds reversed them. He was cheered in Torbay as in many other towns along the road to London. In Exeter, the populace carried him through the streets on their shoulders. Cornwallis, who had lost America, was treated as a conquering hero. Clearly the British nation did not hold him responsible for this event was a harbinger of government's reception of Cornwallis.

Despite Cornwallis's forebodings, his government repeatedly called upon him to stabilize parts of the Empire in crisis. His country needed his services and Cornwallis answered the call. First George III and Lord North had appointed Cornwallis second in command of British forces in North America. In 1780-1781 while the commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Clinton, entrenched himself and his forces in the comforts of loyalist New York City, Cornwallis maneuvered through an unforgiving terrain, torrential rains, and relentless guerilla warfare in the South. Though surrender followed this quagmire, few in government blamed Cornwallis for the campaign's failure. The American rebellion heralded a series of crises in the British Empire. In the two most important of these, in India and Ireland, the British government turned to Cornwallis to reinstate imperial stability.

Despite Cornwallis's fears of a career tarnished, his American service had demonstrated his worth to the empire, which was manifested by a patriotic, progressive-conservative improvement *ethos*, which I sum up in the phrase, "patriotic improvement."

I am using this term from the Greek *`εθος* that has come to mean a customary spirit and attitude of a defined group. In this study that customary attitude is improvement and the defined group is the British political nation. As we shall see, contemporaries used the terms “spirit of improvement” and “patriotic” to describe this *ethos* at work in British society.

British conceptions of patriotism in the eighteenth century evoked love of the fatherland and appealed to a higher moral ideals than conventional norms in order to transcend party division. Therefore the term “patriotic improvement” refers to disinterested and wide-ranging improvement efforts that were intended to benefit the common good and were above both selfishness and contemporary political faction. Cornwallis’s manifestation of this *ethos* recommended him to the king and British cabinet.

THE IMPERIAL CRISES

As Stephen Conway and others have argued, the American rebellion inflicted considerable damage on the British Empire.² Although vital American trade had not been completely cut-off, its short-term constriction deflated imperial markets and traumatized capitalist psyches during and immediately following the war. This economic shockwave soon touched off social instability. Unemployment rose as trade suffered and

² See Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolution: 1783-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

dependency on poor relief spiked as the unemployed and dead and disabled soldiers' families fell into destitution. In addition common citizens voiced grievances as "friendly" quartered soldiers—especially in southern England—destroyed property and crops. Armies have always been eating-machines and thus a terrible burden on the local civilian population. In July 1780 over 11,000 British troops were stationed around London. Over 6,500 more joined their ranks in August, as Whitehall's strategists feared a French invasion.³

Across Britain riots added to the malaise. The Gordon Riots were the most infamous. In 1780 Lord Amherst, the Secretary of War, was busy suppressing riots in regional centers such as Devonshire and Bath. Throughout the eighteenth century the War Office had put-down riots with the regular army. Thus civilian injuries and deaths often resulted from riots.⁴

Official British capitulation in America brought little immediate relief to this suffering. The signing of the peace certainly injured the British imperial mentality. According to many in government the British imperial system had failed; instability at home matched defeat abroad and seemed to confirmed those fears. Elements of public opinion expressed these sentiments in newspaper editorials and in popular periodicals. Gloom-and-doom mentalities nurtured beliefs that the loss of India loomed around the

³Effective Rank and File in and about London, 10th July 1780, WO 34/191/120 ; State of His Majesty's...Regiments of Foot, Royal Artillery, and Loyal Irish Corps, Kingston 26th August 1780, WO 34/191/103.

⁴ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1788* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 52-53.

corner as native Indian powers assaulted East India Company holdings and interests.⁵ In 1779 the sultan of the Marathas defeated British troops in the Second Mysore War. Soon after that British embarrassment, Tipu Saib of Mysore launched attacks on British Madras. Apart from demonizing Tipu Saib as the villain of the British Empire in the 1780s, these events had little lasting significance. However, Tipu and others may have inadvertently provoked movements to reform the East India Company for the security of British India.

The trials of the East India Company, financially, structurally, and diplomatically, had vexed investors and the British government for some years. Since 1760 the East India Company had accrued £20 million in debt, a staggering amount in the late-eighteenth century. This debt devalued company stock and convinced some officials of the necessity of Parliamentary intervention. Ironically these circumstances sprang from the East India Company's victories on the subcontinent nearly thirty years earlier.

After the Company victory over the *Nawab* of Bengal in 1757 at the Battle of Plassey, the ambitious, yet esteemed, Robert Clive acquired the Presidency of Bengal as a gift from the Mughal emperor to the East India Company. By 1765 this gift included the *diwani*, the rights to collect revenues in Bengal. The emperor's gift placed the East India Company in a situation as perilous as it was historic. Clive and his immediate successors implemented an antiquated system of tax farming that produced widespread corruption among the Company's servants. By 1780 this system was hemorrhaging funds, which Company servants seized and used to subsidize political and social lives upon their return

⁵ In this paragraph I draw on Conway, *The British Isles*, 336-340.

to Britain. Patriotic improvers in Britain feared that these “nabobs”⁶ could possibly undercut the British constitution through their practice of bribing MPs and other officials.

Moreover, from 1765 to 1780, the East India Company became increasingly entangled in numerous diplomatic liabilities on the subcontinent due primarily to its relationship to the Mughal emperor and the ensuing war with France as an ally of the American rebels. Extreme instances resulted in British officers serving various native officials, especially the *Nawab* of Bengal —since the East India Company army was led by regular British officers. Furthermore periodic incursions into neighboring territories by Hyder Ali, Tipu Saib, and other native authorities destabilized India further. These circumstances required military expenditures that amplified debt and minimized returns.

Many government ministers contemplated the loss of British India unless the government intervened and implemented significant reforms. Between 1780 and 1784 various ministers submitted bills that would bring the East India Company under closer government oversight. As evidenced by the numerous East India Company reform bills that members of the North, Shelburne, Fox-North, and Pitt governments submitted, many in Parliament had concluded that the East India Company needed strong disinterested leadership with reforming ideas and military competence. Reforms might have taken place earlier had the first debates not coincided with the perceived imperial apocalypse in

⁶ Nabob was a derogatory corruption of the Sanskrit *Nawab*, which was a Mughal provincial governor. British polite society contemptuously labeled wealthy East Indian servants as such.

North America. The British cabinet did not want the heavy-handed tactics that had spawned rebellion in America to have a similar effect in India.⁷

The crisis of the American war also invigorated revolutionary movements in Ireland. Since the 1760s agrarian discontent, anti-English sentiment, Catholic alienation, and sectarian violence had torn Ireland apart. Discontent ranged from peasant protestors such as the White Boys to elite intellectuals such as the Burkes and Protestant reforming politicians like Henry Grattan. However, power in Ireland was held by the Protestant Ascendancy.

The Protestant Ascendancy was a well organized and sophisticated resistance to Westminster's domination. These Irish Protestants exemplified settler nationalism in which settlers emphasize both their connection with, and their distinction from, the mother country. Their main grievance was the mercantilist sanctions placed on Irish trade by the Westminster Parliament since the Declaratory Act in 1720. These sanctions limited Irish exportation of woolens to Britain. Beginning with the surrender of General Burgoyne in November 1777, and France's entry into the war in February 1778, many in the Ascendancy sought to benefit from Britain's position of weakness. The Protestant Ascendancy assembled companies of their homeland defense militia, the Irish Volunteers, in Dublin, in a show of force to back their demands. Their centrifugal force at the very heart of the empire produced a measure of Irish parliamentary autonomy, a relaxation of trade restrictions, and a strengthened Volunteer movement that the Ascendancy frequently resurrected to resist Westminster's impositions.

⁷ John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper-Collins, 1991), 364.

Middle and working class organizations also added to the clamor. The United Irishmen, a non-sectarian association of middle class intellectuals, formed in Dublin and Belfast in 1791. It would provide a unifying national leadership for the 1798 Rebellion. Peasant protest against land tenure issues had given rise to local protests by gangs generically known as White Boys. Meanwhile harassment of Catholics by Protestant gangs had provoked the creation of the Catholic Defenders, a network of town-based, working-class, oath-bound secret societies, which politically were more radical than the White Boys, but certainly capable of cooperation with the agrarian peasant protesters. The coalition of the United Irishmen and Catholic Defenders in the 1790s was related intrinsically to the French Revolution. Catholic Defender ideology was a synthesis of “traditional agrarian aspirations and ‘French’ principles.”⁸ The United Irishmen also drew much of their inspiration for parliamentary reform from the French Revolution.⁹ In this age of crisis from 1780 to 1800, these ideological connections were more significant. Increasing hostility between Britain and France during the American and French Revolutions made Franco-Irish relationships ever more dangerous for Britain. Many British officials, such as Henry Dundas, the Home Secretary under Pitt, were certain of this connection. Dundas predicted that a French invasion of Britain would occur in conjunction with an uprising of the Irish peasantry. Other government ministers asserted confidently that Irish loyalty could not be trusted. As in the past Ireland’s

⁸ Jim Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

disintegration into revolution or rebellion could open the “back door” to Britain for continental powers.

Ireland was distinctive from India or America due to its contested status as either colony or kingdom in the British Isles.¹⁰ Ireland offered challenges within this context of crisis. Years of agrarian and sectarian violence had been amplified by Westminster’s economic policies and an Ascendancy-dominated Irish political nation that did very little to address the sources of the conflicts. Out of this strife, radical societies flourished in the fertile ground of anti-Ascendancy and anti-English sentiments. The French political and economic instability that climaxed in 1789’s revolutionary explosion began to cloud the horizon and further complicated the volatile Irish question. The North, Shelburne, and Pitt ministries had appointed Lord Lieutenants who either complicated matters through their radical measures or lacked the political skill to effect change. More than ever, Britain’s Celtic backdoor posed a major security risk.

Considering this distinct situation, a full analysis of Cornwallis’s role in Ireland is beyond the scope of this present work. Even so, after an analysis of the burgeoning imperial *ethos* and Cornwallis’s applications of it in America and India, I will be able to comment on why similar policies in Ireland seemed impractical. Clearly, Britain governed Ireland as an exception within the Empire. Moreover, Ireland’s strategic and administrative precariousness coupled with Britain’s unusual governance poses interesting questions that I will explore later as a major component of a doctoral dissertation.

¹⁰ See Nicolas Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988).

These were definitely challenging times; many believed that the American debacle followed by gathering storms in India and Ireland were knells for the British Empire. In each of these theaters Lord Charles Cornwallis proved to be the government's chosen administrator. His solutions were sometimes controversial; yet government repeatedly called upon him because he epitomized patriotic improvers' values. The British elite not only admired these values, but perceived that they were the moral and practical foundation for restoring stability to the empire in a time of crisis. It was no coincidence that these crises converged in that revolutionary age, and it was no accident that the British political nation met them with the embodiment of their ruling axiom: Charles, Lord Cornwallis.

METHOD AND SCOPE

The British Empire, during and after the loss of America, has offered a treasure of historical insights into the development of modern Britain. In the eighteenth century Britain's imperial *ethos* pervaded culture and society.¹¹ This study seeks to present a nuanced understanding of this *ethos* at work through a case study. Biography as a historiographic form has taken its share of criticism. I have not attempted to present a biography of Lord Cornwallis. Although biographies of him by Frank and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: the American Adventure* and *Cornwallis: the Imperial Years*, have a significant position in this research, the assertions of this thesis offer deeper analysis. A

¹¹Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 86-88

biographic study immersed in context can illuminate the problems of historical generalizations about empire.

I have chosen the service of Lord Charles Cornwallis from 1780 to 1801 for that purpose. Cornwallis's ascension into the British imperial pantheon is counter-intuitive and paradoxical. Through further investigation, it is apparent that his rise was dependent upon a resurgent *ethos* that fueled the British imperial revival, the *ethos* of patriotic improvement. That same *ethos* propelled Cornwallis's rise to stardom.

This concept of patriotic improvement is not original, but has been examined by historians such as Asa Briggs, C.A. Bayly, Peter Borsay, and P.J. Marshall. Bayly has labeled the improvement *ethos* "Agrarian Patriotism."¹² There are problems with his terminology. First, Bayly asserts that aristocrats were the primary improvers; I agree. However, his term Agrarian Patriotism seems to describe gentry and yeoman farmers rather than aristocratic landowners. Second, the primacy of agrarianism in Bayly's term marginalizes the moral, political, economic, and educational aspects of the improvement *ethos*. For these reasons I have chosen to use the term patriotic improvement.

Each of the authors mentioned above have examined Cornwallis's career and its significance to British imperial revival. However, their studies of his service are cursory. A closer examination of Lord Cornwallis's appointments and service in America, India, and Ireland reveal that while patriotic improvement was the dominant discourse in the birth of the second British empire, the *ethos*'s impact might be limited where more traditional ideologies, such as anti-Catholicism and Francophobia, had taken root.

¹² C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (New York: Longman, 1989).

Fortunately there exists a plethora of sources for this study. Despite imperial administrations' tendency to run roughshod over their subjects, they left wonderful paper trails of correspondence. So it is for Lord Cornwallis, a majority of whose papers were published in the nineteenth century. An even larger collection of Cornwallis's papers has been compiled at the British National Archives in London.¹³ Although these papers act as the core of my investigation, I have also considered the papers of other prominent figures such as George III, William Pitt, Henry Dundas, Sir John Moore, Arthur Young, and Sir John Sinclair, both published and collected at the British National Archives. Finally I have sampled the burgeoning print culture of the eighteenth century consisting of pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers to determine the degree to which the patriotic improvement *ethos* had penetrated the public sphere.

The story of Lord Cornwallis's deployment of the patriotic improvement *ethos* at critical moments of imperial crisis illustrates the partial fusion of British culture and imperial *ethos*. This is a tale of the empire's revival.

¹³ Formerly the Public Records Office.

CHAPTER I

BRITISH ELITES AND PATRIOTIC IMPROVEMENT, 1760-1800

The British political nation met the escalation of imperial crises in the 1780s by practicing a progressive conservatism at home and in the empire. British elites perceived that this *ethos* would restore to the empire both political stability and the prosperity that under-girded that stability. They were confident it would work because they had applied its principles domestically for several decades with excellent results. It had become a recipe for “national integration and patriotism,” which could bring together great landlords, yeoman farmers, and professionals into a moral community.¹⁴ Moreover both Evangelical morality and the rationalism of the Enlightenment energized this *ethos*. That progressive conservatism was what C.A. Bayly has described as Agrarian Patriotism: the inner heart of English expansion and the, “domestic pre-condition of overseas enterprise.”

Bayly’s great synthesis, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, explains Agrarian Patriotism, and while I have chosen not to use his term, his examination of Britain’s improvement *ethos* is useful. What Bayly termed Agrarian Patriotism and I have termed patriotic improvement addressed the crises of empire through improvement and reform aimed at pacifying colonial grievances while benefiting

¹⁴ In this paragraph I draw on Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 80, 109.

imperial interests. Patriotic improvers targeted agriculture, commerce, morality, education, and politics for improvement. The patriotic improvement *ethos*, which was inseparably linked to the Enlightenment, was fused with the political nation's desire to heal the empire. Therefore empire had become a necessary component of British patriotism in a way it had never been. David Cannadine has argued that as estates across the British Isles were consolidated into wealthy landowners' larger holdings, sectional allegiances among elite landowners disintegrated and the landowners increasingly considered themselves British. That consolidated nature of landownership among these new British elites had focused them toward empire.¹⁵ Many of the new elites believed that patriotic improvement was the only *ethos* that could overcome the birth pangs of the Second Empire.

Patriotic improvement was the dominant *ethos* in the founding of the Second British Empire and embraced by a great number of prominent government officials, including the king.¹⁶ As the landed elite recovered from the economic woes of the early 1780s, they became more conscious of their duty to protect the crown, the church, and the constitution from the hydra of revolutionary threats.¹⁷

By 1790, the composite parts of the British elite had been fused into an overtly British patriotic polity. The relative uniformity of their patriotism resulted from a transformation in British aristocratic *ethos*. That transformation originated in the

¹⁵ David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 10.

¹⁶ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 81.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

consolidation of landed wealth in estates of burgeoning British elites, the influence of the British Enlightenment, and the impending crises that elites had perceived in the American and French Revolutions. This transformation of the aristocratic *ethos* was rooted in social and economic issues. Beginning in the 1760s, the nature of British landownership changed. First, lands in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland¹⁸ were consolidated into the hands of authentically British elites spanning all four “nations.”¹⁹

In part, this transformation resulted from the demographic crisis that plagued the aristocracy in the first half of the eighteenth century, which saw many prominent families pass out of existence because they could not produce male heirs. From 1680 to 1770, a considerable decrease in male generation replacement rates²⁰ among peers produced an extraordinary number of heiresses.²¹ Lands inherited by these heiresses were either incorporated into their husbands’ estates or sold. While more affluent landholders absorbed their wives’ holdings, less prosperous holders were inclined to sell.²² In addition, the changing economic circumstances and the effects of the land tax undermined the position of smaller landowners and forced the sale of small estates. This development enabled wealthier peers to incorporate the holdings of their lesser neighbors

¹⁸ Historians have contested Ireland’s status as a colony or a kingdom within the British Empire. However, Canny convincingly argues for Ireland’s status as a kingdom by 1760 in *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*.

¹⁹ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 10.

²⁰ This term refers to the rate of male children born in a generation.

²¹ Lloyd Bonfield, “Marriage Settlements and the ‘Rise of Great Estates’: The Demographic Aspect” *Economic History Review* 32 (1979): 483-493; See also Christopher Clay, “Marriage, Inheritance, and the Rise of Large Estates in England, 1660-1815,” *Economic History Review* 21 (1968): 503-518.

²² Clay, “Marriage, Inheritance,” 516.

and resulted in an engrossment of aristocratic estates.²³ Many prosperous aristocratic families saw their holdings doubled, not only in England but throughout the British Isles. In 1786, the second Marquess of Downshire married Mary Sandys and consequently gained 20,000 acres in Ireland.²⁴ The Butes, a family close to George III, were the most prolific heiress chasers. Bute sons married four heiresses in three generations and acquired estates in England, Scotland, and Wales.²⁵ This consolidation gave rise to what David Cannadine describes as a supra-national British elite astride the borders of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.²⁶ Moreover, the outlook of those aristocrats who held large, exclusively English estates was broadened and encompassed the nation and the empire. These elites were wealthier and more cosmopolitan than their predecessors fifty years earlier. Furthermore, they were systematically oriented toward the empire rather than their native kingdoms.²⁷ George III saw the rise of these new British elites as a domestic and imperial stabilizing force.

The consolidation of these estates not only amalgamated landed elites of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales into a imperially oriented class, but also provided them the opportunity and the incentive to act as major agents in agricultural change.²⁸ Agricultural improvement was the sector of the British Enlightenment that landed elites found most

²³ Bonfield, "Marriage Settlements," 486.

²⁴ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 11.

²⁵ Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 12.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

practical. As did all Enlightenment principles, agricultural improvement emphasized scientific observation and experimentation. Since Locke, British scholars had understood science as “demonstrable” knowledge rather than medieval scholasticism and seventeenth century Cartesian understandings.²⁹ Agricultural improvers shunned traditional farming and husbandry and implemented scientific methods for the benefit of market and society alike.

There were innumerable natural scientists and agriculturists spreading this gospel of improvement. Aristocratic improvers encouraged agricultural improvement through experimental “Home Farms,” membership in agricultural societies, participation in agricultural shows, and instruction through coaching methods. Improvement was exclusively an aristocratic pursuit and agricultural literature maintained this. For example John Lawrence wrote:

I should think my self extremely happy, if I could be instrumental in reviving among Gentlemen, whose Affairs do not oblige them to spend a great Part of their Year in London, a Spirit of improving their Estates and employing their Time in making Experiments, which cannot be expected from the Farmer. He, whose thoughts must be fixed on making up his Rent and maintaining his Family by early and constant Labour.³⁰

Many prominent peers used expendable acres to conduct agriculture experiments, often retaining the produce to consume in their homes. In 1759 the Marquess of Rockingham, using his experimental acres, supplied his Wentworth estate with an abundance of wheat

²⁹ Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 65.

³⁰ John Laurence, *A new system of agriculture* (Dublin: John Hyde, 1727), 12.

worth £195 and maintained his stables with £1,229 of oats and hay.³¹ Lord Shelburne, Prime Minister from 1782 to 1783, conducted similar experiments and hoped to pass down the virtue of improvement to his son: “I have nothing so much at heart as to give Henry [his son] a taste for agricultural improvement.”³² Many elite dignitaries attempted to model virtuous agricultural attitudes: the Duke of Bedford, Thomas Coke, Viscount “Turnip” Townshend—who was Cornwallis’s grandfather—the Marquess of Rockingham, and the list goes on including “Farmer George” himself, the king.

George III’s involvement in agricultural experimentation was extraordinary. While many are familiar with the king as “Farmer George,” few have realized the sophistication of his agricultural interests. George was not an agrarian spectator; he was an amateur agricultural scientist. “Farmer George” experimented with various agricultural methods, especially grain production, in the land surrounding Windsor. In addition, he studied sheep genetics at Richmond and Kew in order to produce a unique British flock and, as a result, improved British textiles.³³ Beyond their commercial importance, the flocks at Windsor, Richmond, and Kew were some of the most important in the art and science of animal breeding in the British Isles.³⁴

The king had a great deal of influence upon the rest of the improving community. In the 1790s, George III hired the agricultural consulting firm of Nathaniel Kent, John

³¹ J.V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 158.

³² Beckett, *Aristocracy*, 160.

³³ H.B. Carter, *His Majesty’s Spanish Flock: Sir Joseph Banks and the Merinos of George III of England* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1964), vii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ix.

Claridge, and William Pearce to supervise planting, crop rotation, drainage, and other scientifically improved farming techniques. In addition, the firm created a scientific system of monitoring workers, stocked agricultural journals and books in a reference library, carefully recorded and published their findings, and streamlined the administration of the king's experimental farms. These changes met with the king's fullest approbation and soon the firm was signing contracts across the country.³⁵ Arthur Young, one of the most prolific agricultural scientists of the day, praised the king declaring that the "most remarkable epoch in the history of British Agriculture" was presided over by George III.³⁶ George reciprocated the sentiment in an article he submitted to Young's *Annals of Agriculture* under the pseudonym Ralph Robinson of Windsor, which stated, "I consider myself more indebted to you than to any other man in my dominions."³⁷

Print culture, as many British historians have noted, was an instrumental ingredient for the British Enlightenment.³⁸ So it was for agricultural improvement. As early as the 1690s, a new brand of instructional literature emerged as agriculturists published their findings for the greater farming public; their subscribers were almost exclusively members of the British landed elite.³⁹ From 1692 to 1703, John Houghton

³⁵ Pamela Horn, "The Contribution of the Propagandist to Eighteenth-Century Agricultural Improvement," *Historical Journal* 25 (1982): 315.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 316-17.

³⁷ Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 197.

³⁸ Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 72-95.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 307.

published his findings in *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*.

This trend continued through Timothy Nourse's *Campania Foelix* (1700), John Laurence's *A new system of agriculture* (1727), William Cullen's *Elements of Agriculture and Vegetation* (1765), and Lord Henry Kames's *The Gentlemen Farmer: Being an attempt to Improve Agriculture by Subjecting it to the Test of Rational Principles* (1776). Agricultural improvement even infiltrated classic literature. Jonathan Swift—speaking through his character, The King of Brobdingnag—wrote, “Whoever could make two Ears of Corn, or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his County than the whole Race of Politicians put together.”⁴⁰

The printed propagation of this seminal agrarian gospel reached its apex in the works of Arthur Young, William Marshall, and John Sinclair. No authors contributed more to the diffusion of new agricultural practices than these, whom one historian has labeled the “agricultural propagandists.”⁴¹ These authors promulgated the two basic principles of agricultural improvement: the expansion of cultivated land through enclosure of common lands and reclamation of wastelands, and the improvement of agricultural techniques through the introduction of new crops and the reorganization of labor, which opened more land to cultivation and involved more workers in harvesting.⁴² Young, Marshall, and Sinclair were renowned for their travel log literature, in which they

⁴⁰ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), as quoted in Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 307.

⁴¹ Horn, “The Contribution of the Propagandist,” 315.

⁴² Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement: 1760-1835*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), 35, and J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1978), 2-3.

recorded their observations of the state of agriculture as they journeyed on inspection tours across the British Isles and the continent: Young's *A six months tour through the North of England* (1770), *A Farmer's tour through the East of England* (1771), and *A tour in Ireland* (1780); Marshall's *The rural economy of Norfolk* (1787), *General view of the agriculture of the Central Highlands of Scotland* (1794), *The rural economy of Yorkshire* (1796); and Sinclair's *The statistical account of Scotland* (1791).

Through this literature, they effectively established an "open university" of cutting-edge agricultural practices. Young, a farmer, traveler, author, editor of the *Annals of Agriculture*, and later Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, wrote in 1767 "Agriculture is beyond all doubt the foundation of every other art, business, or profession."⁴³ Young presented the universal benefits of agricultural improvement illustrated in Norfolk:

All the country from Holkham to Houghton was a wild sheepwalk before the spirit of improvement seized the inhabitants, and the glorious spirit has wrought amazing effects: for instead of boundless wilds and uncultivated wastes inhabited by scarce anything but sheep, the country is all cut into enclosures, cultivated in a most husband like manner, richly manured, well peopled and yielding a hundred times the produce that it did in its former state.⁴⁴

Perhaps Young's most important work was the editing of *The Annals of Agriculture*,⁴⁵ solidified his influence over improvement. The *Annals* served as a clearinghouse in print to publicize successful experiments to others who might apply or adapt them. The list of

⁴³ Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 308.

⁴⁴ Arthur Young, *A six weeks tour through the southern counties of England and Wales* (Dublin: J. Milliken in Skinner, 1768), 21, as quoted in Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 309.

⁴⁵ *The Annals of Agriculture* was founded in 1784. Young published forty-five consecutive volumes of the *Annals* until 1809.

contributors to the *Annals* were a who's-who of agricultural experimenters and improvers, which included Joseph Priestley, Lord Coke of Holkham, and "Ralph Robinson of Windsor," none other than King George himself! Young was consistently troubled by his works' low sales; Pamela Horn rightly argues that he had little if any influence on ordinary farmers.⁴⁶ However, British elites knew his work well and subscribed to many of his tenets.

William Marshall (1754-1818), whom many historians and contemporaries have considered to be Young's superior and who first suggested the establishment of the Board of Agriculture, advocated the setting up of a network of model farms throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Through model farms, elites displayed the most advantageous agricultural practices before their tenants and small freeholders.⁴⁷ Marshall also suggested a peer coaching system for tenant farmers, which would teach improvement through the example of an expert coach, usually another tenant who was adept at the new methods.

Occasionally these "propagandists" conflated agricultural improvement and imperial revival. Sir John Sinclair, in 1791, wrote to the Society for the Improvement of British Wool:

There are two objects, for the advantage of this Country, which cannot, indeed, be too often inculcated. The first is to raise a sufficient supply of wool at home: The second, to produce within our own territories the Naval stores necessary for our

⁴⁶ Horn's thesis is echoed by J.V. Beckett, Roy Porter, and others. However disappointed Young was that only 500 first editions of the *Annals* were purchased, one might infer that elites were the primary consumer of *The Annals*, for reasons John Laurence has already outlined.

⁴⁷ Horn, "The Contribution of the Propagandist," 316.

fleet. Until these two objects are attained, Britain cannot be justly accounted an Independent, Manufacturing, or Maritime nation.⁴⁸

Agricultural historian H.B. Carter echoes Sinclair's argument: "In an economic system wherein a favourable trade balance and the war-potential of the nation were so strongly linked, the commerce in wool alone, therefore, was especially vital and exceeded in value that of cotton and iron combined."⁴⁹ For the missionaries of the agricultural gospel the arts of the soil and Britain's imperial position were intertwined.

Government agencies sponsored patriotic improver's endeavors. The establishment of government agricultural offices, government supported private agricultural societies, the emphasis on moral reform, and efforts to eradicate official corruption illustrated this agenda. Patriotic improvers attempted to pry corrupt members from government seats by eliminating sinecures, while cabinet members and MPs worked for retrenchment and improvement.⁵⁰

Government agents together with agriculturalists encouraged the foundation of agricultural societies to promote improvements. Just as William Pitt established the Board of Agriculture in 1790 to study agricultural experiments and new agricultural methods, agricultural societies had emerged throughout the eighteenth century across the British Isles. The largest and most affluent societies, such as the Dublin Society of

⁴⁸ Sir John Sinclair, *Address to the Society for the Improvement of British Wool; constituted at Edinburgh, on Monday, January 31, 1791, By Sir John Sinclair, Bart.* 2d edition, (London: T Cadell, 1791), 7-8.

⁴⁹ Carter, *His Majesty's Spanish Flock*, 2.

⁵⁰ I am using the term retrenchment in the eighteenth century convention. Instead of referring simply to cost cutting, retrenchment in eighteenth century Britain was closely related to government policy of economic reform and political streamlining.

Agriculture or the Royal Society of Arts, published periodicals to disseminate their findings.

In addition, agricultural societies served to disseminate agricultural improvement. In 1790, Joseph Wimpey, a Dorset landowner, published an article in the *Journal of the Bath Society of Agriculture* that praised the role of agricultural societies in raising awareness of new technologies and methods. Wimpey asserted that greater attention had been given to “tillage, stronger and better designed ploughs, the double mouldboard plough for earthing potatoes, the techniques of drilling or setting seed instead of broadcasting it, the radiation of crops, and the willingness to spend more money on manuring.”⁵¹ Moreover, contemporaries claimed that small farmers could not perform agricultural improvement without the aid of improving societies, the aim of which was to weaken traditional, inefficient methods of farming.

So complex is the study of Agriculture, that it involves a multiplicity of objects of the most abstruse and recondite nature, which can never be thoroughly understood without a previous knowledge of many other arts, and particularly of Chemistry. And yet, this important science has been uniformly committed to the sole management of the illiterate part of mankind. These being unable to learn, for want of persons qualified to teach, have obstinately pursued a routine of random practice in imitation of their forefathers, and who are fearful of risking [*sic*] the moderate certainty they possess for the prospect of greater gains which are yet unknown.⁵²

In 1731 Thomas Prior, a land agent and author, established the first Agricultural Society in Dublin. Prior’s society would become the Royal Dublin Society. Timing was everything. By 1780 Enlightenment ideas had affected many spheres in British society,

⁵¹ Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1972), 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

including science, agriculture, literature, religion, and philosophy. Soon after Prior's Royal Dublin Society, agriculturalists had established societies across Britain. Even the British cabinet had established in the Board of Agriculture (1790) a government sponsored agricultural super-society, which acted as a clearinghouse of agricultural reports and an advising body to the British government.

Agricultural societies encouraged education, experimentation, and innovation. So profound were the effects of agricultural societies that an anonymous gentleman from Leicestershire wrote,

The labours of patriotic individuals, and societies...for a number of years past, and of our Board of Agriculture of late, have wrought a great and glorious change in the practice at least of husbandry. Farming and the production of domestic animals, in the highest possible state of perfection, both for beautiful symmetry and public use, have become the favourite pursuit, and the fair subject of emulation amongst a very great number of our land-holders, and men of property in every degree; barren wastes and delusive unproductive commons, maugre the dreams of idle and ignorant declaimers, have been inclosed and converted into sources of fruitful and permanent production.⁵³

Even so, patriotic improvement was more than just sound farming and good imperial sense; it was the fulfillment of God's calling to everyman, a call to stewardship. As Chief Justice Matthew Hale wrote in 1677, "The End of Man's creation was to be God's steward, *villicus*, bailiff, or farmer of this goodly farm of the lower world," and so to this end, God empowered man with, "authority, right, dominion, trust and care, to correct and abridge the excesses and cruelties of the fiercer animals' ...[and] to preserve

⁵³ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 35.

the face of the earth in beauty, usefulness and fruitfulness.”⁵⁴ The steward’s ethic continued to inform the aristocracy throughout the eighteenth century and into the Victorian period.⁵⁵ Therefore it was the holy duty of the new elite to improve their lands.

Moreover, government politicized these morals; increasingly the British political nation associated immorality with political radicalism and, after 1793, regicide.⁵⁶ George III hated political faction. Immediately after his coronation he worked to eliminate political strife in Parliament and believed the government corruption stemmed from such division. George had fumed against political immorality since his coronation. In 1762 he raved,

The ministry remains composed of the most abandoned men that ever held office... the ministers being vicious this country [Great Britain] will grow if possible worse; let me attack *the irreligious*, the covetous etc. as much as I please, that will be of no effect...men will with reason think they may advance to the highest pitch of their ambition through every infamous way...their black hearts can point out.⁵⁷

Patriotic improvement morality emphasized stewardship, duty, sobriety, keeping the Sabbath, and preserving the public good.⁵⁸ Thus, this moral underpinning energized the efforts of patriotic improvers.

⁵⁴ Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (1677), as quoted in Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 306.

⁵⁵ Pittite and Peelite politicians understood good government to be cheap government. Thus a good government practiced good stewardship. See Harling, *The Waning of “Old Corruption”*.

⁵⁶ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 114.

⁵⁷ George III to Lord Bute, December, 1762, in Bonamy Dobrée ed., *The Letters of King George III* (New York: Funk and Wagnall’s, 1968), 24 .

⁵⁸ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 114.

Patriotic improvement's ethical sophistication is demonstrated in its morality. Moral philosophy had made extraordinary advances in the eighteenth century. Again, the booming print culture promoted the proliferation of moral philosophy. The works of Lord Shaftesbury, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson certainly "anatomized" human nature, but these also emphasized rationalism, which, in the case of morality, was not palatable to patriotic improvers.⁵⁹ Notwithstanding patriotic improvers' attachments to Enlightenment rationalism in other areas of improvement, Evangelicals like Hannah More, may have influenced their morality more than the canon of eighteenth century moral philosophy. In her 1788 publication, *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, which saw nine editions, More illustrated the great responsibility of aristocrats through Jesus's parable of the rich ruler and Lazarus the beggar. After refusing to offer Lazarus the scraps from his table, the ruler died and was cast into hell. More asserted that, "His [rich ruler's] punishment seems to have been the consequence of a hard, worldly, selfish heart, spoilt by the softness and delights of life."⁶⁰ In addition, More condemned revolution and praises obedient and submissive subjects—surely an opinion that gained her many friends among the aristocracy. More advocated reformation from above; for without elite leadership, "[moral reform] will never be effectual. Their [elites'] example is the fountain from whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Porter, *Creation of the Modern World*, 169.

⁶⁰ Hannah More, *Thoughts on the Importance of Manners of the Great to General Society*, 2nd edition, (London: T. Caldwell, 1788), 12.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

George III understood his importance to the Empire as an image of morality and familial bliss.⁶² In return, the king was known by his subjects to be a sober, patriotic family man, who observed his religion with strict and fervent enthusiasm.⁶³ His dealings with his sons and their so-called improprieties demonstrate his emphasis on patriotic moral behavior. After some miscellaneous bad behavior, apparently on foreign shores, George III rebuked Prince William, the later William IV: “Get command of yourself and then you can be of use to your profession; without it, your being brought forward would be a detriment to the service...your next rise must depend on your future conduct not only on float but on shore.”⁶⁴ His son needed to educate himself morally for his coming duties.

Likewise education was important to the dissemination of agricultural improvement; it was also crucial in securing moral reform within Parliament, market, and society as a whole. William Marshall proposed that the state should establish agricultural colleges as the “Foundations of Society at large.” He asserted what he believed was ideal for the aristocracy: “would not the plow—the rein—the firelock—and Broad sword better grace the hands of Men? Of Englishmen?—who still remain the Lords of the Oceans?”⁶⁵ Patriotic improvers insisted on education as a reforming agent because they understood education’s goal to be “virtue” or the ability to affect public good through thrifty self-

⁶² See Marylyn Morris, “The Royal Family and Family Values in Late Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Family History* 21 (1996): 519-33.

⁶³ Hibbert, *George III*, 246.

⁶⁴ George III to Prince William May 6, 1785, in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 157.

⁶⁵ Horn, “The Contribution of the Propagandist,” 312.

denial.⁶⁶ One might easily see that “virtue” as the prerequisite for government’s retrenchment. Therefore, improvers began to believe that education was a panacea for society’s woes. Again, George III set the improving example. The king concerned himself with the education of the poor, and invited to Windsor both Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, the author of *The Oeconomy of Charity*, and Robert Raikes, the famous promoter of Sunday Schools, to discuss his financial support.⁶⁷

Other manifestations of improvement, enlightenment ideals, and moral resurgence were the efforts of reforming officials to rid the government of corruption.⁶⁸ What became known as “economical reform” sought a pure and efficient government. Prior to 1780 the British state manifested several recognizable themes. First, governing Britain was especially costly in the eighteenth century due to war expenditures. Britain had fought repeated wars with continental empires between 1690 and 1783. Second, British administrations were inconsistent and ranged from moderately efficient to wasteful. Mercantilists’ protectionist economics and regressive monetary policy had produced a non-exchangeable currency that hampered growth. Finally, in this period, government was reluctant to address issues that fell within local jurisdictions and this reluctance limited any sense of national cohesion. That is why, Phillip Harling has argued, the

⁶⁶ Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 342-343.

⁶⁷ Hibbert, *George III*, 211.

⁶⁸ In this paragraph I draw on Phillip Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), 10.

aristocracy themselves realized they could only reclaim their tarnished legitimacy as a ruling class if they led efforts to reduce “Old Corruption.”⁶⁹

Improvement of the government and administration was manifest in reform and retrenchment movements. Britain’s necessary fiscal-military state centralized and departmentalized revenue collection to sustain the British armed forces in the long wars with France.⁷⁰ However, the bureaucratic offices thus created were subject to use as political patronage, and that brought forth charges of venality and corruption, while many traditional offices became sinecures. Beginning in Lord North’s Ministry, and due in great part to the cataclysmic events in the American rebellion, ministers increasingly understood the necessity of “economical reform.” In 1782 Lord North created the Commission for Examining the Public Accounts to monitor the emoluments of the Paymaster-General and the Treasurer of the Navy. The Commission for Examining the Public Accounts recommended that interdepartmental oversight be increased, that public officials be salaried and not paid per transaction, and that notorious government sinecures be suppressed and eliminated.⁷¹ Although North deserves credit for supporting the Commission, his dedication to the improving ideal is suspect. Lord North opposed many of the reforming measures of his successors and probably only proposed reforms when they were politically safe and inaction was politically dangerous. Unfortunately this is

⁶⁹ Harling, *The Waning of “Old Corruption,”* 12.

⁷⁰ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), xiv.

⁷¹ John Norris, *Shelburne and Reform* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1963), 201.

speculative and cannot be measured since his ministry fell casualty to the public's anger over its management of the American war.

Lord Shelburne, patriotic improver and North's successor to the Premiership, continued to improve government beginning with his Treasury Minute of August 29, 1782. This minute required detailed reports from the Excise Commissioners and nineteen other offices of receipt and expenditure. Shelburne exacted efficiency within the Treasury by establishing guidelines for Treasury agents that modern officers of state would recognize.⁷² Lord Shelburne also sought to enforce Burke's Pension Act of 1780 and bring pensions within a total sum of £90,000, which reformers believed was reasonable. Shelburne's retrenchment also targeted the Prime Minister's cabinet. His policies reduced the consumption of stationery from the exorbitance of North's ministry. In 1781, Lord North's stationery invoice was £2,382.15s.5d. This sum was over half the total government consumption of stationery: £4,700. In addition, illustrating patriotic improvers' moral emphasis on stewardship, Lord Shelburne worked to reduce government expenditures through eliminating sinecures and emoluments. Even so Lord Shelburne's ministry was short-lived and the Fox-North Coalition that replaced him neglected many of his policies.

Perhaps the greatest political reformer of this time was William Pitt the Younger, who served in Lord Shelburne's cabinet. Moral stewardship bent Pitt toward streamlining government and suppressing corruption. As early as 1783, while sitting in opposition to the Fox-North coalition, Pitt proposed three resolutions, all of which failed.

⁷² In this paragraph I draw on Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 186, 203-204, 209.

Pitt proposed resolutions to reduce election bribery and expense, to grant additional members to county and borough constituencies, and to disfranchise boroughs that were proven corrupt.⁷³

When he rose to Prime Minister in 1784, some ministers approached Pitt concerning the resurrection of Britain's dominant status in Europe, advocating an alliance system that would isolate France.⁷⁴ However, Pitt subscribed to the growing sentiment that tied Britain's imperial recovery to an improvement *ethos* that could be exported throughout the empire, i.e. patriotic improvement. He summed up his vision for national revival in a letter to his friend, Lord Rutland, "Let peace continue for five years and we shall again look any Power in Europe in the face."⁷⁵ In August 1784 Pitt and his Secretary of State, Henry Dundas, proposed a bill to regrant lands confiscated by George II from Jacobite supporters in 1745, which had fallen into waste, to their former families.⁷⁶ The heirs were required to pay various sums to the Exchequer in return, the sum of which amounted to £90,000. Subsequently William Pitt used the funds to improve turnpikes, bridges, schools, and other public works in the area. In 1790 Pitt established the Board of Agriculture to gather agricultural information, another proof of the state's emphasis on agrarian improvement.⁷⁷ The board's findings informed the cabinet's spending on improvement endeavors through several reports, which were often

⁷³ Holland J. Rose, *William Pitt and the National Revival* (London: Bell and Sons, 1911), 131.

⁷⁴ Michael Duffy, *The Younger Pitt* (New York: Longman, 2000), 167.

⁷⁵ Rose, *William Pitt and the National Revival*, 111-12.

⁷⁶ Parliament, *1784 Land Grant Act*, 24 George III (Cap. LVII 1784).

⁷⁷ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 123.

authored by men like Arthur Young, William Marshall, and John Sinclair. Pitt never lost the drive for improvement; after resigning in 1801 over his failed attempt to “improve” the constitution through Catholic Emancipation, Pitt rented and improved lands adjacent to his Walmer estate.⁷⁸

Following the loss of the American colonies, politicians faced improving elites who increasingly linked the burden of taxes and the failed war in America with the corrupt and prodigal nature of British politics, which Peter Harling terms “the lineaments of ‘Old Corruption.’”⁷⁹ Even so, these elites were content to leave government structures to the young Premier’s oversight because they believed him to be a genuinely disinterested minister who was working to improve the government from within.⁸⁰ Pitt succeeded in avoiding any remaining suspicion through improving acts that eliminated sinecures and funded domestic improvement projects, thus reducing government expenditures.⁸¹ Consequently Pitt proved to be the king’s man. In response to Pitt’s 1786 proposal concerning repaying a portion of the national debt, George wrote to him,

Mr. Pitt has had the unpleasant office of providing for the Expenses incurred by the last War [American Revolution]. It is but just He should have the full merit He deserves of having the Public know and feel that he has now proposed a Measure that will render the nation again respectable.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, 214.

⁷⁹ Harling, *The Waning of “Old Corruption,”* 31.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸² George III to William Pitt, March 30 1786, PRO 30/8/103/188.

The significance of improving elites to Pitt's ministry only increased. In 1790 Lord Stafford, a member of Pitt's cabinet, suggested that the cabinet should consist of landed gentlemen in order to be more representative of the new British elite. The young Prime Minister immediately sought land and nearly bankrupted himself purchasing a small estate.⁸³

The moral reform movements of the late eighteenth century had a profound influence upon the Younger Pitt's government. The Prime Minister maintained close relations with Evangelical reformers such as William Wilberforce, with whom Pitt attended both Eton and Oxford and continued to be sincere friends, even after Wilberforce's ideals had marginalized him in government. Wilberforce doubtless had influence upon Pitt's agenda, regardless of his usual stance in opposition to government. However, unlike Wilberforce, Pitt was more pragmatic and often abandoned improving measures when opposition was strong, only to revive them at the most opportune moments.⁸⁴ Wilberforce's personal religious revival and the war with France dealt a fatal blow to their friendship. Though they remained casual friends, the Evangelical's opposition to the war and the Prime Minister's dedication to defending the Empire were diametrically opposed. However, many moral improvers adopted Pitt. Hannah More, in her *Thoughts on the Importance of Manners*, declared Pitt "wise and virtuous."⁸⁵ Pitt's

⁸³ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, 62.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁵ More, *Thoughts on the Importance of Manners*, 78.

political improvements, therefore, fit hand-in-glove with the moral revival of the late eighteenth century and patriotic improvement.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the apprehensive reaction among British elites to the disasters around the empire. Shortly after the Fall of the Bastille, Lord Grenville reported to the Duke of Buckingham that the “landed gentlemen...are thoroughly frightened.”⁸⁶ British landed elites turned to improvement to secure imperial interests. The building of roads and canals, the creation of turnpike trusts, the draining of marshes, clearing and planting of forests, enclosure of unproductive land, and the improvement of crops and herds through hybridization became the outward manifestation of the legitimacy of aristocratic rule both domestically and imperially in the terms of their uniting *ethos*.⁸⁷ Improvement could bring large landholders, yeoman farmers, and professionals together in a moral community.⁸⁸

The king’s reaction to Henry Dundas’s report of no disturbances during English Radicals’ celebration of Bastille Day in 1792 is illustrative.

I approve of Mr. Dundas’ attention in acquainting me of the perfect tranquility that subsisted yesterday; the conduct of both landed property and the bulk of the nation shows that solid good sense on the present occasion that makes one proud of one’s countrymen as well as our glorious constitution.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Reluctant Transition* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), 139.

⁸⁷ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 109.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁹ George III to Henry Dundas 15 July, 1792, A. Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 602.

This response may seem conventional or modest; however, the significance lies in George III's emphasis on the landed property's good sense and the "glorious constitution" as generating the day's "tranquility." Not only were the political nation and the masses unmoved by radical sentiments, but the day was also not marred by the horrific riots that had taken place in Birmingham the year before.⁹⁰ The House of Lord's defeat of Charles Fox's proposal to repeal the Treason and Sedition Acts drew similar royal praise: "Every friend of the British Constitution must rejoice... to find so many Country Gentlemen step forward every occasion to show they feel the blessings they enjoy."⁹¹

After the American rebellion, many Britons were anxious about the future of the empire. However, the new British elite would not idly watch the Empire collapse. Patriotic propagandists like Young, Marshall, and Sinclair held up improvement as the panacea for the ailing empire. Convinced patriotic improvers fostered agricultural, moral, and social improvement domestically, while the British government, through appointments and colonial policy, exported patriotic improvement throughout the empire. Furthermore, no one embodied patriotic improvement as perfectly as Lord Cornwallis. It is for this reason that Cornwallis became the patriotic improvers' "trouble-shooter" for imperial crises.

⁹⁰ See Robert Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country* (Lexington KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983) 5, and John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 107.

⁹¹ George III to William Pitt, May 24 1797, PRO 30/8/104/179.

CHAPTER II

“NO BROKEN FORTUNE TO BE MENDED”: THE APPOINTMENT OF LORD CORNWALLIS TO INDIA

How did Cornwallis's background and *ethos* equip him for the role of imperial physician? Since the British political nation considered patriotic improvement the constructive remedy for the empire's ailments, Pitt's government twice more chose Cornwallis to procure imperial stability because he personified patriotic improvers' ideals. Although military concerns did inform their appointments, it is possible that the deciding factor was Cornwallis's sensitivity toward the preservation of agricultural and commercial prosperity in the colonies, while practicing conscientious stewardship in funding the Southern campaign against the American rebellion.

CORNWALLIS IN AMERICA: PATRIOTIC IMPROVEMENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Cornwallis was no obscure aristocrat. He had fought on the Continent during the Seven Years War and had held several positions during the years leading up to the American war, including Lord of the Bedchamber (1765), Colonel of the 33rd Regiment of Foot (1766), Vice-Treasurer for Ireland (1769), and Constable of the Tower of London (1771). Still, his service against the American rebellion illuminated his character and his

utility to King and country. It was perhaps the most trying time of his life, before his service in Ireland, and just for that reason the American campaigns illustrated Cornwallis's patriotic commitment to the Empire, which transcended politics, status, family, and personal interests.

Cornwallis had entered the House of Lords in 1762 and like many country gentlemen aligned himself with the Rockinghamites in opposing monarchical overstepping. While in the House of Lords, Cornwallis had opposed George III's coercive American policy, yet he would continue to lead the British forces against the rebellious colonists in America to secure Britain's holdings there.⁹² Cornwallis had opposed the Stamp Act in 1765 and the Declaratory Act the following year. In this way, Cornwallis appears to have been ahead of his time; he did not believe coercive measures could ameliorate American sentiments toward Britain. It took the outbreak of war in America and the entry of France into that war to convince George III of coercion's futility.⁹³ The crisis presented by the American rebellion and Cornwallis's patriotic improvement *ethos* superseded partisan politics. Thus he prosecuted the war with ardor despite his previous political stance.

Lieutenant General Cornwallis served meritoriously in the northern American campaigns under Burgoyne and Clinton. He received accolades for his leadership at the battles of Long Island (1776), Brandywine (1777), and Mommouth Courthouse (1778). In each of these engagements, Lord Cornwallis led the decisive maneuvers that carried the

⁹² Frank and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1970), 46.

⁹³ George III to Lord North, January 31 1778, in Sir John Fortesque, *The Correspondence of King George III* Vol. 4 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1928), 30.

day. Cornwallis was an offensive minded Lieutenant General, so the caution and indecision that ruled his superiors' prosecution of the war frustrated him. His frustration boiled over in a letter offering his resignation to Lord Germaine, in which he explained, "As there is great reason to apprehend... that no offensive measures may be taken in this part of the world...I must beg Your Lordship to permit me to return to England."⁹⁴

Cornwallis was rarely free to lead unencumbered until the southern campaign in 1780.

Cornwallis's offensive mind took control in South Carolina. After the joint action with Clinton in their victorious siege of Charleston, Cornwallis moved quickly into the interior or backcountry. He secured a major victory at Camden in August 1780 that gained him the praise of George III, Lord Germaine, and his Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Clinton.⁹⁵ After that Cornwallis's luck ran out. His previous offensive campaign verged on the impossible in the upcountry—north of the fall-line. As he moved north into North Carolina, Cornwallis committed his first decisive mistake in America: he divided his force. He split his force in order to move more efficiently. Consequently, inferior rebel units routed two smaller British forces, one under Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton and another under Major Ferguson. Ferguson was killed and his force of Loyalists destroyed or captured at the Battle of King's Mountain. Tarleton rushed into a trap set at the Cowpens that resulted in heavy losses and Tarleton's retreat.

⁹⁴ Lord Cornwallis to Lord George Germaine, June 17, 1778, in Charles Ross ed., *The Correspondence of Charles First Marquis Cornwallis*. 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1859), 1:33 . From this point forward the Cornwallis Correspondence will be cited as CC.

⁹⁵ Clinton to Leslie, PRO 30/11/3/277, CC 1:79.

Cornwallis worked to limit the cost of war on the British government. He targeted the Chesapeake Valley in Virginia for its military and economic significance. He naively believed that the guerilla resistance in South Carolina could be staved off by the small garrison he left behind. Many historians have labeled Cornwallis's decision to leave South Carolina and march northward a blunder.

Whatever the plan's military imprudence, it demonstrates his commitment to patriotic stewardship. Lord Cornwallis intended to secure Virginia for its valuable trade economy, which could supply the war effort in the South and partially relieve the government's funding of his campaign.⁹⁶ This plan met with the king's approbation.⁹⁷

Lord Cornwallis found it difficult to repeat the success of Camden. Rebel commanders would not brook another head-to-head engagement. Instead, suffering from a lack of supply, Cornwallis's troops were sniped at from forests and shadows as they marched throughout North Carolina and into Virginia (See Figure 1). The march into Virginia was to place pressure on General Washington and free Clinton from his—self-imposed—defensive position in New York. As a result of this lack of support and a French naval victory at the Battle of the Capes, Cornwallis was pinned in at Yorktown.

Regardless of his failures, the freedom the high command granted Lord Cornwallis in the southern campaign is useful to this investigation. Once he had this freedom in 1780 to 81, Cornwallis's policies clearly reflected the patriotic improvement *ethos*.

⁹⁶ Cornwallis to Clinton, August 20 1781, CC 1:114.

⁹⁷ Lord Germaine to Cornwallis, June 4 1781, CC 1:109.

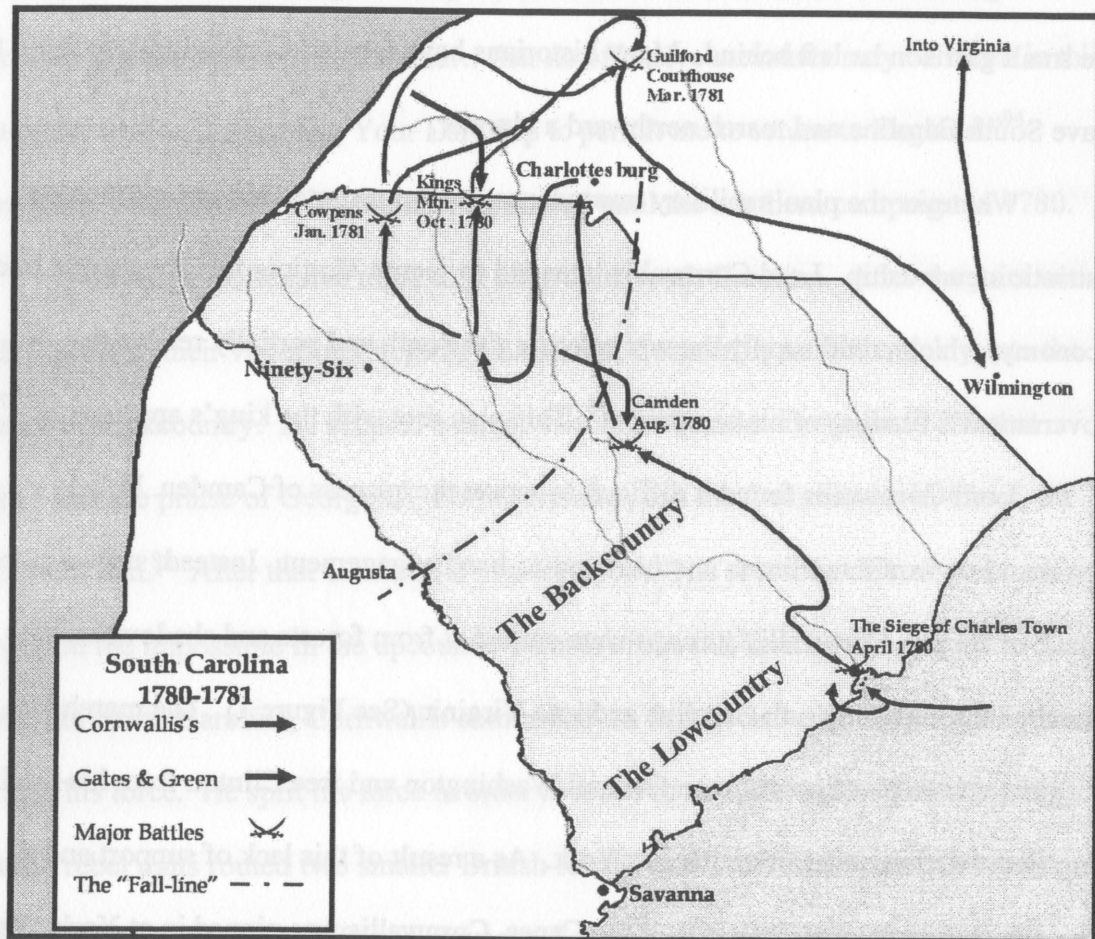


Figure 1: Cornwallis's Campaign in South Carolina, 1780-1781⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Map by the Author, Based on "American Revolution Overview" (http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/american%20revolution/american%20revolution%20map/american_revolution_overview.gif) 2005.

In addition to ordinary wartime trials, Lord Cornwallis faced a number of problems in South Carolina. First, British forces in the region consisted of a patchwork of British regulars, the British Legion,⁹⁹ and loyalist militia. Often these groups' actions were not congruent with the intentions of Lord Cornwallis. Second, after the successful siege of Charleston, Sir Henry Clinton, the victorious general, issued a proclamation that decreed the seizure of estates belonging to landowners who had supported the American Rebellion. How to manage these confiscated estates proved a nightmare for Cornwallis. Finally, logistical conditions in the southern colonies proved disabling. While rivers and roads were useful in the "lowcountry," poor conditions north of the "fall-line" and constant guerilla attacks made it challenging to supply the British troops.

First, the patchwork nature of British forces created discipline problems that could aggravate the military occupation. Reports of British soldiers' ruthless behavior against disloyal inhabitants and requests for intervention reached Lord Cornwallis.¹⁰⁰ The Lieutenant General understood the importance of good relations between the British forces and the populace. Brutality could only increase rebel recruitment. Cornwallis believed that the British forces must coax the apparently deluded rebels into friendship by convincing them that such a friendship was in their best interest.¹⁰¹ In order to avoid alienating the inhabitants further, Cornwallis reined in his officers and rank-and-file. He insisted to Lord Rawdon on June 29, 1780 that, "if I [Cornwallis] hear of any more

⁹⁹ The British Legion consisted of American Loyalist regular units under the leadership of British officers. Banastre Tarleton commanded the British Legion under Cornwallis.

¹⁰⁰ A. Wingard [?] Brigadier General of South Carolina Loyalist Militia to Lord Cornwallis, June 5, 1780, PRO 30/11/2/90.

¹⁰¹ Lord Cornwallis to Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot, June 29, 1780, CC 1:49.

instances of irregularity...I will put the regiment into garrison on Sullivan's Island."¹⁰² This should not suggest that Cornwallis was overly conciliatory to the enemy. Rather, perhaps referencing his own opposition to the government's heavy-handed policies of the 1760s in America, such as the Stamp Act, he understood the colonists' grievances and believed that fraternal overtures could neutralize their resolve. Cornwallis thoughtfully instructed his officers to extend the "sword and olive branch" while "rigidly disarm[ing] as many of the enemy, and make[ing] as few desperate as possible."¹⁰³

Considering these fraternal overtures, it is little wonder that brutality on the part of American forces provoked Cornwallis's wrath. As Cornwallis's army marched north into North Carolina, the left flank led by Colonel Ferguson engaged Appalachian frontiersmen at King's Mountain on the border between North and South Carolina. Ferguson's command consisted of one thousand Loyalist provincials. Through an act of considerable folly, Ferguson had positioned his troops on open ground that the rebel militiamen promptly surrounded. Although the rebel militia suffered limited casualties, Colonel Ferguson was killed, 225 Loyalists were killed, 163 were injured and 716 taken captive. Many injured and captured loyalists were beaten and hacked to death by the American militiamen as they marched to the American headquarters at Hillsborough. Once there, rebel authorities condemned thirty-six loyalists to death, and they were hanged. Cornwallis exhibited his temper over the beating, murder, and hanging of

¹⁰² Lord Cornwallis to Lord Rawdon, June 29, 1780, CC 1:50.

¹⁰³ Lord Cornwallis to General Cruger, January 16, 1781, PRO 30/11/84/68.

prisoners after the Battle of King's Mountain and vowed retaliation.¹⁰⁴ Despite the ruthlessness surrounding the Battle of King's Mountain and the fate of Colonel Ferguson's troops, Cornwallis was satisfied that his policies were just. He reported to Clinton, "However provoked by the horrid outrages and cruelties of the enemy in this district I have always endeavored to soften the horrors of war, and received the acknowledgement of General Gates and the principal officers of the enemy's army."¹⁰⁵

THE SEPTEMBER PROCLAMATION

In May 1780, Sir Henry Clinton issued a proclamation that ordered the confiscation of rebel property and the severe punishment of anyone who impeded the re-establishment of His Majesty's government in South Carolina.¹⁰⁶ Contemporary American Whig historians emphasized this proclamation as evidence of the "enslavement" of American property under the British crown.¹⁰⁷ However, it is more likely that Clinton was being pragmatic; if supporting rebellion cost colonists their property, perhaps the risk would dampen their rebellious zeal. Moreover rebel Americans' estates were supply depots for the guerillas who pestered Cornwallis

¹⁰⁴ Lord Cornwallis to Major General Gates, December 1, 1780, CC 1:71. In another incident Cornwallis ordered that perpetrators of atrocities should suffer the destruction of their homes, confiscation of their slaves, cattle, and property, and in severe cases, execution. PRO 30/11/84/66-67.

¹⁰⁵ Lord Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, December 4, 1780, CC 1:73.

¹⁰⁶ Sir Henry Clinton, a Proclamation, PRO 30/11/2/34.

¹⁰⁷ David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South Carolina: From a British Province to an Independent State*, Vol. 2 (Trenton NJ: Isaac Collins, 1785), 180-181.

throughout the southern campaign. Even so, this was a gamble for Sir Henry Clinton; by trying to deter rebellion, he had also raised the stakes.

Nevertheless, in the light of Lord Cornwallis's perception that landowning gentry could well serve as agents of stability and prosperity, Clinton's proclamation proved problematic. By deposing rebel supporters from their estates, Clinton removed a large portion of the landed elite from their position in South Carolinian society. Some historians have described Cornwallis as being obsessed with hereditary estates.¹⁰⁸ However, he was concerned more with the stability and prosperity he believed landed elites instilled in society. Just as patriotic improvers in Britain espoused the stabilizing virtues of aristocratic improvers, Cornwallis emphasized the elites' role in improvement as a catalyst to colonial stability and prosperity.

Accordingly in September 1780, Lord Cornwallis issued a proclamation concerning sequestered or seized estates. With this proclamation Cornwallis hoped to address several major issues. First, he sought to better supply his forces in the region. Second, perhaps most importantly, he wanted to prevent sequestered estates from falling into waste. Finally, Cornwallis wanted to "soften the horrors of war" for the dependent families of the rebels and dispossessed loyalists.

The Proclamation of September 16th, as some historians have labeled it, addressed these issues by creating a Commission of Sequestered Estates. Cornwallis named John Cruden, Esq., as commissioner and, though Cruden was subject to an audit by the Commandant of Charleston, placed only the high command (Clinton and Cornwallis) and

¹⁰⁸ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991), 170-1.

Admiral Arbuthnot in authority over him. All other officials, whether civil or martial, were to submit to Cruden's administration of the estates. Commanders in South Carolina could request supplies from Cruden or simply use the estates as forage depots. However, all requests or forages were subject to Cruden's permission.

As Commissioner Cruden received the confiscated lands, he was to utilize surplus slave labor to improve or maintain the estates. Cornwallis ordered Cruden to prioritize estates according to their state of disrepair. Estates in most need of improvement were to receive the most attention.¹⁰⁹ Cornwallis was vague as to the exact methods Cruden was to use. However, it is apparent from the correspondence between Cornwallis and other British commanders that Cruden employed trustworthy deputies to oversee individual estates.¹¹⁰

As many historians have noted, Cornwallis intended to supply his army through the Commission of Sequestered Estates. Their observations are, to a limited degree, correct. Whereas the British forces were relatively well supplied in the lowcountry and backcountry of South Carolina, the geography north of the "fall-line" was much more rugged and the rivers ceased to be navigable. Therefore Cornwallis relied on wagon trains, which were unreliable due to impassable roads and guerilla attacks. Cornwallis hoped that by making the sequestered estates throughout South Carolina accessible to British troops he could better supply his forces and partially relieve the cost of the campaign from Government. He expected that the produce of the estates would feed the

¹⁰⁹ Lord Cornwallis to John Cruden Esq., September 16, 1780, PRO 30/11/7/22.

¹¹⁰ Lord Cornwallis to Charles Stedman, December 15, 1780, PRO 30/11/7/9.

garrisoning force in South Carolina, and the sale of rice, tobacco, cotton, and indigo would profit British coffers £50-60,000. These expectations proved to be unrealistic and perhaps naively conceived.¹¹¹

Even so, historians have either ignored or misinterpreted the significance of Cornwallis's separate orders to John Cruden.¹¹² Cornwallis instructed Cruden to maintain the estates, "in the best state of Improvement and increase...for the publick good."¹¹³ David Ramsay, Banastre Tarleton, and Henry P. Johnston all have omitted any account of Cornwallis's orders to Cruden, which immediately followed, but were separate from, the published September Proclamation. On the other hand, in their biography of Cornwallis in America, Franklin and Mary Wickwire have included the document, but have erroneously interpreted his phrase "for the publick good" to mean the supplying of the army. Cornwallis, through John Cruden and his staff, created a civilian bureaucracy to replace the "deluded" landed patriots who abandoned their estates for revolution, and he did so believing that would secure the stability and prosperity of South Carolina. Cornwallis generally believed that agricultural and commercial prosperity was essential to stability.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Cornwallis wished to alleviate the suffering caused by the war. He instructed Cruden to return fractions of the produce of the estates to the

¹¹¹ Wickwire, *American Adventure*, 240.

¹¹² David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South Carolina* (1785); Lieutenant General Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaign of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (Dublin: Colles, 1787); Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis, 1781* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881); Wickwire, *The American Adventure*, 146.

¹¹³ Lord Cornwallis to John Cruden Esq., September 16, 1780, PRO 30/11/7/22.

¹¹⁴ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: Britain and the World, 1783-1832* (New York: Longman, 1989), 65.

former holders' families. In addition, dispossessed loyalist families could apply for relief from the Commission.¹¹⁵

Cruden exerted considerable effort to restore wasteland to cultivation and to utilize better techniques; thus he practiced agricultural improvement on the estates. In 1782, he reported to the Board of Police¹¹⁶ that he had invested £16,432 toward estate improvement.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the nearly continuous raids by rebel guerillas destroyed property, crops, and livestock while making the transportation of goods nearly impossible. By the time of Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, Cruden could claim a net loss of £6,854 and no significant support to any British interest.¹¹⁸ Even so, the failure of the September 16th Proclamation does not negate its historical significance. Through his progressive leadership in America, Cornwallis exhibited the virtues that patriotic improvers in Britain would come to perceive as a general palliative to imperial unrest. As a sign of their approbation of Cornwallis's service in America, patriotic improvers in Parliament led by the Thomas Coke, Earl of Holkham, and Thomas Townshend, Viscount Sydney, moved a vote of thanks.¹¹⁹

Historians agree that Cornwallis was no military genius and occasionally committed outrageous blunders of strategy. On the other hand, Cornwallis's commitment

¹¹⁵ Lord Cornwallis to John Cruden Esq., September 16, 1780, PRO 30/11/7/22.

¹¹⁶ The Board of Police was responsible for maintaining law and order in Charleston during the British occupation of that city. By this occasion, the Board had returned to England and seems to have acted as an auditing board.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the Board of Police, February 26-April 19, 1782, PRO 30/11/110/1-10.

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the Board of Police, February 26-April 19, 1782, PRO 30/11/110/1-10.

¹¹⁹ Townshend to Cornwallis, December 20, 1780 CC 1:92.

to a moral stewardship of agriculture, personnel, and supply displayed to Crown and Parliament his imperial utility in times of crisis.

CORNWALLIS BLAMELESS: THE CLINTON-CORNWALLIS SCANDAL

Beyond the government's approval of Cornwallis's efforts in America, the events leading to the surrender in October 1781 inevitably fell under scrutiny. There was a great deal of intrigue surrounding Lord Cornwallis and Sir Henry Clinton. With whom should guilt for the catastrophe of Yorktown lie?

Public opinion varied on this point. Clinton had expected such an investigation, and prior to his departure from New York had published an essay vindicating himself. In this, he cited Cornwallis's slow movement and choice of Yorktown as a defensive position as the key failures in the Southern campaign. Although Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton, who had commanded the British Legion in South Carolina and Cornwallis admired, corroborated these assertions, government's opinion of Cornwallis was not swayed by Clinton's reports. In contrast with Clinton's claims, George III, Lord Germaine, and Lord Sydney had noted on many occasions Cornwallis' combination of cautious planning and swift and decisive action against the enemy in both the Seven Years War and against American rebels in New York.

Although Lord Cornwallis and Sir Henry Clinton were similar in their desires to "gain the hearts and subdue the minds of America,"¹²⁰ inconsistencies in both Clinton's

¹²⁰ Stephen Conway, "British Army Officers and the American War for Independence," *William and Mary Quarterly* 41 (1984): 265.

communications and his character created a stark contrast between the Earl and the Commander-in-Chief. The Clinton-Cornwallis controversy hinged on such inconsistencies, which served to discredit many of Clinton's claims. The strained relationship of Clinton and Cornwallis was no secret in Westminster. As mentioned, Cornwallis had expressed his disapproval of Sir Henry Clinton's reluctance to engage the enemy in the northern theatre to Lord Germaine in 1778. However, Clinton wrote a letter to Germaine as well. The Clinton letter praised Cornwallis and thanked Germaine for his presence. Obviously Clinton withheld his true feelings from Lord Germaine, for the records decidedly show that Henry Clinton did not approve of Cornwallis's appointment. Clinton had once commented that Cornwallis was guilty "of the most consummate ignorance I ever heard of [in] any officer above a corporal."¹²¹

In addition to Clinton, Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton, the commander of the British Legion, did not approve of Cornwallis's methods in the Southern campaign. Despite the acclaim Tarleton received from Lord Cornwallis, he was open with his disdain for his commanding officer. Tarleton condemned Cornwallis's moderate efforts in South Carolina: "Coolness, apathy, and civil law will never supply hussars with horses."¹²²

Both Clinton and Tarleton continued to serve their country in subsequent years, but in quieter corners of the Empire. Sir Henry Clinton served as Governor of Gibraltar.

¹²¹ Frank and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Houghton-Mifflin: New York, 1970) 98.

¹²² Tarleton to André, April 19 1779, Clinton Papers as quoted by "Sir Banastre Tarleton," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.

Tarleton occupied a seat in Parliament where, in 1814, he would oppose Arthur Wellesley's appointment to be Commander-in-Chief of the allied forces on the continent; the result at the Battle of Waterloo proved that his judgment was flawed. Excluding his service in America, Tarleton was best known for his scandalous love affair with the actress Mary Robinson, the former mistress of the Prince of Wales. Even as the public lives of his critics waned into scandal and obscurity, Lord Cornwallis's star continued to rise.

CORNWALLIS IN INDIA

As the sun set over the British Empire in the thirteen colonies, a storm gathered over British India. The bungling administration in Madras had provoked a war with Hyder Ali, sultan of Mysore. Ali invaded the Carnatic, a state that surrounded Company holdings in Madras and was a Company ally. (See Figure 2) Ali defeated the Company's forces there and pressed into the suburbs of Madras itself. Ali had been supported by the French, so it was with little surprise that Ali's campaign was accompanied by an assault by a French fleet, which drove the residual British Navy from southern Bay of Bengal and back toward Calcutta. Further disaster was narrowly averted when, in 1782, William Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal, used diplomacy, 4,000 Company troops, and £1.5 million to split the Marathas-Mysore alliance, and Hyder Ali retired to Seringpatam. Even so, these arrangements proved to be only an intermission as Mysore became a threat to southern Indian stability until 1799.

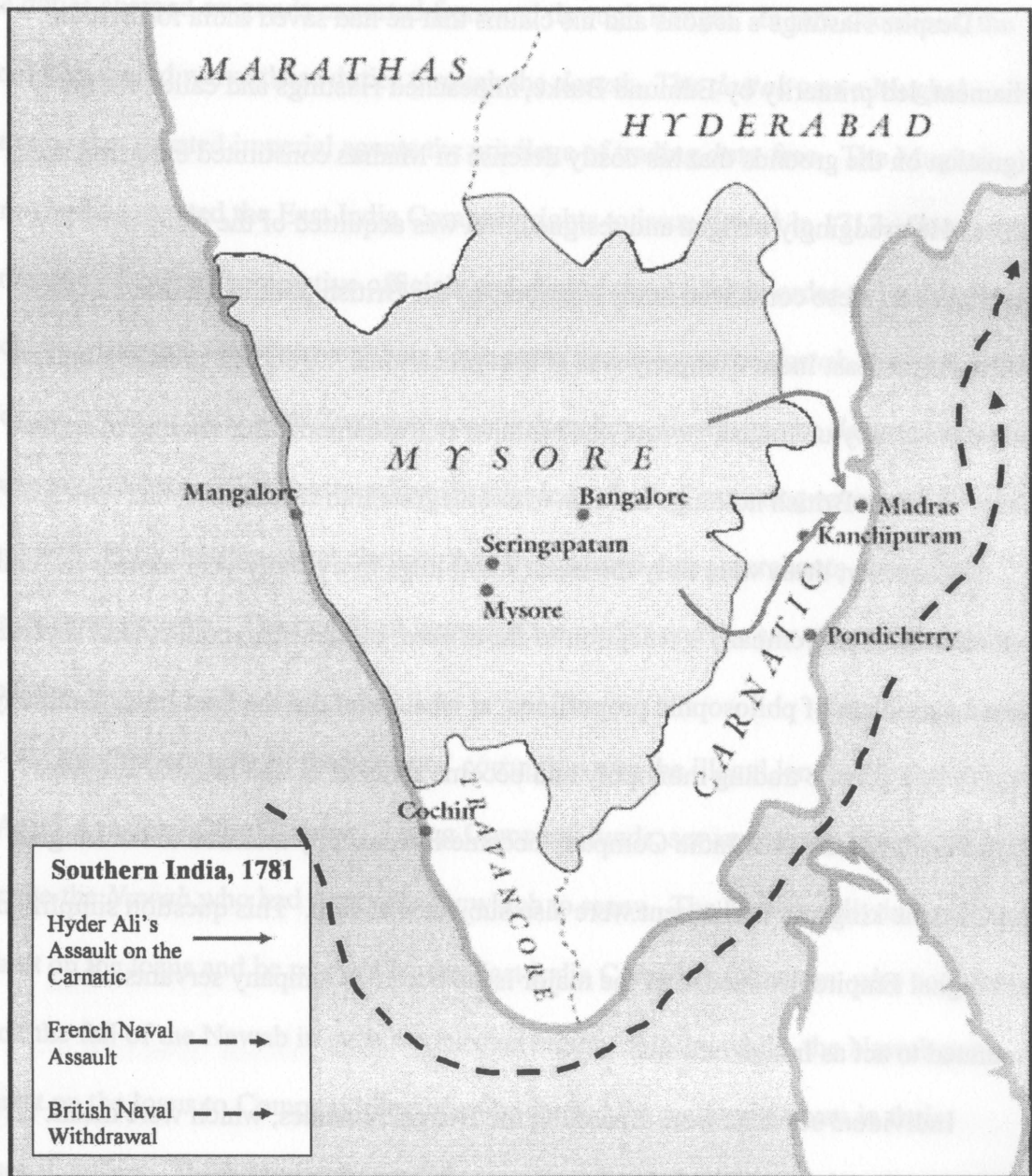


Figure 2: Military Campaigns in Southern India, 1781¹²³

¹²³ John Kay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 267.

¹²³ Map by the Author, based on "Map of Mysore and its Neighbors after the Treaty of 1799," The National Galleries of Scotland, (<http://www.nationalgalleries.org.uk/tipu/map.htm>) 2000.

Despite Hastings's actions and his claims that he had saved India for Britain, Parliament, led primarily by Edmund Burke, impeached Hastings and called for his resignation on the grounds that his costly defense of Madras constituted extortion and murder. He grudgingly obliged and resigned, but was acquitted of the charges in 1795. Events such as these convinced many members of the British political nation that the position of the East India Company was at best precarious. "You will naturally believe that we are totally unhinged," wrote one Member of Parliament after reading of Indian affairs.¹²⁴ Were British holdings in India to disintegrate into rebellion as had America?

Moreover, these were only the latest stumblings in a twenty-year morass in India. As mentioned, the Company's reception of the *diwani*, or license to collect land revenue created a problem of philosophic proportions: at what point did the East India Company cease to be a private trading monopoly and become a vassal of the Mughal Emperor? Theoretically, as the East India Company became increasingly attached to the Mughal Emperor, the king and Parliament were also subjected to him. This question simplified as the Mughal Empire declined, and the major issue became Company servants who continued to act as Indian nawabs.

Individual servants were siphoning the Bengal revenues, which were meant to supply capital for the Company's trading ventures. Although the company experienced worsening financial performance in the 1760s and 1770s, servants returned to England

¹²⁴ Fraser to Keith, December 16, 1783, as quoted in Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolution, 1783-1793* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15.

wealthier than ever.¹²⁵ One of the most significant forms of revenue for the Company was the duties charged on goods exported from and through Bengal. In rare occasions, the Company would waive these duties through the *dastak*. The *dastak* was a Mughal tradition that granted imperial agents the privilege of trading duty-free. The Mughal Emperor had granted the East India Company rights to issue *dastak* in 1717. Company servants took bribes from native officials and abused the *dastak* in order to line their own pockets. Although Company servants were permitted to issue the *dastak*, they were only to do so in conjunction with Company economic policy. However, the *dastak* provided Company servants with an extraordinarily simple method of extorting revenue from their employer. For a fee somewhat cheaper than the charged duty, merchants could buy *dastak* from servants. The merchant increased his profits and the servants padded their pensions.¹²⁶

Another example of the servants' corruption was the illegal lending to the *Nawab* of Arcot, a region of the Carnatic. Using Company funds, servants made high interest loans to the *Nawab* who had no means by which to repay. The *Nawab* fully intended to default on the loans and be rescued by the East India Company Directors, who could not brook the fall of the *Nawab* in such a contested region. All the while, the *Nawab* paid interest on the loans to Company servants who stuffed the payments away in their personal coffers. These predatory acts of corruption coupled with everyday abuses of the

¹²⁵ John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1993), 367.

¹²⁶ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 367.

tax farming system served to stifle British India's economy and the Company spiraled further into debt.¹²⁷

East India Company servants should not receive all the blame for the Company's financial woes. Since 1765, when the Company received the *diwani*, India had suffered several crises.¹²⁸ First, the East India Company, in an attempt to increase profits, halted the importation of gold and silver bullion into Bengal. Company Directors had hoped that Bengal's land revenues would fund the Company's trade and create a self-supporting market. However, the blocking of bullion imports into the country caused the local economy to shrink. Matters were complicated by the Bengal famine (1769-70) that killed a quarter of the Bengali populace and reduced production for several subsequent years. The poor state of Bengal's agriculture, with which Lord Cornwallis became so familiar, was a result of the shortage of labor, not the shortage of land under cultivation. Thus corrupt Company servants did not create the problems in India, but through their aggravation, problems grew into crisis.

Most servants, upon their return to Britain, did not settle down into obscurity. Instead, they made their presence known by forming powerful lobbying groups such as the "Arcot Squad" and the "Bengal Squad." These groups of "nabobs" used their ill-gotten fortunes to bribe Members of Parliament and East India Company leadership; they often undermined the position of the Company in order to further their own interests,

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ In this paragraph I draw on C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 29, 64-65.

such as gaining for themselves a seat in Parliament or on the Company's Board of Proprietors.¹²⁹

Nabobs flaunted their corruption in posh London. Paul Benfield, the architect of several money lending schemes in British India and the president of the Arcot Squad, was perhaps the most notorious of these peacocks. In an act that begged to be labeled "macaroni," Benfield purchased a sky-blue chariot, in which he paid to have his wife aimlessly driven around London. Reformers took notice of this and similar distasteful acts. Many predicted that if the moral and administrative weaknesses, perceived as inherently Indian, were not purged from the Company, the metropole could be infected by the chaos.¹³⁰

In an era of increasing perceptions of good government as good stewardship of God's provision, the East India Company leadership had proven to be something akin to the foolish servant in the biblical parable of the talents. The East India Company was the target of numerous reforming politicians from 1778 to 1784. Even so, British politicians mounted their efforts with trepidation. The great fear voiced by the East India Company and British politicians alike was that state intervention would create a deluge of patronage for the crown and its ministers. Endowed with this new authority, the King could unify government beneath him and subvert the constitution.¹³¹ At the same time,

¹²⁹ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 367.

¹³⁰ Bayly, *Indian Society*, 65.

¹³¹ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 364.

Britain's very presence in India seemed threatened, and nothing made possession more important than the prospect of its loss.¹³²

Thus finally pressure for reform outweighed political inertia. In 1778 Lord North established the Secret Committee to investigate the mismanagement of the East India Company. John Robinson, an expert on Indian affairs, the Treasury Secretary, and a member of the Secret Committee, concluded that

whoever considers the nature of our territorial acquisitions in the East Indies... will, if he is a wise man, see, and if he is an honest man, confess, that nothing can be more absurd and preposterous than the present system.¹³³

An intense interest in India emerged after Parliament began its series of investigations into East India Company administration.¹³⁴ While Robinson served to inform the government on the details of East Indian abuses, few researched the issue as exhaustively as the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Henry Dundas. Dundas commented on the servants of the East India Company:

I wish every servant of the Company to consider that it is and ought to be the first aim of his life to prove himself a faithful steward of the Company, and that he has no right to fancy [that] he is an Alexander or an Aurangzeb and prefer frantic military exploits to the trade and commerce of the country.¹³⁵

Dundas, as Lord Advocate of Scotland, had secured myriad positions for Scots in India. Perhaps this motivated his intense interests in Indian administration. This interest came

¹³² Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 338.

¹³³ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 363.

¹³⁴ Conway, *The British Isles*, 340.

¹³⁵ Michael Frye, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1992), 114.

to fruition in 1783 when Dundas, as a member of the Fox-North coalition government, submitted a bill for the reform of the East India Company. However, due mainly to Charles Fox's reforming ambitions, Dundas abandoned his bill to clear the way for his superior's. The Lord Advocate's plans were set aside for a more opportune time.

Upon becoming Prime Minister in 1784, William Pitt the Younger turned his attention to India. He addressed the House of Commons and emphasized that the loss of America had highlighted the importance of India.¹³⁶ After consulting Henry Dundas, Pitt drafted his version of the India Bill. In a speech before the Commons, Pitt outlined the major points of his bill. Pitt addressed fears that Indian exoticism was undermining British politics; his bill would "prevent capricious effects on the constitution of Britain from the government of India." Moreover, Mr. Pitt wished to eradicate the oppressive nature of East Indian governance so "authority should leave energy and vigor for all the purposes of good and substantial government, to secure the happiness of the natives, as well as to protect the commerce and the possessions of the Company."¹³⁷ Apparently Pitt understood that exhibiting principles took little effort; adopting provisions required sophistication.

Soon after Cornwallis's return from America, the government began to turn to him for service in points of crisis throughout the empire. In 1783 Lord Shelburne, then Prime Minister, beseeched Cornwallis to accept the Lord Lieutenancy in Ireland.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Conway, *The British Isles*, 337.

¹³⁷ In this paragraph I draw on *The Speeches of the Right Honorable William Pitt in the House of Commons* (London: Longman, Hurst, Orme, et. al., 1817), 85.

¹³⁸ George III to William Pitt, December 28, 1783, PRO 30/8/103/19.

Cornwallis refused to accept that post probably because he was averse to serving without complete administrative autonomy, by holding both the Lord Lieutenancy and the military post of Commander-in-Chief. He did not wish to be captive to another's blunders as he had been in America. In addition, American leaders refused to release Cornwallis officially from his paroled status, which he entered into at Yorktown. Hence, by his honor, he could not allow him to take a government or military position in the meantime.

Having demonstrated patriotic improvement in America, Lord Cornwallis appeared to be the perfect fix for the East India Company's troubles. But Pitt's India Bill subjected the Governor General to the East India Company's administration and separated military authority into a separate office. Thus when Pitt's ministry offered Cornwallis the Governor Generalship of India in 1784, Lord Cornwallis declined. The capitulator of Yorktown did not wish to risk a similar outcome in another colonial jewel consequent on lacking full control. However, Cornwallis's deepest desire was to serve his country. Cornwallis's sense of duty assailed his love of home. To his confidant and former aide-de-camp, he described his debate with himself:

Do not think of it [accepting the Governor Generalship]; reject all offers; why should you volunteer plague and misery? duty then whispers, You are not sent here merely to please yourself; the wisdom of Providence has thought fit to put an insuperable bar to any great degree of happiness; can you tell, if you stay at home, that the loss of your son, or some heavy calamity, may not plunge you in the deepest despair? Try to be of some use; serve your country and your friends; your confined circumstances do not allow you to contribute to the happiness of others by generosity and extensive charity; take the means which God is willing to put into your hands.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Lord Cornwallis to Charles Ross, May 9, 1784, CC. 1:175-6.

In addition Cornwallis again refused the government appointment unless it included the powers of Commander-in-Chief of the army in India. He believed that only through the combination of the offices could he truly serve British interests in India.¹⁴⁰ The ministry fell silent.

In February 1786, the ministry again offered Lord Cornwallis the Indian position. William Pitt and Henry Dundas were prepared to meet the Earl's terms and promised to introduce revisions to Pitt's India Bill, which would allow for the combination of the Governor Generalship with the powers of Commander-in-Chief. This point is evidence of Pitt and Dundas's attachment to Lord Cornwallis's character. Dundas had intended to offer Cornwallis the Governor-Generalship in conjunction with his proposal for East India reform in 1783.¹⁴¹ Dundas had earlier remarked to a friend that with Lord Cornwallis, "there is no broken fortune to be mended! Here is no avarice to be gratified! Here is no beggarly mushroom kindred to be provided for! No crew of hungry followers gaping to be gorged!"¹⁴² The consensus in Pitt's ministry was favorable to Lord Cornwallis's appointment to India. Finally Lord Cornwallis accepted but lamented that it was "much against my will and with grief of heart."¹⁴³

Since the recall of William Hastings in 1785, the British East India Company had been reeling from mismanagement, from diplomatic and military entanglement in the

¹⁴⁰ Lord Cornwallis to Lord Sydney, August 4, 1784, CC. 1:180.

¹⁴¹ Frye, *Dundas Despotism*, 114.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴³ Lord Cornwallis to Charles Ross, February 23, 1786, CC 1:215.

sub-continent's conflicts, and from official corruption. Under Sir John MacPherson's interim Governor-Generalship in Bengal, the situation worsened.¹⁴⁴ He had involved himself, the Company, and its servants in "an ever-deepening morass" by encouraging jobbery, collusion, and venality at the expense of Company interests.¹⁴⁵ Cornwallis's arrival had become increasingly necessary for the Company's survival.

Cornwallis's objective was to guide the East India Company to revenue-producing stability by ending corruption, by securing the borders against native aggressors, and by reforming the army. At the same time, he was to avoid war, entangling alliances, and extensive commitment to native powers. This was no mean agenda. Lord Cornwallis was not surprised when he landed in India and found widespread fraud and corruption among the Company servants. The Earl knew that he must immediately begin work to purge the Company of costly inefficiency, corruption, and mismanagement.

Cornwallis's tenure in India began at a time when genteel British culture was being exported to India, and his presence served to encourage British-Indian society in that direction.¹⁴⁶ Across Bengal, theatres had "modernized," circulating libraries had opened, sports teams competed, and British social clubs welcomed new members. However, vice attended refinement and enveloped the East India Company servants.

¹⁴⁴ Sir John Macpherson (1745-1821) joined the East India Company's service in 1767. He used jobbing to secure a position on the Fort William Council in 1781. After Parliament recalled William Hastings, he became interim Governor-General—from 8th of February 1785 to the 12th September 1786.

¹⁴⁵ Frank and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The Imperial Years* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 40.

¹⁴⁶ Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 22-23, and Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 29-30.

James Gillray captures this in his engraving “The Bengal Levée”(Figure 3). While exactly what Gillray was expressing in this engraving is debatable, one cannot help but sense the venality and deviance of the participants. At the same time Cornwallis is depicted in the right background surrounded by servants who appear more respectable.

For many India was a snare of oriental vice. Young men wished to make money and return to Britain before they lost their opportunity and Indian exoticism claimed them.¹⁴⁷ Cornwallis was disgusted with British circumstances in India. In his understanding any attempted reform would prove worthless without able and honest men, full of integrity and serving the Company and Empire through self-sacrifice.¹⁴⁸

The thrust of this new cultural exportation was to prevent East India Company servants from “going native”: i.e. being influenced by an oriental culture and therefore assimilating the perceived corruption inherent in oriental societies. British civilization and decorum exported to India would preserve British morals among the servants. Contemporary historians, such as Edward Gibbon, had emphasized the importance of avoiding the Roman nemesis of exoticism and indulgence in order to prevent decay in Britain and the empire.¹⁴⁹

Cornwallis took proactive measures to improve servants’ morality and ethics. He wanted to preserve British culture and consistently required officers and servants’ attendance at balls and the theatre. He was hardly ever absent himself unless duty

¹⁴⁷ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 29.

¹⁴⁸ Cornwallis to East India Company Board of Directors, November 1788, PRO 30/11/153/149-76.

¹⁴⁹ Sen, *Distant Sovereignty*, 33.



Figure 3: *The Bengal Levee*, By James Gillray¹⁵⁰

required.¹⁵¹ Under previous administrations, formal gatherings had quickly disintegrated into binge drinking sessions. Cornwallis refused to take part in displays of debauchery and politely—with few exceptions—excused himself if such activities commenced. Eventually, once Cornwallis himself was hosting formal events, he scheduled dancing immediately to follow supper. Faced with the risk of embarrassment on the dance floor, officers and servants abstained from their traditional overindulgence.

In addition, Cornwallis sought to exemplify the improvement ethos through moderate living. He had refused the salary of Commander-in-Chief—an enormous sum

¹⁵⁰ From an engraving by James Gillray for Hannah Humphrey, 1792 reprinted by permission, from the British National Library.

¹⁵¹ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 34.

of £25,000—when he accepted the appointment to Bengal. Lord Cornwallis confided to his friend Charles Ross in January 1784, “Although I have lost a much greater part of my income than I could afford, I have lost no character, which is more than most [of] the *dramatis personae* can say.”¹⁵² As a matter of habit, the Earl led a humble existence.¹⁵³ Sir John Moore, who later served with Lord Cornwallis in Ireland, described the Earl’s routine:

Lord Cornwallis lives without ceremony with his *aides-de-camp* like a general officer. He eats breakfast at nine, and immediately afterwards retires with his secretary. The Adjutant-General is shown in to him first, and then the different officers, civil and military, in succession; and he continues to do business until two or three o’clock when he gets on horseback and rides till six. Dinner is at about half-past six or seven. He converses freely upon whatever subjects are started, the military ones are evidently those he likes best. Dinner is over about nine, when the company goes into another room and those who do not compose the family retire. The newspapers are brought in, and he continues conversing with such as remain till past eleven, when he goes to bed. He appears to be a man of plain, manly character, devoid of affectation or pretension displaying good sense and observation. He has held the greatest situations this country affords without their having in any degree affected the simplicity of his character or manners.¹⁵⁴

Lord Cornwallis dealt with corruption in the East India Company service by targeting its leaders. Considering Cornwallis’s strong belief in *noblesse oblige*, this is no surprise. He understood the incentive that led so many “second-sons” to join the Company’s service. After Clive’s capture of Bengal in 1757, there were fortunes to be made in India. However, with increasing Company debt came decreasing servant salaries. Consequently Britain’s second-sons found ways to supplement their incomes to

¹⁵² Cornwallis to Ross, CC 1:164.

¹⁵³ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 34.

¹⁵⁴ F.J. Maurice ed., *Diary of Sir John Moore* (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 319.

the detriment of the Company. The Board of Directors ordered all offending servants prosecuted, but Cornwallis thought this was extreme and hypocritical considering many high-ranking Company officials themselves had benefited from the practices.¹⁵⁵ With this in mind, the governor general urged leniency from Parliament for the many offenders, but planned to make examples of members of the Board of Revenue. He summarily filed charges against each member of that board.¹⁵⁶

Lord Cornwallis perceived that the creation of an honorable service without decent salaries was impossible. He asked William Pitt to pressure Company directors for better salaries: “those persons who hold offices of great labour and great responsibility must be well paid, or they will for the most part betray their trust.”¹⁵⁷ In addition, the Earl wished to secure ethical practices by rewarding especially good servants. He requested and obtained baronetcies for Charles Warre Malet and Captain John Kennaway for their extraordinary service to the Company in the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1789-1792).¹⁵⁸ Again, Cornwallis attempted to place patriotic improvers into strategic position; both Malet and Kennaway appear to have subscribed to that improvement *ethos*. Charles Malet pushed for commercial improvement in the Bombay presidency influencing future policy towards commercial expansion in India while Kennaway returned to England and became an influential member of Devonshire agricultural and Christian improvement societies. For lesser service, after years of begging the East India

¹⁵⁵ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*. 43.

¹⁵⁶ The results of the trials varied; however, most were convicted.

¹⁵⁷ Lord Cornwallis to William Pitt, November 4, 1788, CC 1:391.

¹⁵⁸ Wickwire, *Cornwallis: Imperial Years*, 56.

Company Board of Directors for better salaries, Lord Cornwallis circumvented the Board's authority and lobbied Parliament to effect salary reform.

Corruption not only plagued the East India Company's civilian sphere; Lord Cornwallis took note of the lack of decorum and endemic venality among the Company's army officer corps. Cornwallis had studied the Company's military extensively before his departure for Calcutta, and he and Henry Dundas had formulated a plan of action to merge the Company's Army and British regular units.¹⁵⁹ However, after his arrival Cornwallis disregarded that plan in favor of officer corps reform.

The Governor General was most concerned with the Company's officer corps, whose humble origins prevented their being commissioned in regular British units. An honorable officer corps could instill discipline and integrity in the rank and file. Because of East India Company officers' undesirable social origins, the prospect of securing a fortune in the "Indian Army" was a powerful motivation. When Cornwallis arrived in India, a colonel could obtain £7-8,000 a year in property confiscated from the countryside during military action. Even so, upon their return to England, these wealthy officers lost their social standing; provisos limited the commission of an "Indian" officer to India. Further anomalies, such as the absence of retirement benefits, perpetuated military corruption. In order to encourage decorum and discipline among the officers, Cornwallis transformed the English East India Company Army into a regular British East Indian Army. Thus East Indian Officers held commissions from the king; although the commissions were temporary, Cornwallis hoped it would revive a sense of self-esteem.

¹⁵⁹ In this paragraph I draw on Raymond A Callahan, "Cornwallis and the Indian Army, 1786-1797," *Military Affairs* 34 (1970): 93-97.

Beyond the officer corps, Cornwallis was concerned with the “European regiments” of the East India Company’s army—regiments of British born troops. Within the European regiments were pockets of invalided soldiers who had formed degenerate cliques of debauchery and drunkenness.¹⁶⁰ He considered this debauched, drunken, disabled, and deserting group the lowest scum.

I found a disorderly mass of debauched invalids living in Fort William almost without officers & without regulation of any kind corrupting, of course, all the recruits & all the other Europeans in garrison. Compassion for many who had brown families & for a number of Frenchmen with whom the caprice & infatuation of Sir Eyre Coote had filled this army, prevented my sending them all home, which in justice to the Company & the service I ought to have done. I formed therefore a battalion of those who had the strongest pretension to live upon arrack [a liquor] for the remainder of their days & sent them under some appearance at least of military form to Chunar.¹⁶¹

Even so, Cornwallis was certain that British Soldiers were essential to a secure British India. In order to reform the European regiments, Cornwallis disposed of as many as were not of sound condition. He secured pensions and passage back to England for many disabled and invalid soldiers, and the rest he grouped into a labor regiment and garrisoned them on an island in Bengal Bay. Lord Cornwallis then purged the European regiments of subversive elements and discharged those who undermined the *esprit de corps*. For the rump that remained, improved discipline, better facilities, and more competent leadership facilitated their reform.

¹⁶⁰ Soldiers unfit for command or duty by virtue of wounds or old age.

¹⁶¹ Lord Cornwallis to Henry Dundas March 8 1789, PRO 30/11/150/30.

**PATRIOTIC IMPROVEMENT EXPORTED:
THE CORNWALLIS CODE AND THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT**

Lord Cornwallis argued that the company's trade itself was in danger and agriculture must flourish before Bengal commerce could be revitalized.¹⁶² Soon after arriving in Bengal, Cornwallis began formulating a system intended to bring agricultural improvement and self-sustaining prosperity to British India. On May 1, 1793, Lord Cornwallis announced his "Cornwallis Code." The Cornwallis Code and the Permanent Settlement of Bengal Land Revenues were superlative examples of patriotic improvement exported into the periphery of the Empire. The Code was based on British Enlightenment principles of contractual governance, which Cornwallis believed would bring order to the Company's holdings in India. The Cornwallis Code most importantly established an Anglicized judicial system rooted in British Enlightenment principles of individual liberty and equality and a system of land tenure that attempted to create Anglicized gentry from Indian landowners.

Cornwallis sought to establish an Anglicized judicial system to bring legal stability to India. From 1765 to 1793, the East India Company judicial system had been entirely pragmatic. As Cornwallis noted on his arrival in Bengal, "all early arrangements were framed with a view to mere collection of revenue."¹⁶³ He believed that this trampled the Company's subjects' rights and encouraged corruption among Company servants. Cornwallis revoked Company collectors' authority to settle trade and revenue

¹⁶² Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 65.

¹⁶³ Sinha Chittaranjan, "Doctrinal Influence on the Judicial Policy of the East India Company's Administration in Bengal, 1772-1833," *Historical Journal* 12 (1969): 241.

disputes and invested British civil judges with that authority. The Cornwallis Code asserted that,

The Revenue Officers must be deprived of all judicial power. All of the financial claims of the public, when disputed, must be subjected to the Courts of Justice, who from their official situation and the nature of their trust shall not only be uninterested in the result of their decisions, but be bound [by oath] to decide impartially between the Government and the Proprietors, and between the Proprietors and the Tenants.¹⁶⁴

By establishing an Anglicized judicial system over British India, Cornwallis believed, the Company not only preserved law and order, but secured property rights and encouraged improvement and prosperity.

But it was the Permanent Settlement of Bengal Land Revenues, the first of the Cornwallis Code's forty-eight points, that created the most debate and controversy. Traditionally the Mughal Empire's taxes had been collected from the peasants or *ryots* by the local elites or *zamindars* who acted as tax-farmers, paying 90% of their collections to the *Nawab* as the agent of the emperor. The Company had taken the *Nawab*'s place, thanks to the *diwani*. In the 1770s and 1780s the Company's Governor General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, sought to replace that ancient system with a modern tax bureaucracy. He believed Bengal was being "over-governed" by a surfeit of officials. In response, Hastings replaced hundreds of petty revenue officials, both *zamindars* and Company servants, with several district collectors.¹⁶⁵ This reform effectively removed the *zamindars*' ability to fund and perform their traditional roles of maintaining law and order, mediating land disputes, collecting land revenue, and lending money. This

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, 397.

debased the traditional social structure of Bengal and destroyed the psuedo-feudal symbiosis between *zamindars* and *ryots*.¹⁶⁶ With no recognizable social network, many *ryots* took to the roads. This social upheaval brought dire consequences to the East India Company's Bengal administration: many Bengali farmers migrated and, since agricultural production was the primary source of revenue, the tax base shrank. In the meantime, the collectors continued to line their pockets while the Company fell deeper into debt.

Cornwallis faced the still unsettled question of the best way to collect revenues for maximum benefit to the company and minimum distress to the tillers of the soil, the *ryots*. In 1789 Charles Grant and John Shore, members of the Board of Directors, began research into a plan for the settlement of revenues in Bengal. Cornwallis synthesized a Bengal settlement from Grant and Shore's reports, suggestions from trustworthy Company servants, and the history of Bengal revenue collection.¹⁶⁷

Cornwallis concluded that "a regular gradation of ranks... is nowhere more necessary than in this country for preserving order in civil society."¹⁶⁸ Lord Cornwallis's Bengal land settlement transformed the traditional connection between *zamindars* and *ryots* into a contractual relationship. *Zamindars* became hereditary landed elites, and Company law protected the *ryots* from *zamindar* abuses. *Zamindars*, as before, were to pay 90% of the collected revenue to the East India Company's thirty-five collectors.

¹⁶⁶ Ratna and Rajat Ray, "Zamindars and Jotedars: A Study of Rural Politics in Bengal," *Modern Asian Studies* 9 (1975): 81-83.

¹⁶⁷ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 61.

¹⁶⁸ Lord Cornwallis to Court of Directors, August 2, 1789, CC 1:554.

However, Lord Cornwallis remained unsatisfied. Shore and Grant proposed a ten-year term for land appraisals; every decade the East India Company collectors would issue a new appraisal and the required taxes would change accordingly. Shortly after the approval of this ten-year settlement, Lord Cornwallis pressed the Board of Directors for an amendment. He favored making the Bengal settlement permanent, which he believed would encourage the *zamindars* to invest in agricultural improvements. Cornwallis expressed his certainty of that to the Board of Directors:

Were there any grounds for supposing that a system which secures to the landholder the possession of his lands, and the profits arising from the improvement of them, will occasion a decline in agriculture, then might we apprehend that a permanent assessment would in time, bear hard upon the contributors; but reason and experience justify the contrary supposition in which case, a fixed assessment must be favorable to the contributors, because their resources will gradually increase, whereas the demand of the Government will continue the same¹⁶⁹

Cornwallis drew from British “reason and experience” that the improvement *ethos* that had transformed agriculture and commerce in Britain would have similar effects in India. Cornwallis also believed that a permanent settlement would spawn an evolution among the *zamindars*. In time, “the *zamindars*...will at once assume new principles of action, and become economical landlords and prudent trustees of the publick interests.”¹⁷⁰ This evolution would benefit the *ryots*, or tenants, as well. For “when a spirit of Improvement is diffused throughout the country, the *ryots* will find a further security in the competition

¹⁶⁹ Minute of the Governor-General, February 10, 1790, CC 2:460.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, CC 2:642.

of the landholders to add to the number of their tenants.”¹⁷¹ Thus, abrupt evictions would become rare.

A ten-year settlement did not offer the stability Cornwallis considered necessary; if the *zamindars* could expect another, perhaps significantly different, settlement each decade, they might deem improvement too risky. Most in Cornwallis’s administration favored a permanent settlement. However, since John Shore was one of the Company’s most admired and trusted administrators, his belief that a permanent settlement was inflexible and did not allow for market volatility carried weight. However, Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control under Pitt’s 1784 India Bill, was sympathetic to Cornwallis’s wishes and swayed the opinion of Pitt and the Board in favor of a permanent settlement. Facing unyielding support for permanence from the Pitt ministry, the Board of Control, and many of the Company’s administrators, Shore’s opposition conceded defeat. Cornwallis enacted the Permanent Settlement on May 1, 1793.

Cornwallis had completed his assignment. As the patriotic improvers who had appointed him expected, the East India Company was reformed: an advantageous revenue system would produce stability and curb corruption; improved decorum and discipline in the army would yield a reliable and cost-efficient military; and an enlightened judicial system would enforce law and order in British India’s districts.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., CC 2:644.

THE THIRD ANGLO-MYSORE WAR

The Third Anglo-Mysore War canonized Lord Cornwallis as a new imperial hero: one who did not conquer to extend despotic prerogative but to spread an empire of esteem and humanity. His original objective had been strictly to avoid war; war was expensive and had proven to be embarrassing. He preferred the extension of Company influence through diplomacy.¹⁷² For instance, Cornwallis had refused to entangle himself or the Company in the military struggles between Tibet and China, but instead sent mediators. However, war inescapably became linked to Cornwallis's mandate.

In 1789 Tipu Saib, sultan of Mysore, attacked fortifications in Travancore, a British ally, in an attempt to force an engagement with the East India Company. Tipu was an Indian patriot in many respects. However, Britons perceived him as representative of that "inherently Indian concept," absolutist tyranny. Cornwallis expressed his opinion of Tipu's aggression to Henry Dundas: "into [war] we were forced by the ungovernable ambition and violence of his [Tipu's] character."¹⁷³

When war finally broke out in December 1789, Cornwallis chose to command from a distance. He charged General Meadows, the Governor of Madras, with the reduction of the Mysore threat. Like many who served under Cornwallis in India, Meadows had first served with the Governor-General in the southern campaign in America. Cornwallis gave Meadows the opportunity to prove himself but was

¹⁷² Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 46.

¹⁷³ Cornwallis to Dundas, as published in "Reports from India" *The Times*, July 27, 1792.

disappointed. Meadows's tactics were demonstrably grandiose. Early in 1790, Meadows planned a three-pronged invasion of Mysore. In hindsight, this plan required synchronization and mobility that would have perplexed commanders of the Second World War with their advanced communications and mechanization. Meadows's plan ordered the simultaneous attack on Mysore by Company forces in Bombay in the west, by Company forces from Madras in the east, and his forces from the Carnatic in the south. Cornwallis was dumbfounded; if a simultaneous invasion could be mounted, it would be impossible to synchronize the other armies' advances.

After Meadows had shown himself ineffectual, Cornwallis took command of the war from Madras.¹⁷⁴ He planned the large invasion from the east through the mountain passes of East Mysore. (See Figure 4) He had to move quickly in order to complete his objectives before the monsoon season. Cornwallis captured the strategic fortress town of Bangalore in March 1791 and hoped to move quickly to lay siege to Seringapatam, Tipu's capital. Unfortunately for Cornwallis, the monsoons came early and, coupled with a lack of provisions, forced him to retire to Bangalore. In many ways, Cornwallis had learned from his American misfortunes and refused to repeat his mistakes: i.e. dividing his forces or marching without adequate provisions. Many of his subordinate officers commented on his excellent tactics.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ After Cornwallis took command, Meadows continued to serve as a general officer. General Meadows blundered in his responsibilities during the siege and could no longer bear the shame. Meadows shot himself while in his tent; yet, he could not even complete that task. He survived the wound and returned to Britain where he was appointed governor of the Isle of Wight in 1798.

¹⁷⁵ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 150.

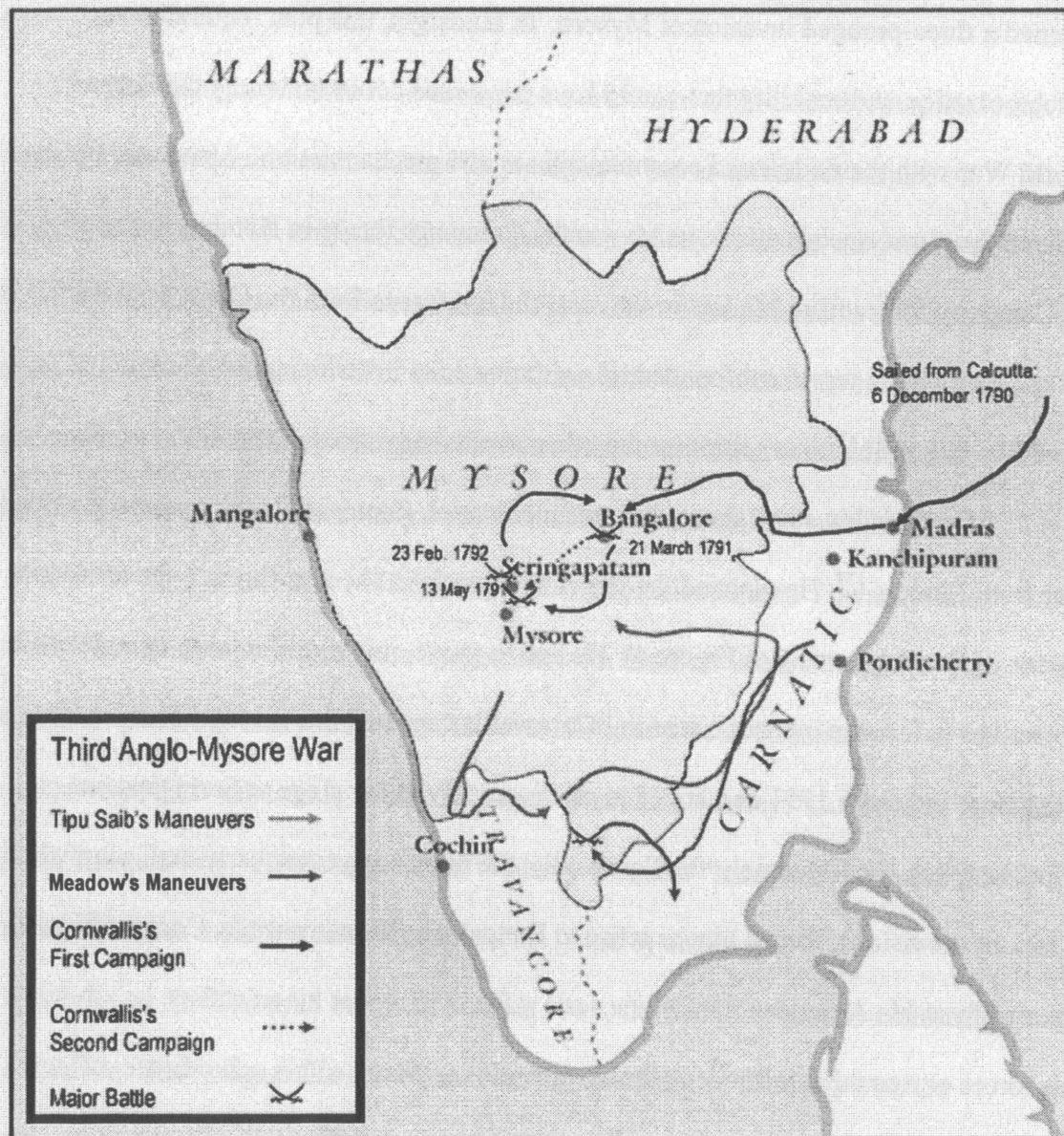


Figure 4: Maneuvers during the Third Anglo-Mysore War¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Map by Author, Based upon a map entitled "Map of Mysore and its Neighbors After the Treaty of 1799," The National Galleries of Scotland (<http://www.nationalgalleries.org.uk/tipu/map.htm>) 2000.

Cornwallis resumed the offensive early in 1792 and reached Seringapatam in early February. Cornwallis's victory came on February 23, 1792 after a successful storming of the fortress and the capitulation of Tipu Saib. Through the peace treaty, the Governor-General forced from Tipu territorial concessions, a £3 million indemnity, and his sons as hostages to secure his future peaceful conduct.

The delivery of Tipu's sons became the most depicted symbol of Cornwallis's victory over the Sultan of Mysore. Lord Cornwallis wanted to welcome the children, aged eleven and seven years. He ordered that full military honors greet their arrival, and a salute was fired as they approached. Cornwallis embraced both the boys and gave them gold watches before assuring them and their father that he would treat them as sons. The *Madras Courier* first carried the report of Cornwallis's victory and reception of Tipu's sons, but the story was soon republished in the *Calcutta Gazette* and *The Times*.

The attention artists and their patrons paid to this event demonstrated its imperial significance. Immediately, paintings were commissioned to commemorate Cornwallis's reception of the boys. Artists such as Robert Home, Mather Brown, James Northcote, Edward Bird, George Carter, Robert Smirke, and Henry Singleton painted versions of the event.¹⁷⁷ No previous imperial incident had received so much artistic attention. Moreover, the painters' subjects exhibit a range of emotions toward Cornwallis. In Mather Brown's paintings the children look upon Cornwallis with a filial adoration, while the British officers watch in awe of their commander. Robert Homes paints a

¹⁷⁷ P.J. Marshall, "'Cornwallis Triumphant': War in India and the British Public in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *War, Strategy, and International Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard*, Lawrence Freedman et. al. ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 63.

different scene; as Cornwallis receives Tipu's sons, the Union Jack flies triumphantly over the battlefield at Seringapatam. (See Figures 5, 6, 7) In addition, Matthew Boulton, an accomplished medal designer, struck a commemorative medal for the occasion. (See Figure 8) These works capture the sentiments of the British people toward Cornwallis; they expressed their awe and admiration fully upon Cornwallis's return to Britain. Artists have depicted only one event involving Lord Cornwallis as frequently: the surrender at Yorktown. In a real sense, the reception of Tipu's sons as hostages was redemptive.

Cornwallis's term in India was due to expire in 1791, and Pitt was already preparing for Cornwallis' return to England. He approached George III with plans to offer Cornwallis the Home Office, stating that no one "would be so creditable or advantageous, as Lord Cornwallis."¹⁷⁸ The outbreak of the Third Mysore War detained Cornwallis for another two years, and made the appointment impossible. Nevertheless, Cornwallis's answer to Pitt's offer is significant, for it is evidence of the disinterested nature of Cornwallis's service and his commitment to duty above personal gain:

I have always been of the opinion that no man who has a regard for the consideration in which he is to stand in this country should produce himself even in the House of Lords, as an efficient member of administration, without possessing such powers and habits of Parliamentary debate as would enable him to do justice to a good cause, and defend his measures as well as those of his colleagues.¹⁷⁹

Such sentiments did not discourage the King's Minister; William Pitt would continue to hold Cornwallis in high regard and call on him in other times of crisis.

¹⁷⁸ William Pitt to the King, April 29, 1791, A. Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Vol.1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 529.

¹⁷⁹ Cornwallis to William Pitt, January 23, 1792, CC 2:144.

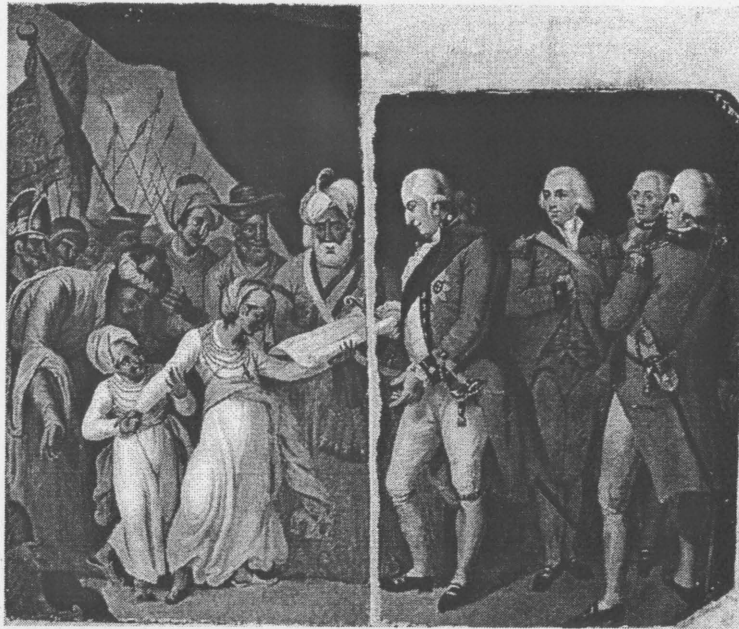


Figure 5: *Cornwallis Receiving Tipu's Sons*, By Mather Brown, 1792¹⁸⁰

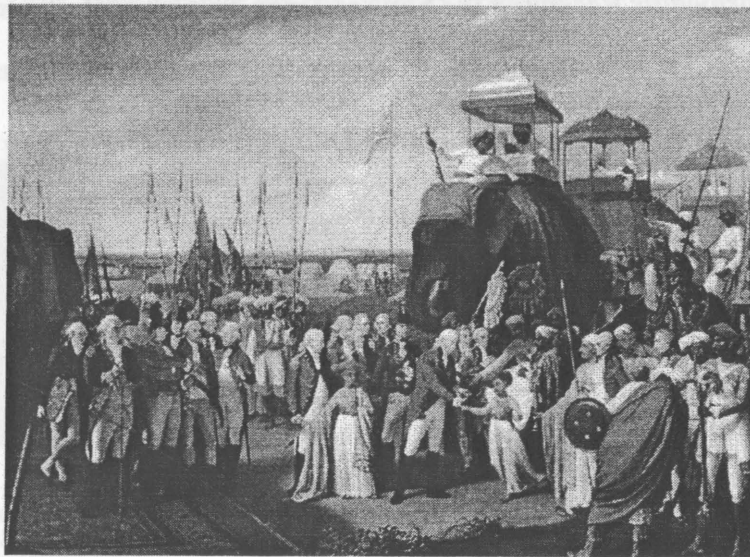


Figure 6: *Lord Cornwallis Receiving Tipu Sahib's Sons as Hostages at Seringapatam*, By Robert Home 1793-4¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Mather Brown, *Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu as Hostages*, The National Galleries of Scotland (<http://www.nationalgalleries.org.uk/tipu/tipu325.htm>) 2000.

¹⁸¹ Robert Home, *Lord Cornwallis Receiving Tipu Sahib's Sons as Hostages at Seringapatam*, The National Galleries of Scotland, (<http://www.nationalgalleries.org.uk/tipu/tipu325.htm>) 2000.



Figure 7: *Earl Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipoo Sahib as Hostages*, By Mather Brown 1793¹⁸²



Figure 8: *Defeat of Sultan Tippoo*, Commemorative Medal, By Matthew

Boulton 1793¹⁸³

¹⁸² Mather Brown, *Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipoo Sahib as Hostages*, Reprinted in Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 172, by permission of the India Office Library and Records, London

¹⁸³ Matthew Boulton, *Defeat of Sultan Tippoo*, Commemorative Medal (http://blackwatch.napoleonicmedals.org/Pre_Consulate/M0779.htm) 2000.

Henry Dundas, with whom Cornwallis had most contact during his Indian service, ascribed the reforms of the East India Company to “his [Cornwallis’s] good and popular government.”¹⁸⁴ *The Times* also recorded Dundas’s regard for Lord Cornwallis: “He [Dundas] paid many compliments to Earl Cornwallis, whose military talents and victories, as well as moderation and virtues had procured us so many advantages in that quarter of the globe.”¹⁸⁵ In addition, George III often expressed his “infinite satisfaction” with Lord Cornwallis’s service.¹⁸⁶

However, high regard for Lord Cornwallis was not exclusive to the Tory government. Even members of the Whig opposition recognized his enlightened and disinterested service. Charles Fox, the MP George III detested most, the embodiment of radical reform and personal corruption, stated that his opinion of Cornwallis was “much heightened” by what Fox had heard of the Governor-General’s service in India.¹⁸⁷ Other figures such as John Wilkes also voiced their approbation. Wilkes commented that Cornwallis had created an “Empire founded on esteem and affection beyond the power of the sword.” William Wilberforce, whose political sophistication knew no party, commented that “Lord Cornwallis’ conduct removed him from the rank of successful Generals and from the vulgar list of conquerors and placed him high, in the estimate of every friend of humanity and virtue.”

¹⁸⁴ John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: the Consuming Struggle* (London: Constable and Co, 1996), 147.

¹⁸⁵ “House of Commons, 25th February” *The Times*, February 26, 1793.

¹⁸⁶ Lord Sydney to Cornwallis, January 27 1790, CC 2:29; King George III to Henry Dundas, September 5, 1791, Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, 1:559.

¹⁸⁷ In this paragraph I draw on P.J. Marshall, “Cornwallis Triumphant,” 58, 72-73.

It is difficult to measure a large portion of the population's opinion at this period in history. However, one may employ stock prices to infer the sentiments of stockholders in a given company. The optimism of East India Company stockholders appears to have been optimistic. From the point when it was rumored that the government would offer the governor-generalship to Lord Cornwallis, Company stock price increased. (See Figure 9) P.J. Marshall has recognized this phenomenon and agrees that the stock was sensitive to actions in India.¹⁸⁸ Of course, such sensitivity included troughs in the stock's performance. However, these troughs appear to be contemporary to reports of Tipu Sahib's aggression in Southern India, which began in 1789. With reports of Company victories under Cornwallis in 1792, the stock price soars.

East India stock value is an indication of stockholder perceptions during Cornwallis's tenure in India. Increasingly, due to an expanded journalistic interest in India, the British public was informed of Indian events, which allowed them to make informed decisions at the stock exchange.¹⁸⁹ Government officials wasted little time, harnessed this trend, and many may have manipulated sentiments. On occasion, Henry Dundas leaked private letters to favorable newspapers to bolster public support for the government policy in India.¹⁹⁰ Even so, the trend represented by East India Company stock values was optimistic confidence among stockholders in Lord Cornwallis's governance. The praise for Cornwallis from the king and his ministers—those who

¹⁸⁸ P.J. Marshall, "Cornwallis Triumphant," 73.

¹⁸⁹ Marshall, "Cornwallis Triumphant," 73.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

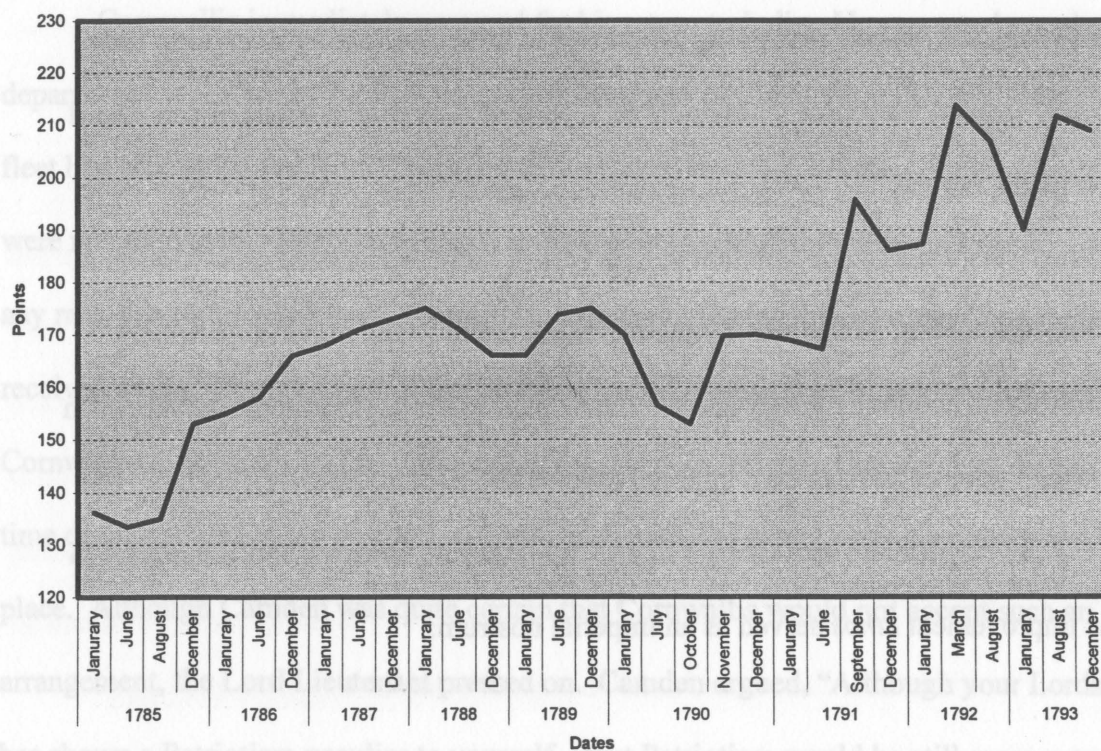


Figure 9: East India Company Stock Price 1785-1793¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Based upon "Stock Prices," in *The Times*, May 26, 1785- December 18, 1793.

appointed him—might be predictable, but the public's celebration of his return was unprecedented. Cornwallis returned to what amounted to Cornwallis mania: the public turned out for parades; crowds cheered; consumers snapped up poetry, songs, trinkets, cheap souvenirs, and murals portraying his service in India and victory over Tipu Saib. The recently dubbed Marquess Cornwallis set a precedent as first in a line of canonized British Imperial heroes.¹⁹²

Lord Cornwallis's appointment and service in India represented an evolution in British Imperial tactics. Britain no longer bandaged crises in the imperial periphery solely with sound economic policy and a military fist. Instead, patriotic improvers such as Cornwallis were at work to cure imperial disease and prevent future infections. For patriotic improving leaders like George III and William Pitt, Cornwallis's adherence to patriotic improvement *ethos* served as an imperial nostrum.

A GATHERING STORM OVER IRELAND

On January 19, 1797, Henry Dundas wrote Cornwallis begging his return to India for six months. Dundas wanted Cornwallis to teach his successors the methods and policies that they were to pursue. "Go," Dundas supplicated, "And you will have the satisfaction of reflecting that you have twice been the instrument in the hands of providence to save the British Empire in India."¹⁹³ Cornwallis responded that if he went

¹⁹² Ibid., 56-74.

¹⁹³ Dundas to Cornwallis, January 19, 1797, CC 2:318.

it would be “very unfortunate for our Indian possessions.”¹⁹⁴ This humility confirmed Dundas in his decision. Cornwallis finally agreed and wrote to his confidant, Ross, that, “The die is cast, I will go to India.”¹⁹⁵

Cornwallis immediately prepared for his return to India. He was nearly ready to depart when a mutiny in the fleet began at Portsmouth on April 15, 1797. By May 22 the fleet had blockaded the River Thames and threatened to starve London if their grievances were not addressed. The threat abated, and the sailors returned to duty on June 15. At any rate, this mutiny delayed Cornwallis’s departure. During this layover, Cornwallis received a letter from the Earl of Camden, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which asked Cornwallis to consider taking command of the Army in Ireland. Camden had for some time desired to resign his position as Lord Lieutenant and have Lord Cornwallis take his place. Although Camden was quite certain that Cornwallis would not accept such an arrangement, the Lord Lieutenant pressed on. Camden argued, “Although your Lordship has shown a Patriotism peculiar to yourself...that Patriotism would be still more extended if you could be prevailed upon to accept the Lord Lieutenancy of the Kingdom.”¹⁹⁶

Cornwallis did not return to India in 1797; his tutoring of East India Company administrators would have to wait. Government’s attention turned to the deteriorating situation in Ireland. The Ministry believed that Ireland’s poor state was a direct result of the Dublin Government’s misadministration. Just as Camden had approached Cornwallis

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:320.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Camden to Cornwallis, May 23, 1797, CC 2:325.

concerning Ireland in 1797, Pitt's ministry turned to him in 1798, when Ireland appeared to be on the brink of the abyss.

CHAPTER III

THE MARQUESS CORNWALLIS AND THE PARADOX OF IRELAND

Cornwallis employed patriotic improving methods again to try to both “improve” and conciliate Ireland as he had in America and India, but Ireland’s distinctive circumstances made many of his methods either impractical or unmanageable. Pitt had coaxed Cornwallis to Ireland in response to the Great Rebellion of 1798 and the Earl of Camden’s ineffectiveness as Lord Lieutenant. Despite the deluge of patriotic improvers’ praise for Pitt’s decision, Cornwallis did not enjoy the same support from the government he had in India or America. Why were attitudes so different toward Ireland?

The 1798 Rebellion erupted along fault lines in the social and political structure.¹⁹⁷ Internal dynamics in social and political life, which had been pulling at Ireland’s seams for ninety years, bore the fruit of rebellion in the 1790s. Added to these dynamics was the perceived weakness of Britain, whose army was, by the middle and late 1790s, in retreat from the French Republic on the Continent. Moreover, the ideological catalyst loaned to Ireland by the French Revolution set the stage for a wide-scale rebellion.

A radical, non-sectarian society, the United Irishmen, embodied the ideological leadership of the 1798 Rebellion. However, the key evolution was the incorporation of

¹⁹⁷ Jim Smyth ed., *Revolution, Counter-Revolution, Union: Ireland in the 1790s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.

the working class Catholic Defenders and the agrarian White Boy movements into a revolutionary nexus of elite leadership and rebellious agents. The United Irish ideology was as sophisticated as it was synthetic. Jim Smyth describes it best as “Presbyterianism, freemasonry, Irish Volunteering, the American Revolution, Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, and the British Whig-radical and ‘classical republican’ traditions, crystallized in the ‘revolution principles’ of 1688 and given a ‘colonial nationalist’ inflection by Anglo-Ireland.”¹⁹⁸ The agrarian activism of the White Boys and the paramilitarism of the Defenders provided a tradition of organized violence, to which the ideology of the United Irishmen gave direction.

Westminster had attempted to pacify Ireland throughout the 1790s. In 1792 the Catholic Relief Act re-admitted Catholics to the Bar. Another such act in 1793 made wide strides toward removing disabilities from Catholic political participation by granting Catholics the same suffrage rights as Protestants. Moreover, William Pitt established a Catholic seminary at Maynooth in 1795; Pitt conceived that it was better to keep priests in Ireland than have them traveling to France where they might fall under the influence of the Revolution.

However, the British project in Ireland was a failure. There was no shared Britishness as manifested between England, Scotland, and Wales.¹⁹⁹ Not only did Catholics and Dissenters perceive their distinction from Britain, but also the Protestant

¹⁹⁸ Jim Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 91.

¹⁹⁹ Smyth, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution, Union*, 10.

Ascendancy, which relied so heavily on British support of its ascendant position, and which had developed a separate colonial nationalism.

Circumstances became dire in 1796, when a French fleet anchored in Bantry Bay and threatened an invasion that, if not for poor weather, might have captured Dublin and threatened the British possession of the island. However, a terrible fog and a pursuing British fleet prevented the French invasion and spared Britain. Nevertheless, Britons were re-acquainted with the strategic dangers of Ireland in the hands of the enemy. The possible outcomes, just evaded, terrified Irish Protestants. Consequently Pitt's British cabinet, joined by Dublin Castle, took preemptive measures to disarm the Irish countryside and remove the radical element encapsulated in the United Irish movement.

The benefits of these actions are debatable. Most of the United Irishmen's leaders were incarcerated, and that prevented widespread organization in the subsequent rebellion. Moreover, the countryside for the most part was disarmed, although few residents had anything more than pikes. However, the tactics utilized in these preemptive efforts, which included torture, confiscation, and deadly force, only enflamed anti-British sentiments in the countryside. General Lake was the most notorious director of the disarming campaigns. He often could not control his troops and sent them rampaging through settlements, committing numerous atrocities. Despite the successes of disarming, the tactics left behind a thirst for vengeance in the place of confiscated weapons.

In 1798 tensions quickly escalated, and there were further British efforts to avoid a rebellion. In March government achieved a significant victory. Sixteen United Irish

leaders were arrested; that disabled further the movement's plans for rebellion. Shortly after the arrests, Pitt declared martial law to assist with the locating and processing of the rebellious elements.

As a result many United Irishmen had taken to the mountains of County Wicklow and stockpiled arms in preparation for French assistance. The remaining United Irish leadership planned a coup d'état, regardless of any French invasion. Beginning in May 1798, the government troops' concentration on the disarmament of residents in County Wicklow and a government ultimatum to disarm convinced the United Irish leadership that they could not wait for French aid.

The "Rising of the Moon," as contemporaries labeled the rebellion, began on May 23, 1798 with the rebel attacks on strategic points in County Meath, County Dublin, and County Kildare. The first two days of fighting resulted in the deaths of 102 government troops and over 350 United Irish rebels. The struggle in May and June proved to be particularly bloody.(See Figure 10)

In addition to open warfare, both sides committed atrocities. After several thousand rebels had surrendered to General Ralph Dundas at Gibbet Ruth on May 31, a column of 60 dragoons and 350 militiamen from Dublin, led by General James Duff, charged the unarmed prisoners and killed nearly 400. Duff commented afterward that "Nothing could stop the rage of the troops."²⁰⁰ This event fanned the dying embers of rebellion in the Midlands, where General Dundas's moderate methods were disarming

²⁰⁰ Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (New York: Wiedenfield and Nicholson, 1997), 163.

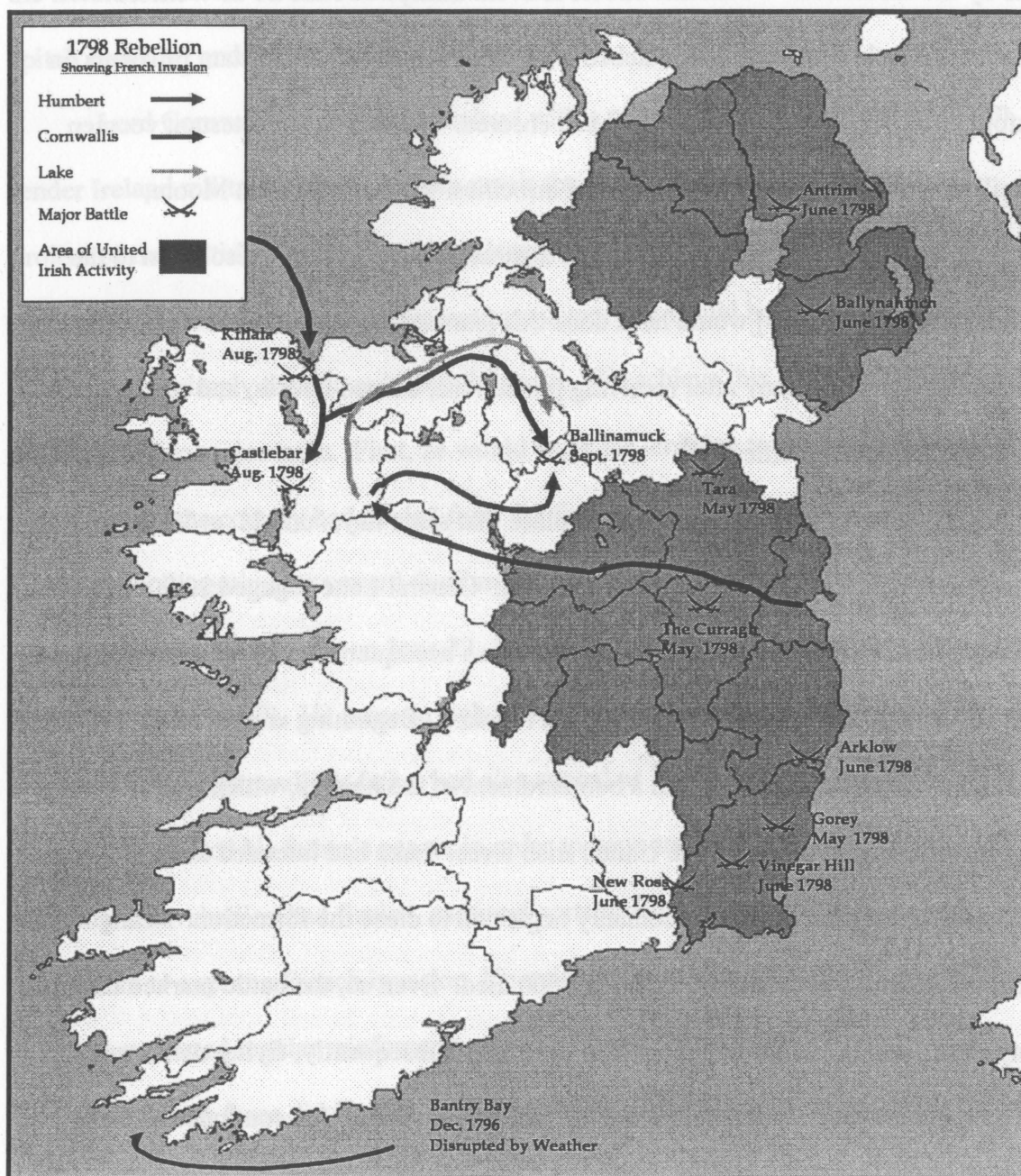


Figure 10: The 1798 Rebellion Showing Major Engagements and the French Invasion²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Map by Author, based upon "The 1798 Rebellion," in Séan Duffy, *The Macmillan Atlas of Irish History* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 83.

rebels by the thousands.²⁰² Another atrocious event transpired June 21 in Wexford. United Irish rebels ceremoniously stabbed with pikes ninety-four Protestant prisoners on Wexford Bridge while a crowd shrieked and cheered. Nevertheless Protestant yeomen and militia were the primary perpetrators of atrocities. General Sir John Moore, disgusted, complained of these militiamen's obstruction of a peaceful resolution to the conflict: "They [the rebels] would have done this [surrendered] sooner had it not been for the Yeomen who shot many after receiving protections, burned houses, and committed other unpardonable atrocities."²⁰³

The decisive battle in the East took place that same day, June 21, at Vinegar Hill, a monadnock near Enniscorthy, County Wexford. General Lake engaged 20,000 rebels at Vinegar Hill, which the United Irish had used as a headquarters, with his force of about 8,000 militia and yeomanry and 2,000 British regulars. Beginning around seven o'clock in the morning, General Lake began a bombardment of the heights, which was followed by a general assault that routed the United Irish force. Lake had intended to encircle the rebel position but the disorderly yeomanry neglected to close the formation. Nearly all of the United Irishmen successfully fled; only 500 died. Even so, the battle marked the end of any significant threat from the rebels in the East. Subsequently, flying columns of militia continued their work to eradicate the bands of guerillas that continued to make raids from impenetrable mountains and bogs. Often these militia dealt out "justice" in

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ F.J. Maurice, *The Diary of Sir John Moore* (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 311.

the field. This often included executions, floggings, and creative forms of torture like “pitch capping” and “shearing.”²⁰⁴

Lord Cornwallis departed for Ireland with a mandate to stamp out the rebellion, to render Ireland militarily secure, to help repair the ravages of rebellion, and, the pet project of the British cabinet, to secure a legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland.²⁰⁵ He was committed to promote measures that would benefit the entire populace, not simply the clique in Dublin Castle. To achieve this, Cornwallis focused his efforts into two major tasks. First, he would work for leniency toward deluded rebels. Second, once the country had cooled from the fires of rebellion, he would labor to “soften” the ill sentiments toward the Empire, especially among Catholics.

He arrived in Dublin on June 22, 1798, just one day after the decisive British victory at Vinegar Hill. He came to Ireland better prepared than when he had taken office in India. Cornwallis’s father had also served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Cornwallis studied his father’s papers in order to be more efficient on the island. Although the rebellion had fizzled, captured correspondence had warned the Lord Lieutenant to expect a French invasion. He quickly assembled the articles necessary for war and requested regular reinforcements, which Whitehall gladly delivered.

A French force did invade. In August 1798, General Humbert arrived at the head of a relatively small force and established a beachhead at Killala, County Mayo (see Map 4). The objective of General Humbert was to rally rebellious inhabitants to the French

²⁰⁴ “Pitch capping” involved shaving the victim’s head, placing pitch-soaked paper or cloth on the victim’s head, and setting the paper or cloth on fire. “Shearing” a victim meant cutting off their earlobes.

²⁰⁵ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 223.

standard, arm them, train them, and lead them to victory. For Cornwallis, it must have resurrected memories of the American rebellion where rural rebels had also received the aid of France against Britain. This experience proved useful. Just as he had in South Carolina, Cornwallis ordered his men not to harm the property of the inhabitants:

...if the soldiers of any regiment have had opportunity of committing these excesses from the negligence of their officers, [Cornwallis] will make them answerable for their conduct,... if any soldiers are caught either in the act...or with the articles of plunder in their possession, they shall be instantly tried and immediate execution shall follow their conviction.²⁰⁶

Cornwallis's troops were ambassadors from the British Empire to the Irish people; for Cornwallis, it was necessary that they make a good impression.

Cornwallis believed he could not afford to make any mistakes. Any missteps by Britain's troops could encourage further rebellion.²⁰⁷ Cornwallis acted cautiously; he mirrored Humbert's movements until he could force a decisive battle. In September, Lord Cornwallis did just that and forced a French surrender at Ballinamuck, County Longford. Cornwallis earned the respect of many who had not served with him previously. General Sir John Moore wrote in his diary praising Cornwallis's dedication to service, explaining that after Cornwallis injured his foot, he had fashioned a cloth shoe to enable him to lead the troops into battle.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ General Orders, August 31, 1798, CC 2:395.

²⁰⁷ Cornwallis to Ross, July 1798, CC 2:36.

²⁰⁸ Maurice, *Diary of Sir John Moore*, 315.

The rebellion took a terrible toll on life and property. The most accurate estimates calculate the total dead to be about 30,000.²⁰⁹ The amount of property destroyed, which historians have calculated from the claims on government from “suffering loyalists” totals over £1 million.²¹⁰ The social impact may have proven even more costly. Dublin was filled with widows and orphans, which made the capital city appear much like a modern refugee camp. Moreover, more than a dozen towns were destroyed, leaving the pauperized survivors to begin anew.²¹¹ This was fertile ground for resentment and reprisal. Although Lord Cornwallis generally succeeded in his objective of ridding Ireland of a mass of disaffection, he could not extinguish a revolutionary recalcitrance simmering among those who had rebelled.²¹²

Cornwallis undertook measures to limit the suffering of rebels and loyalists alike. The effect of the 1798 rebellion on agricultural production has not been investigated. However, that effect may have been considerable. By 1799, Ireland was suffering from a food shortage that inflated food prices. Cornwallis acted quickly, without the assent of the British cabinet, to establish a commissariat, prohibit distilling, and import grain from America to ease the scarcity. The Duke of Portland, Home Secretary, stood in his way and suggested that the scarcity was exaggerated.²¹³ Portland had not agreed with

²⁰⁹ Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty*, 342.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 343.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Michael Durey, “Marquess Cornwallis and the fate of Irish rebel prisoners in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion,” *Revolution, Counter-Revolution, Union*, Jim Smyth ed., 129-130.

²¹³ Frank and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The Imperial Years* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 231.

Cornwallis's appointment, which led Cornwallis to comment that the Duke "never omitted any opportunity of putting me in the wrong, and reprobating my conduct."²¹⁴

Unlike in India and America, Cornwallis did not act as an agent of agricultural improvement. By the 1770s improvers had already been at work in Ireland. Ireland had its own agriculturalists. Men such as J.W. Baker, the president of the Dublin Society of Husbandry, taught that only through projects "of domesticity and oeconomical nature" could the waste of war be repaired.²¹⁵ Moreover, enclosure of common lands and the application of capital to farming had made "ragged beggars" into productive farmers. This was especially true of the production of naval stores: i.e. butter, cheese, beef, and liquor.²¹⁶ Even so, Lord Cornwallis continued to trust in the stabilizing force represented by benevolent landowners improving their estates. He and General John Moore discussed their solution: "the country would remain quiet if the gentlemen would return to their estates and treat the people with justice."²¹⁷

Once the British forces had neutralized the rebellion and French invasion, Cornwallis's primary goal was to return Ireland to a state of order and normality. To do this he wanted to bring rebel leaders to a prompt justice and return duped rebels to the farms.²¹⁸ As Lord Lieutenant and Commander-in-Chief, Cornwallis could micromanage

²¹⁴ Cornwallis to Ross, June 18 1800, CC 3:268.

²¹⁵ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: Britain and the World, 1783-1832* (New York: Longman, 1989), 121.

²¹⁶ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 122.

²¹⁷ Maurice, *Diary of Sir John Moore*, 311.

²¹⁸ Durey, "Marquess Cornwallis," 130.

the execution of justice in Ireland. He reviewed every judgment handed down by either courts martial or civil courts; thus, only those rebels who committed heinous crimes or held positions of leadership in the rebellion received the full wrath of the law.²¹⁹ The Lord Lieutenant left ajar the door to pardon and rarely endorsed execution. His preferred method of punishment was banishment. Banishment allowed the government to rid itself of the rebellious elements while it deprived the lingering rebels of their martyrs.²²⁰ Between June 1798 and December 1801, more than 2000 rebels stood trial: 900 received a transportation sentence, foreign military service, or imprisonment.²²¹ Only 131 rebels were executed, including the upper-echelon members of the United Irishmen, such as Wolfe Tone, who led the failed French invasions of December 1796 and October 1798. Castlereagh believed Cornwallis had measured “firmness with mercy.”²²²

Cornwallis believed that if any perpetual peace settlement was to be, Westminster had to address the sectarianism so rampant in Ireland. As Cornwallis worked to secure peace after the 1798 Rebellion, he was frustrated by the vindictiveness of Dublin Castle officials. As one official reported to William Wickham, “Lord Cornwallis has begun his administration in a manner that is not agreeable to a certain set of people here; he is not violent enough for them; he would conciliate if possible, they would only coerce.”²²³ Cornwallis described these officials to Ross: “The violence of our friends and their folly

²¹⁹ Durey, “Marquess Cornwallis,” 130.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

²²² Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 230

²²³ Crawford to Wickham, July 25, 1798, as quoted in Durey “Marquess Cornwallis,” 131.

in endeavoring to make this a religious war, most powerfully counter all plans of conciliation."²²⁴

The Anglo-Irish political nation had conflated Irish Catholics with Jacobinism. Now as then it is obvious that most rebels were far from being Jacobins. This point is evidenced through the reports from British commanders, who, after their victories, conversed with the rebels. General Ralph Dundas, who, as we have seen, used a conciliatory approach to secure the surrender of thousands of rebels in the Midlands, reported that most grievances concerned the tithes that the Church of Ireland required.

Even so, Lord Cornwallis exerted himself to "suppress the folly which has been too prevalent in this quarter, [which is the]...substitution [of] the word Catholicism instead of Jacobinism as the foundation of the present rebellion."²²⁵ These sentiments disgusted Cornwallis. It seemed as though he could not escape them as he insisted to Ross,

The conversations of the principal persons of the country all tend to encourage this system of blood, and the conversation, even at my table, where you can suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on shooting, hanging, burning, etc. and if a priest has been put to death, the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company. So much for Ireland and my wretched situation!²²⁶

Cornwallis was struggling against anti-Catholic xenophobia.

In many ways, what Lord Cornwallis was fighting was symptomatic of colonial nationalism. Protestants in Ireland had formulated a defense of their rights as

²²⁴ Cornwallis to Ross, July 1, 1798, CC 2:355.

²²⁵ Cornwallis to Portland, June 28, 1798, CC 2:355.

²²⁶ Cornwallis to Ross, August 2, 1798, CC 2:369.

Englishmen born in Ireland, which they pitted against the condescension of the Imperial center and the perceived tyranny inherent in Catholicism.²²⁷ The events of the seventeenth century—the 1641 Rebellion and the War of the Two Kings (1690-1691) involved Catholic atrocities against Protestant communities—solidified this nationalism.

Nevertheless, Cornwallis had very little time to contemplate patriotic improvement projects through which he could improve Ireland's situation. Once Ireland was militarily secured, Cornwallis turned his attention to manipulating a legislative union between Ireland and Britain. William Pitt instructed Cornwallis to "mark with dismissal" anyone who opposed the Union.²²⁸ This order thrust Cornwallis and his secretary, Viscount Castlereagh, into the business that nauseated Cornwallis: coercing the Dublin Parliament into the Union. He expressed his grief again to his confidant, Major-General Ross, "The political jobbing of this country gets the better of me: it has ever been the wish of my life to avoid all this dirty business and I am now involved in it beyond all bearing." Cornwallis and Castlereagh dismissed prominent anti-unionists and offered undecided members public offices in order to obtain a strong pro-union majority in the Dublin Parliament. Common bribery did the rest. Together Cornwallis and Castlereagh ushered in what many thought impossible, the somewhat democratically determined United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Perhaps the most glowing report was provided by the most staunchly ascendant member of the Dublin clique, Lord Chancellor Clare, who praised Lord Cornwallis to the Earl of Camden:

²²⁷ Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690-1830* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992), 258.

²²⁸ Pitt to Cornwallis, January 30, 1799, CC 3:57.

Certainly Cornwallis has had much of the merit which attaches to our success in the measure [Act of Union]. So far as he found it absolutely necessary he did stoop against his nature to the political traffick imposed upon him, and without committing himself in any manner to our Irish chiefs, he continued to gain their confidence...I am now quite satisfied that he has on the whole been the man of all the others best selected for the crisis.²²⁹

Lord Cornwallis, supported by Viscount Castlereagh, William Pitt, and others, argued that the British government should offer concessions to Catholics in Ireland in order to pacify and integrate them fully into the Empire. Cornwallis explained, "With regard to future plans, I can only say that some mode must be adopted to soften the hatred of the Catholics to our government."²³⁰ The Lord Lieutenant offered three suggestions to the Duke of Portland that might have addressed the major Catholic grievances that his officers had reported. First, government must offer Catholics some advantage within the Union; second, some provision must be made for Catholic clergy; or there must be a modification of the tithe system.²³¹ Pitt's ministry returned an ingenious plan for the Act of Union. The Test Act, which required government officials to take an oath denouncing Catholic sacramentalism and affirming the present royal succession, had disabled Catholics from taking a government seat or appointment. The Ministry proposed, "All members of the United House to take the oath now taken by British members; but such oaths to be subject to such alterations as may be enacted by the United Parliament."²³²

²²⁹ Clare to Camden, April 2 1800, PRO 30/53/3/13, as quoted in Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 248.

²³⁰ Cornwallis to Portland, September 16, 1798, CC 2:404.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Portland to Cornwallis, November 16, 1798, CC 2:435.

Despite its reserved nature, this proviso of the Act of Union opened the door for Catholic membership in Parliament.

While most officials supported an act of Union, whether the act would exclude Catholics from a United Parliament was contentious, even among patriotic improvers. Pitt had broached the issue in conjunction with the Catholic relief acts in 1792 and 1793. Others in the cabinet, such as Henry Dundas, Lord Grenville, and Lord Camden also supported Catholic Emancipation. However, there stood one major obstacle to the inclusion of Catholics: George III. The king had often expressed his sentiments concerning Catholic emancipation to Pitt. On this occasion he was concise: "No further indulgences must be granted to the Roman Catholics, as no country can be governed where there is more than one established religion."²³³ Henry Dundas was certain that some opponent of Catholic emancipation had poisoned the king's mind against the proposal. While historians have yet to find any truth in Dundas's suspicion, there were powerful opponents of emancipation at work in Westminster in the days leading to the vote. Both the Speaker of the House, John Foster, and Lord Clare, the lord chancellor of Ireland, were busy spreading traditional anti-Catholic arguments.²³⁴

The Act of Union passed without the concessions to Catholics. William Pitt, Lord Cornwallis, and Viscount Castlereagh resigned in protest. Other members of Pitt's cabinet had opposed emancipation. Lords Portland, Westmorland, Liverpool, and

²³³ George III to Pitt, June 13 1798, as quoted by Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon*, 243, as quoted in Ehrman, *The Consuming Struggle*, 176.

²³⁴ Wickwire, *The Imperial Years*, 250.

Chatham opposed the proposal and were incorporated into Henry Addington's cabinet when he succeeded Pitt.

Many in the Westminster government hated the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. Thus Cornwallis's struggle to coerce them into a legislative union, where their influence in Ireland could be checked, met with government's full support. However, most of the British political nation, patriotic improvers included, would not tolerate any further concessions granted to Catholics. An alteration of the Test Act would have brought Catholics into the constitution of the Glorious Revolution, the British constitution, which George III praised for insuring the stability of the empire.²³⁵

Paradoxically, George III and other patriotic improvers stood in the way of such a revolutionary development. Eighteenth century Ireland was, as some historians have argued, an *ancien regime* due to the ascendancy Protestants enjoyed and the discrimination Catholics suffered.²³⁶ Even so, in 1800, Ireland was poised to enter into the empire constitutionally; yet it was not to be. In hindsight, patriotic improvers had the opportunity to ensure the most significant stability the empire would have known. By bringing Ireland into full inclusion, patriotic improvers could have released the imperial energy that was only manifest in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Irish imperial agents left their mark on the empire in Asia, Africa, and Australia.²³⁷

²³⁵ See note 72.

²³⁶ S.J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2-3.

²³⁷ Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690-1830*.

Therefore the question remains, when the greatest political minds in the empire, William Pitt and Viscount Castlereagh, and the most trusted imperial administrator, Lord Cornwallis, and others stood together behind a patriotic improvement measure with the most possible benefit to the empire, why do patriotic improvers resist? Considering that patriotic improvers in the British government had praised Cornwallis's exportation of a British hierarchical system to India, why did the exportation of the British constitution to Catholic Ireland meet with many improvers' resistance? Why were the attitudes of some patriotic improvers so against Catholic Ireland? Since many of them believed that Catholic Emancipation was incompatible with the present context, were patriotic improvers such as George III simply being pragmatic? It is obvious that Lord Cornwallis did not believe that. He lamented to Ross: "I do not think it would have been much more difficult to have included the Catholics."²³⁸ Whatever the answers to these questions, it is apparent that, in regards to Ireland, patriotic improvers reined in their improving *ethos*.

²³⁸ Cornwallis to Ross, November 23, 1798, CC 3:100.

CONCLUSION

Many historians have aptly described the period from 1775 to 1800 as an age of crisis in Britain. As we have seen, the failures in America and India convinced many Britons that the Empire was collapsing around them. When these trepidations spurred efforts to bolster the Empire, many in Britain's political nation sought to correct the corruption and mismanagement that had damaged the British government and colonial administrations. Since the 1760s, an evolution in imperial *ethos* had begun taking root in Britain. Patriotic improvement, which had been so successful in improving agriculture, limiting corruption, and securing morality at home, would be exported abroad by patriotic improvers in the British government.

It is apparent that this *ethos* informed the king and his ministers in the British cabinet toward the appointments of Lord Cornwallis. Cornwallis's paradoxical rise to prominence in the Empire as a trouble-shooter seems almost inevitable when considered in conjunction with patriotic improvers' goals to export that *ethos* to the empire. Lord Cornwallis confirmed his membership among patriotic improvers through his service in America and India, which encouraged the British cabinet to turn to him again during the Irish conflagration in 1798.

Cornwallis's service in America and India demonstrated patriotic improvers' ideals. He consistently practiced moderation and stewardship in order to soften the

ravages of war, stabilize chaotic corners of the empire, and under-gird that stability with a self-sustaining prosperity and peace. In America, Cornwallis worked to prevent South Carolinian society from sliding into chaos through his September Proclamation. Then in India, he established a code of laws to govern the East India Company holdings and to convert the Indian property system to an English “improved” model. In these two endeavors, Cornwallis helped export patriotic improvement to the imperial periphery. The September Proclamation established a bureaucracy to play the role of improving landowners who had deserted their estates, while the Permanent Settlement of Bengal Land Revenue stamped India with an imitation of British aristocratic hierarchy, a hierarchy that, through improvement, could institute stability and prosperity.

While patriotic improvers supported the *ethos*’s exportation to America and India almost unanimously, they did not do so regarding Catholic Ireland. From both America and India, Cornwallis returned to Britain amid cheers and exultations. The Crown and cabinet both had approved of his conduct and had gone to great lengths to show that approval. Nevertheless, Lord Cornwallis’s measures in Ireland were undermined by more traditional anti-Catholic and anti-French prejudices at the very top: King George was still able to thwart his ministry on a matter of high policy. The resignations of Pitt, Cornwallis, and other cabinet officials reveal that adherence to the patriotic improvement *ethos* was present in the British government, even dominant. Yet that presence was in gradients coupled with more traditional British prejudice, such as anti-Catholicism. Thus some patriotic improvers’ transcending patriotism could be subverted by their anxieties.

The effects of the failure to consolidate and strengthen the Empire in 1801 may have had longer and more significant effects than the failure at Yorktown twenty years previous.

Despite the mixed practice of patriotic improvement in government, C.A. Bayly was accurate in describing it as the dominant *ethos* of the Second Empire. It is clear that the British Empire had entered into a new era. The Second Empire would prove greater than the first, though crises still arose. For another thirty years after the Irish Act of Union, British patriotic improvers met these crises at home and abroad with the stabilizing *ethos* that had revived the empire during its age of crisis.

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