

RELUCTANT
REVOLUTIONARIES

NEW YORK CITY AND THE ROAD TO
INDEPENDENCE, 1763-1776

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Empire and Liberty

On Sunday, April 23, 1775, New Yorkers learned that four days earlier British troops had killed Americans at Lexington, Massachusetts. The incident was no accident, for on January 27, Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state for America, had written Gen. Thomas Gage that events in New England “shew[ed] a Determination in the People to commit themselves at all Events in open Rebellion.” Dartmouth directed the general “to arrest” the leaders of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and to dismantle rebel fortifications in Connecticut and Rhode Island. “Any efforts of the People, unprepared to encounter with a regular force, cannot be very formidable”; it would “be better that the Conflict should be brought on, upon such ground, than in a riper state of Rebellion.” Because most whig leaders had already fled Boston, and because Gage had only three thousand troops on hand, he decided that his best course of action would be to seize the matériel the patriots had stockpiled at Concord. That led directly to the Battles of Lexington and Concord.¹

From the perspective of three thousand miles, the secretary’s strategy was logical. The ministry considered New England to be the insurgency’s center. If the army were to chastise the hotheads there, whigs elsewhere would be cowed, and the rebellion would crumble. But conflict theory suggests that other factors were at work, as well: “A good predictor of high levels of coercion and violence is earlier conflict behavior of a lesser magnitude.” Britain and its American colonies had been at odds since the early 1760s; and the spiraling of the violence in 1775 was impelling both sides to act in ways that would have horrified them in 1760. More-

over, once a punitive course of action is undertaken, its initiator tends to persist, not to retreat, even if the action miscarries. Hence, even though the Coercive Acts had failed, the cabinet authorized still harsher measures. Further, a group usually escalates a conflict when either the reward for winning or the penalty for losing exceeds “the costs of raising the magnitude” of its “conflict behavior.” In this case the cabinet believed war preferable to conceding American independence.²

Contrary to British expectations, but not to those of conflict theory, Lexington and Concord nudged New York closer to revolution. First, for military force to be effective in such circumstances it must be “threatened and applied precisely.” But the rout of the redcoats in their retreat from Concord only emboldened whigs. A New Yorker exuded, “I know the value of British disciplined troops, but a thousand American gunmen, on their own intricate advantageous ground, ’tis likely at any time will defeat a large number of any European troops.” Second, when an adversary’s behavior (here, killing Americans) exceeds an opponent’s “normative expectations,” coercion is usually “counterproductive.” The injured party becomes so outraged it feels free to escalate its own tactics. Finally, given the colonists’ abiding ideological fear of standing armies, the ministry’s resort to force confirmed their belief that Britain aimed to establish a tyranny and thus validated the whig argument that resistance was justified.³

The reaction was instantaneous. New Yorkers stood on street corners “inquisitive for news — Tales of all kinds invented believed, denied, discredited.” “Reconciliation,” wrote a resident, “is at a farther distance than we, of late, had rational ground to hope”; and “many persons of influence, who have been thought inimical to the cause, now come out boldly and declare their sentiments worthy of themselves.”⁴ Robert R. Livingston claimed “the Tories [here] turn Wigg so fast that they will soon be as much united as they are in Massachusetts Bay.” Another New Yorker added that New Englanders “are held in the highest esteem for their bravery, and people here are determined to . . . march to their assistance when called for. The die is thrown, and every man of us, whether we are hearty in the cause or not, must abide by the cast.”⁵

Again, it was the radicals who had blazed the path. Thomas Jones, a New York Supreme Court justice, caustically described how on Sunday, April 23, the streets became a public theater. Liberty Boys “paraded the town with drums beating and colours flying, (attended by a mob of negroes, boys, sailors, and pick-pockets) inviting all mankind to take up arms in defense of the ‘injured rights and liberties of America.’ The posts were stopped, the mails opened, and the letters read.” A mob “seized

upon a sloop loaded with provisions for [the army in] Boston . . . and cast the cargo into the dock." The Committee of Sixty gathered hastily before nightfall, scheduled a mass meeting for Monday, and sent envoys to Connecticut for help should New York be attacked. On Sunday night a crowd broke into an armory, distributed the weapons, and posted a guard to secure what remained. Demonstrators then threatened to attack the 106 redcoats barracked near the Fields. The soldiers' position was defenseless, and a mob assault would have ended in a slaughter. Colden was distraught. His plans to assemble a force to hold New York for the crown had failed, and now the mob held the army hostage. But as had typically happened in the years after 1765, cooler heads prevailed, and the troops were not harmed that night.⁶

Much as they had done after the 1765 riots, royal officials and Tories described the following week as one of anarchy.⁷ Reportedly, little business was transacted by day, and the taverns were jammed at night. Yet the radicals had achieved their objectives: they had negated the army's power in town, intercepted supplies intended for Gage, avoided indiscriminate violence, and had three to four hundred armed men patrolling the streets to keep order. Jasper Drake's Water Street tavern was the recruitment center; and Isaac Sears's home on Queen Street was military headquarters. Tories bewailed the chaos. But from a patriot standpoint that was good, for in their "Terror" the loyalists gave up "every thought of Resistance." "The Whig party gained a Compleat triumph."⁸

The town remained tense on Monday, for rumors of an impending assault upon the redcoats had resurfaced. When the governor's Council met that afternoon, Col. Leonard Lispenard, a radical Dutch Reformed innkeeper, reported that civil officials should expect "no aid from the Militia, for they were all Liberty Boys who would keep the Peace of the City in other Respects." Mayor Hicks added "that the Magistratic Authority was gone." Thomas Jones, who had been invited to the meeting, blustered "that the militia should be called out, the riot act read, and if the mob did not thereupon disperse, to apprehend and imprison the ring-leaders." William Smith demurred, claiming the crisis would subside once grievances were redressed. In the end, all the Council could agree on was that it had "no power" and that "the best mode of proceeding . . . was to use Diswasion from Violence."⁹

The Committee of Sixty held its scheduled meeting in the Fields that afternoon, but by then the news from Massachusetts had made the people more militant than their leaders. After voting to form a new whig militia, the meeting pressed the committee to organize the city's defenses. Isaac Low, the committee chair, objected: "He wanted no new Powers and

would not act upon any." Philip Livingston said he "did not think himself Qualified for a member of a committee of warr, which he understood was the Object of the New Powers." Their caution was understandable; they had been elected to enforce the Continental Association, not to wage war. The meeting ended without a vote on the matter, but on Wednesday, April 26, the committee called for the election that Friday of twenty delegates to a Provincial Congress to meet on May 22 and also of a Committee of One Hundred to direct affairs in town forthwith. The next day, Thursday, the Committee of Sixty published slates of candidates for these two proposed bodies.¹⁰

Sears was disgruntled: both sets of nominees included too many British sympathizers; merchants were still shipping matériel to the enemy in Boston; and a New Yorker had allegedly asked Gage for troops. Accordingly, the Sons of Liberty met on April 27 and formed a battalion of eight hundred men both to defend the city and to enhance radical power. The meeting next appointed a five-member ad hoc committee to visit the collector of the customs. About three hundred and sixty persons then escorted the five to Andrew Elliot's home, where they requested the keys to the Customs House and a pledge that he would no longer enter or clear any vessels according to the rules set down by Parliament. Elliot promptly sent a message to his deputy, who put the key in the Customs House door and fled.¹¹ Meanwhile, the meeting nominated its own candidates for the Provincial Congress and the Committee of One Hundred. Seventy-nine of the persons selected for the committee had been on the Committee of Sixty's list. The twenty-one whom the meeting replaced were mostly De Lanceyites, many of whom would become loyalists. Of those the meeting named for Congress, only six had been on the Committee of Sixty's slate of candidates; but the pattern was the same: Liberty Boy-Livingston coalition members were substituted for suspected Tories. That done, the crowd marched to the Customs House, locked the door, and put a guard at the entrance. Smith reported that "the Merchants are amazed and yet so humbled as only to sigh or complain in whispers. They now dread Sears's Train of armed men."¹²

On Friday, April 28, the voting both for the Committee of One Hundred and for delegates to the Provincial Congress began as expected. But Sears "went with the Pride of a Dictator and forbid the Polls objecting to the List proposed by the Committee." In a broadside issued the same day the Committee of Sixty replied that unity could be preserved only if "every Member of Society will consent to be governed by the Sense of the Majority, and join in having that Sense fairly and candidly ascertained." To answer Sears's complaint that too many nominees were British sympa-

thizers, the committee explained that the new committee "should consist of a large Number, in order that by interesting many of Weight and Consequence in all public Measures, they might meet with the more Advocates, receive less Opposition, and be attended with more certain Success." Maintaining a consensus was paramount: "Let us avoid Divisions; and instead of cherishing a Spirit of Animosity against one another, let us join in forwarding Reconciliation of all Parties, and thereby strengthen the general Cause." The Committee of Sixty reaffirmed its support for its slates of candidates and rescheduled the election for Monday, May 1.¹⁵

Meanwhile, alarmed by reports that Gage had ordered the army to seize the ordnance at Salem, Massachusetts, Sears and his men began carting the cannons from the Battery to Kings Bridge, fourteen miles up the Hudson. For the second time that day he was acting without authority, and on Friday night the committee adopted a General Association to reaffirm its authority and to restrain local militants. "Persuaded that the Salvation of the Rights and Liberties of America" required "the firm union of its inhabitants, in a vigorous prosecution of the Measures necessary for its Safety," the compact committed subscribers to obey "whatever measures may be recommended by the Continental Congress; or resolved upon by our Provincial Convention" and to "Follow the Advice of" the Committee of Sixty for "the Preservation of Peace and Good Order."¹⁴

But order was not promptly restored. The next afternoon the *Pennsylvania Journal* arrived with a letter from London claiming that Cadwallader Colden, John Watts, Myles Cooper, Henry White, and Oliver De Lancey—Anglicans all—had asked Britain for troops to assure New York's "defection and Submission." Even though the accused denied the story, several people became so enraged they "actually charged their pieces in order to shoot" the traitors.¹⁵

Harmony finally triumphed, however. On May 1 the Committee of Sixty issued a broadside with a revised slate of candidates. Of the twenty-one Committee of One Hundred nominees whom Sears opposed, four Anglican De Lanceyites were removed. One of the committee's replacements, John Imlay, had been nominated by the Liberty Boys on April 27. Two others, Samuel Broome and Eleazer Miller, were Presbyterian merchants. The last, Benjamin Helme, was a German Reformed attorney. Further, the Dutch Reformed James Beekman, who had helped the Sons of Liberty to buy Hampden Hall in 1770, replaced the Anglican John Thurman on the list of congressional nominees; and Jacobus Van Zandt, a Dutch Reformed Livingstonite merchant and confidant of Sears, was added as a twenty-first candidate for Congress. The elections thus went smoothly, and the revised slates of candidates were elected without opposition.¹⁶

Despite the tumultuous events of the preceding week, unity had been maintained, plans for a Provincial Congress had been set in motion, and the Committee of One Hundred had been accorded the legitimacy it needed to become the de facto authority in the city. The process had not always been orderly, but what revolution is? New York City's diverse population was entering uncharted territory and trying to do so by consensus, not by repudiating the colony's traditional political leadership. In fact, that was typical of what people were attempting elsewhere in the multiethnic Middle Colonies. In Pennsylvania, according to Joseph E. Illick, "the whole society" was "constantly aware of the importance of consensus" in resisting British imperialism. Though Sears had tested the limits of that consensus more than once, in the end he heeded the call for harmony and remained in the fold.¹⁷

II

In New York, the months after Lexington were marked by hesitancy, even confusion. How could it have been otherwise when so heterogeneous a group faced so daunting a challenge? Yet a broad-based understanding persisted, one to which the Provincial Congress and the Committee of One Hundred hewed throughout 1775. Robert R. Livingston said it best: "Every good man wishes that America may remain free: In this I join heartily; at the same time, I do not desire, we should be wholly independent of the mother country." In May the Committee of One Hundred declared that New Yorkers would resist till death the plan "to erect in this land of liberty a despotism scarcely to be paralleled in the pages of antiquity, or the volumes of modern times." But "when our unexampled grievances are redressed, our Prince will find his American subjects" exhibiting "the most unshaken fidelity to their Sovereign, and inviolable attachment to the welfare of his realm." Put succinctly, most New Yorkers wanted both empire and liberty.¹⁸

Public officials understood that fact. City magistrates avowed in an address to Gov. William Tryon on his return from Britain that New York "sigh[ed] with the utmost ardour for the re-establishment of the common tranquillity, upon that ancient system of Government and intercourse which has been such a fruitful source of general prosperity and opulence." Conversations with townspeople persuaded Tryon that these sentiments were genuine. On July 4 he warned the cabinet, "America will never receive Parliamentary taxation. I do not meet with any of the inhabitants who show the smallest inclination to draw the sword in support of

that principle." The next month he added, "The friends of government in general consider themselves between Scylla and Carybdis, that is the dread of Parliamentary taxation and the tyranny of their present masters. Could the first principle be moved out of the way, His Majesty would probably see America put on a less determined complexion." William Smith agreed: "The Dread of being taxed by the Commons of Great Britain, is the Soul of the League, that bands the Provinces together. Give them a constitutional Security agt Arbitrary Levies; that is to say, covenant that they shall be Englishmen, and the Advocates for Independency, will be found such an inconsiderable Handful, even in the most suspected Colonies."¹⁹

There were powerful reasons, too, why New York was committed to empire and liberty. For one, the city was not, as Edward Countryman has argued, on the verge of internal revolution or political collapse in the 1770s. Sharp cleavages persisted, and these both antedated and outlasted the Revolution. They help to explain how the city reacted to the procession of imperial crises, but they were not sufficient to bring about a revolution in 1776. The impetus for change had come from Britain, not New York. Like people throughout the Middle Atlantic Colonies, most city residents wanted the ministry to rescind its policies; they did not want to quit the empire or to restructure New York society.²⁰ It was only when New Yorkers became convinced that Britain would not mend its ways that they reluctantly declared their independence. Even as late as June 1776 some whigs still felt that their side should eschew provocations that might push affairs to the breaking point.

New Yorkers were also reluctant because the city was composed of diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups that found it difficult, throughout the eighteenth century, to reconcile their differences. Many feared revolution might end in chaos. Townspeople thus sought to use their formidable political skills to build a consensus over how best to resist British imperialism. Because the costs of opposing imperial initiatives varied from group to group, it took time to hammer out an understanding that most could support. Further, whenever a conflict group is in essence a coalition, the tendency is for it to embrace goals and tactics acceptable to the least militant and most conservative of its partners, for if the coalition is not to crumble, the group must adopt objectives all can approve. Thus, the restraints imposed by the city's heterogeneity abetted the emergence of leaders who were conciliatory in outlook.²¹ Indicative of this reality is that although a disgusted Sears would leave the province in late 1775 and spend the war in New Haven and Boston, New Yorkers never repudiated their more cautious leaders in the Provincial Congress. More-

over, the fact that residents worked hard and often to forge a consensus in each of the imperial crises shows clearly that the key issue was not who should rule in New York but how best to defeat those British initiatives that residents considered both unconstitutional and ruinous to their well-being. Though real economic, ethnic, religious, and political divisions existed, New Yorkers considered unity essential and were prepared to pay a price for it.

It is in the context of pluralism, not political decay or instability, that New York politics must be evaluated. The Livingston and De Lancey parties were not simply bands of opportunistic aristocrats exploiting imperial crises for selfish advantage. They were coalitions of interest groups, and their leaders had to heed the myriad demands of their constituents. Nor did these leaders lack beliefs of their own.²² James De Lancey had crafted a program after the 1765 riots that aimed to safeguard the empire, the Anglican Church, and elite rule, while revitalizing the city's economy. The plan failed, and he became a loyalist refugee. Yet his doing so was neither an accident nor the result of cynicism. It was a choice based on positions he had advocated throughout the period. If few joined him in his self-imposed exile, most remained receptive to the message he had preached for a decade: that the city's economic well-being was linked to its membership in the empire. Given the city's materialistic impulse, the De Lancey legacy contributed mightily to the citizenry's reluctance to declare independence. Anglican party members, of course, also had religious reasons for wanting to save the empire.²³

The Livingstons, for their part, had stated their opposition to unconstitutional taxation as early as the 1750s, had reaffirmed it in the Stamp Act crisis, and had adhered to it in subsequent imperial crises. But the Real Whigs among them were torn between a fear of tyranny from above and a dread of anarchy from below. Party patricians worried that mob violence or independence would undermine elite rule. Party lawyers wanted Parliament to be resisted only by lawful methods. Nonetheless, the Livingstons had been allied with the radicals since 1769. Following the Tea Act, Isaac Sears, John Lamb, and Alexander McDougall typically held center stage, yet Livingstonites were present, too: supporting the cause in the Assembly and on extralegal committees, advising on strategy and tactics, and restraining the radicals when that seemed advisable. Though committed to upholding American rights, Livingstonites remained moderates who favored empire over independence, elitism over egalitarianism, and conciliation over confrontation. The need to find a common front that both radicals and moderates could accept propelled patriots toward the dual pillars of empire and liberty, delaying their embrace of independence.²⁴

By cleaving to a platform of empire and liberty, Livingstonites could be content that they were safe from both autocracy and anarchy; Liberty Boys, that freedom would not be sacrificed for the sake of empire; and De Lanceyites, that the cry for liberty need not be a call for independence. Other factors were involved, too. De Lanceyites feared that if they quit the movement, the Liberty Boys would radicalize it. Colden, in fact, assured the cabinet that the best people served on whig committees only to restrain the hotheads. In Pennsylvania, when the old elite withdrew "from resistance activities," "radical leadership devolved" first to moderates and finally to "the laboring poor." That was exactly what De Lanceyites hoped to avoid in New York. Nevertheless, the city's radicals, who constituted the genuinely revolutionary force in the province, had much to gain by tempering their demands. In 1775 John Holt wrote that the lukewarm were elected to the committee and to Congress because they were often "men of weight and Fortune, who might contribute to the expense and give Credit to the proceedings." Another reason "was that they by Degrees might be drawn into a concurrence, and cooperation in the same publick Measures, with the rest of the colonies, and . . . for their own security [be] obliged to unite with, and Support them." Indeed, by placing Anglican conservatives like James Duane and John Jay in prominent roles, the whig party (unlike the Livingstons in the 1760s) made clear its ecumenical desire to unite all New Yorkers, Anglicans and dissenters alike, in the common defense. In explaining why the city voted for the least radical ticket in the April 1776 elections for the Third Provincial Congress, "A Sober Citizen" would say that with Britain ready to invade it was better to preserve unity, to keep conservatives tied to the cause, and not to risk their desertion to the enemy.²⁵

Because of conflict over long-term objectives, quite a few opposed what the Committee of One Hundred and the Provincial Congress were doing in 1775 to advance the dual goals of empire and liberty. On one side were people like Isaac Low who prized the empire more than liberty; they disparaged the threat to freedom and the need for warlike preparations. Many such people had already or would become tories. On the other side were those like Sears who revered liberty more and spurred moderate whigs to act more boldly on behalf of American rights. Extremists in this group were nudging the city toward independence. Dissension thus led the committee and Congress to act cautiously, but critics were unfair to condemn them for timidity. Given the consensus' commitment to the empire, both bodies should be seen as resolute, not timid, in the steps they took to uphold liberty. Other colonies moved more swiftly or forcefully in 1775, but New York whigs were acting in an environment shaped

by the city's history, ethnic and religious pluralism, economic divisions, political factionalism, and strategic significance. Better to proceed warily without stumbling than audaciously without success.

But neither the Committee of One Hundred nor the Provincial Congress confused prudence with submission, or patience with passivity. On the day the nominees for the two bodies were elected, the Committee of One Hundred began immediately to function as an extralegal government. Order was restored, and a night watch established. Once the port was reopened, the Continental Association was strictly enforced, and trade with Boston outlawed. Men were urged to begin military training; troops were raised; munitions were procured; and the export of critical matériel was prohibited. Residents were told to sign the Committee of Sixty's General Association of April 29 or be reported to the committee. On May 8 the Committee of One Hundred disarmed all tories within its jurisdiction; it wrote Colden that it had acted thus so as to strengthen "the hand of the civil Magistrate in every lawfull measure calculated to promote the Peace and just Rule of this Metropolis; and consistent with that jealous attention which above all things we are bound to pay to the violated Rights of America."²⁶

Once the Provincial Congress convened on May 22, it assumed overall direction of the colony's affairs. It required its members to sign a General Association pledging allegiance to Congress and decreed that every New Yorker should do likewise. Though people were not persecuted for refusing, they were punished if they joined the British army, violated the Continental Association, or acted in some way "hostile to American liberty." Congress continued the work of defense that the committee had begun: provisions were collected; fortifications erected; a militia organized; and units raised for service in the Continental Army. Since money was scarce, individuals made contributions, and the provincial Treasurer and the Loan Office at Albany advanced funds. When that was not enough, Congress debated whether to tax residents. Though it decided against that, its vigor led Colden to lament, "You will be surprised . . . how entirely the legal authority of Governmt is now superceded in this Place, where only a few Months agoe the Prospect of public affairs gave so much satisfaction to the Friends of Government."²⁷

Congress kept the door of conciliation ajar, however. Benjamin Kissam, a New York City Anglican attorney and future tory, declared in Congress on May 30 that a settlement based "on constitutional principles" was "essential to the well-being of both Countries" and would "prevent the horrors of a civil war." He asked that an ad hoc committee set down "the terms on which such reconciliation may be tendered to Great Britain,

consistent with the just liberties and freedom of the subject in America." His motion passed on June 2. Although they opposed the idea, both John Morin Scott and Alexander McDougall sat on the committee. On the basis of the report the committee submitted on June 24 (a week after Bunker Hill), Congress adopted a "Plan of Accommodation" on June 27. First, Parliament should annul the acts that the Continental Congress had demanded be repealed in October 1774. Second, Britain could regulate commerce, but revenues raised through tariffs should go directly into the provincial treasuries. Third, elections for the colonial assemblies should be held at least triennially. Fourth, if the crown approved, "a Continental Congress" might "meet with a President appointed by the Crown, for the purpose of raising and apportioning their general aids, upon application made by the Crown, according to the advice of the British Parliament." Fifth, Parliament should not interfere "in the religious and ecclesiastical concerns of the Colonies." Sixth, the colonies should be guaranteed "a free and exclusive power of legislation within themselves, respectively, in all cases of internal polity whatsoever, subject only to the negative of their Sovereign." For the sake of colonial unity, however, "no part" of the Plan of Accommodation should "be deemed binding or obligatory upon the Representatives of this Colony in Continental Congress." Though the plan did not pass unanimously, most congressmen believed strongly that compromise was a worthwhile stratagem. In contrast to Lord North, the British prime minister, who saw the dispute as a struggle that only one side could win, Congress wanted to "fractionate" the conflict into smaller issues, so that compromise might be possible. If that were to succeed, empire and liberty would still be compatible. The few, including Sears, who voted against every motion favoring reconciliation constituted a distinct minority. Even McDougall refused to join them.²⁸

On June 25, during Congress's debate on the "Plan of Accommodation," it happened that both Governor Tryon and General Washington arrived in town. Congress tried to afford each the welcome his office demanded (see the Introduction). Whigs everywhere, however, were angered by the deference shown Tryon and feared the province might desert their cause. But if Congress's attachment to both empire and liberty might to some have looked like waffling, patriots need not have worried. Congress had directed that Tryon be greeted by uniformed soldiers from among those it had raised for the colony's defense. Though these troops were evidently elsewhere when Tryon landed, Congress's decision to use them suggests that the welcome extended the governor was a calculated show of autonomy, not a caitiff act of submission. On July 4, in fact, Congress directed the city magistrates not to wait upon Tryon with the formal

address customarily presented to a governor upon his return to the province. Tryon futilely asked Mayor Hicks to ignore the order, and a sympathetic Gage later wrote Tryon that New York's behavior was a sharp blow to the empire and that whig leaders throughout America had probably concocted the plan together.²⁹

Notwithstanding New York's desire to remain in the empire, British military decisions created a dynamic that repeatedly forced whig leaders to reassess their policies. Several days after residents learned that the cabinet had ordered troops to the city, the Committee of One Hundred wrote the Second Continental Congress for guidance. That body promptly replied that any redcoats reaching port could join those in the barracks but should not be allowed to erect ramparts or to obstruct communications. Somewhat later, Congress directed that the city militia be held "in constant readiness" to thwart any attempt "to gain possession of the city and interrupt its intercourse with the country."³⁰

Because the British army did not arrive in force in New York until 1776, the city's resolve was not abruptly tested. But the redcoats already in town were headaches enough. Their commander, Maj. Isaac Hamilton, had written Colden on May 26 that his troops were deserting, and that those who remained should be put aboard ship. Colden agreed, but the *Asia* was too small to accommodate Hamilton's men and their families, and the soldiers remained in the barracks. Meanwhile, rumors spread about town that the redcoats were to be withdrawn. On June 3, fearing trouble, the Provincial Congress urged residents to let the soldiers depart peaceably. After still more soldiers deserted, royal officials decided to move the redcoats to the *Asia* and their dependents to Governor's Island. When the troops left the barracks on the morning of June 6, Marinus Willett, a master cabinetmaker and Liberty Boy, was at Drake's tavern, a radical hangout. Upset by Congress's "timid disposition," Willett and some others decided to seize the arms the redcoats were carting from town. The conspirators raced across the city seeking help. When Willett reached Broad Street, he came upon the carts and a small guard of soldiers. Though alone, he impetuously halted "the whole line of march" and insisted that the committee had not given the troops permission to take "any other arms than those they carried about them." A Provincial Congressman objected, but Willett held his ground. And once Scott, a member of both the committee and Congress, backed him, a crowd confiscated the carts. The Provincial Congress warned residents not to take matters into their own hands and later ordered that the arms be turned over to the mayor. But the weapons remained hidden on property owned by Abraham Van Dyck, a Dutch tavern keeper and "a good Whig," until

they were supplied to a regiment that McDougall raised for the Continental Army.³¹

If Willett had made the New York Congress appear timid, the *Asia* was a more intractable problem. On May 27 Abraham Lott, a navy contractor who had been pressured in 1773 not to accept appointment as a tea agent, had asked Congress whether he should fill a requisition from Capt. George Vandeput of the *Asia*. Since Congress had prohibited New York merchants from supplying British troops in Boston, could it let Lott provision the *Asia*, which was in New York to buttress royal authority? Because a negative reply might have triggered a violent response from Vandeput, Congress authorized Lott to furnish supplies to the *Asia* "for her own use, while in this port."³²

The *Asia* would remain a problem, especially after the Continental Congress stationed Connecticut soldiers, commanded by Capt. David Wooster, just outside the city. On July 13 two aldermen informed the Committee of Safety (an arm of the Provincial Congress that managed affairs when Congress was in recess) that Wooster's troops had seized a boat from the *Asia* and confiscated supplies from "His Majesty's Store" in town. When the committee investigated, Wooster explained that a Connecticut armed sloop had taken the boat, but he had ordered it released; the supplies were under guard in his camp and could be returned to the storehouse if the committee so directed. The crisis thus appeared resolved. But the two aldermen returned, right after Wooster left, with news that the boat had just been destroyed. An outraged Capt. Vandeput soon demanded "Satisfaction," or he would consider the incident "a direct Act of Hostility." City magistrates told Vandeput it was "the opinion of every one, that immediate Reparation should be made." They would not have said so unless they knew the Committee of Safety would go along. And quietly go along it did. But on July 18 the mayor informed the committee that he had tried to hire a carpenter to build the *Asia* a boat, but the artisan demanded "an order," to guarantee that "his fellow-citizens" would know "he is doing that work with the approbation of the Committee." The committee was thereby forced to record its approval in its minutes.³³ Construction of a new boat was begun, but a few days later someone sawed it into pieces. The committee investigated but could not discover who was responsible or find a carpenter willing to make another. Hence, on August 16, to the consternation of radicals, Congress ordered Henry Sheaf, a Presbyterian Livingstonite, to build the craft and Col. John Lasher (another Presbyterian) to guard it; anyone who obstructed Sheaf was "guilty of a dangerous attempt to destroy the authority of this Congress." The decision was understandable. In July, during a dispute over

supplies, a British warship had bombarded Newport, and the Rhode Island General Assembly had responded to the incident by allowing the city to provision the ship.³⁴

On August 22 the Provincial Congress authorized the clandestine removal of the cannon still on the Battery to a fort being built in the Highlands. Vandeput learned of the plan and ordered a barge to lie near the shore to keep him posted. About midnight, after the whigs, under the command of Sears and Lamb, began moving the artillery, an officer on the barge fired a musket to alert Vandeput. Assuming the shot was aimed at them, the Americans returned the fire with small arms. The *Asia* then answered with two of its cannons. After Vandeput learned that a sailor on the boat had been killed, the *Asia* then fired on the Battery again, killing one and wounding three. To protect those moving the cannons, Sears ordered a diversionary party to move a distance from the Battery and to begin making noise and firing small arms. The *Asia* replied with another broadside, but by sunrise Sears had removed twenty-one pieces of ordnance.³⁵

In the morning Vandeput wrote the mayor that if residents persisted in such behavior, "the mischief that may arise must lye at their Doors." But when the magistrates replied the next day, it was clear how severely Vandeput had damaged his own cause. After accusing him of firing the first shot, they remarked: "As to the Taking away the Cannon we are to inform you, that the same were taken away by Permission of the provincial Congress," which "the People have thought proper to constitute to act for them in this critical Situation." Here were public officials, some tories, conceding the committee's right to take government property and to manage local affairs. Vandeput replied that it was his "duty to defend every Part of the King's Stores, wherever they may be." Yet he could not force residents to return the cannons. He could cannonade the city, but Congress would surely cut off his supplies, forcing him to leave port. The magistrates' letter should have warned him too that an attack would turn tories into patriots and make regaining the city's allegiance exceedingly difficult. Vandeput was learning, as had Sears, that New York's commitment to empire and liberty restricted his options.³⁶

Meanwhile, families began fleeing town. Tryon learned of the gunfire exchange on August 24 and returned home from Long Island the next day. In the past he would have summoned his Council; this time he assembled his councillors, the city magistrates, and the members of the "Committees and Provincial Congress." To end the crisis he proposed a compromise: the purloined cannons would remain on the Commons; no more raids would be made on the "Kings Stores"; and the town would continue to provision the *Asia*; "but to prevent disorder the Boats from

the city might carry the provision on Board."³⁷ That afternoon Congress "ordered, That no more Cannon or Stores be removed from the Battery." On August 29 it authorized Abraham Lott to continue supplying the *Asia*, but he was to leave the provisions on Governor's Island for the navy to pick up. On September 1, to make it harder for Vandeput to collect intelligence, Congress forbade all communications with the *Asia* undertaken without its permission.³⁸ Vandeput's superior, Vice Adm. Samuel Graves, directed him to destroy the homes of all known whig leaders in town and all the ships in the harbor if he were refused supplies. And Mayor Hicks alerted the Committee of Safety on September 19 that Lord Dartmouth had ordered British naval commanders "that in case any more Troops should be raised, or fortifications erected, or any of His Majesty's stores taken, that the commanders of the ships of war should consider such Cities or places in a state of rebellion."³⁹

There the affair ended, however, for no one wanted to push matters to the breaking point. If Vandeput were to bombard the town, he would destroy loyalist property along with that belonging to whigs. And it would have been foolish to decimate a city the British army might someday want to occupy. Similar restraints were at work in the patriot camp. Though many observers, within and outside the province, bemoaned New York's timidity, members of the committee and Congress understandably feared the loss of lives and property and opposed doing anything that might cause the city's destruction. They also realized that razing the city might lead directly to civil war. Indeed, by September the *Asia* had come to symbolize residents' uneasy relationship with the empire. Provisioning the man-of-war served as a tangible link to a past they were not yet ready to abandon. And cutting off communications with the ship represented the new political world they were creating but would not yet embrace. Sears was unhappy, but between May and September Congress had mirrored the consensus of the city's residents and had thereby maintained the unity that was essential to the survival of the cause.⁴⁰

III

Still, the Provincial Congress could not forever preserve both empire and liberty. The crisis had a momentum of its own that would not be denied. In August Tryon had informed Dartmouth that "Independency is shooting from the root of the present contest; it is confidently said if Great Britain does not within six months adopt some new plan of accommodation the colonies will be severed from her as to any system of solid

and general union." William Smith wrote in October, "This Winter will decide the great Question, whether Great Britain and her Colonies, are to be happily reunited, or to prosecute their Animosities to an eternal Separation."⁴¹ Their predictions were correct. Between September 1775 and April 1776 forces within and without the city pushed New York toward revolution. If the process was not complete by April, it was in any case irreversible.

The key to events was not the alleged "instability" of "society and politics" in New York but the cabinet's decision in the autumn of 1775 to abandon Boston and to make the province of New York the main theater of military operations.⁴² The aim was the same one Colden had espoused in 1774: control of New York would geographically divide the colonies and strangle the rebellion. Lord George Germain, who was now the American secretary of state, believed Britain's setbacks in New England were "trifling" compared to those in New York: "As long as you maintained New Yorke the continent was divided." What had changed was the method to be used. Military control of New York City would give the navy a safe harbor from which to launch expeditions against New England, which supposedly was the rebellion's center, and the colonies to the south, where many tories were reportedly ready to fight for the crown. Aided by the navy, the army could advance up the Hudson, cut communications between north and south, and establish contact with British forces in Canada. The farmlands of Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey would ease the military's dependence on Europe and thereby reduce the war's cost. Finally, despite the setbacks of 1775, the cabinet expected to enlist the support of the many British sympathizers reputedly living in the province.⁴³

When word of Britain's plan reached town, it disturbed everyone, especially the tories, for it doomed reconciliation. Their anxiety, in turn, stirred them to action. Carl Becker has called what followed a "royalist reaction" that "was very nearly disastrous to the revolutionists," for the Provincial Congress "was barely able to hold together." Bernard Mason offered a different explanation: Becker had been correct in stating that five counties did not elect deputies to the Second Provincial Congress in November 1775; but he had been wrong in arguing that they failed to do so because the loyalists there had overpowered the whigs. That was true in Queens and Richmond, but in Cumberland, Charlotte, and Gloucester "communication difficulties, factionalism, and the Vermont controversy" with New Hampshire were the key reasons; and the three in any case eventually sent deputies. The extreme caution with which Congress managed affairs in this period resulted not from loyalism's numerical strength

or influence but from "the powerful emotion of self-preservation." Vandeput's threats and the fear of a British invasion were what made whig leaders hesitate.⁴⁴

Mason has effectively demonstrated that few New Yorkers were loyalists, but something serious was nonetheless afoot. Though it would be wrong to claim that New York lagged behind the other colonies because of the number of tories in the province, it is fair to say that its hesitancy resulted partly from the moderation of its leaders, some of whom would become loyalists. Moreover, too many partisans on both sides were talking about a loyalist threat for the threat to be ignored. In October, McDougall wrote Jay at Philadelphia "that the Tories are chearful, and too many of the whigs make long Faces. Men of rank and Consideration refuse to accept of commissions as Field Officers of the Militia; so that these commissions have gone a begging for six or seven weeks." McDougall wrote Jay again in November and December, urging the Continental Congress to send troops to crush the Long Island tories. The situation was remarkably similar in New Jersey. According to Larry R. Gerlach, once independence became a genuine possibility, that colony experienced "a conservative backlash in some areas." It was not that New Jerseyans or New Yorkers were converting in droves to loyalism, but that they had not yet reconciled themselves to separation from Britain.⁴⁵

Part of the stir flowed simply from the fact that nerves frayed as war neared. That was particularly true for the radicals, who wanted more done to ready the city for an invasion. Alarmed by the Provincial Congress's cautiousness, they began ascribing it to duplicity. The radical Hugh Hughes blamed Philip Livingston's "trimming" not on the fact that he was a moderate, committed to empire and liberty, but on a "connection" he allegedly had with Governor Tryon through "the medium of Hugh Wallace," a loyalist member of the provincial Council. Sears complained that most of New York's whig leaders were tories who would throw off their masks and declare their loyalism once the British arrived.⁴⁶

Alexander McDougall was more sanguine than either Sears or Hughes, yet he was nonetheless exasperated. On November 14 McDougall protested to Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler of the Continental Army that the Provincial Congress had "dissolved by the non-attendance of the members," who feared the navy might bombard the town and had fled "without appointing a Committee of Safety." McDougall worried about what loyalists might do if left unchecked. In a letter to Jay, urging that the tories in Queens County, Long Island, be disarmed, he explained that "altho a majority of the County are not against the Public measures, Yet a majority of those who are active are against them." If loyalists there were not pun-

ished, "Kings [County] will follow their example as Richmond [County] has done; and whenever a Considerable number of [British] Troops arrive, the Mal-Contents in Queens will join them."⁴⁷

The belief that tories were a liability was no illusion, for they were working desperately in the vicinity of New York City to cripple the whig cause. In Queens a tory party headed by Cadwallader Colden and his son David blocked the election of delegates to the Second Provincial Congress, procured arms from Vandeput, formed a loyalist militia in the town of Hempstead, and issued a broadside declaring that they would resist all "Acts of violence" directed against them. In Dutchess County, there were enough armed loyalists to make a whig fret that "all are Tories, only a few excepted." After Tryon fled the city in October for the safety of a naval vessel, loyalists from Kings, Queens, Richmond, and New York City often visited him to provide intelligence and supplies. For example, Tryon enlisted James Leadbetter, a New York City brewer, to spy on the whigs and to purchase provisions. And David Matthews, who became New York City's mayor in February 1776, recruited David King, an African American slave and shoemaker, to carry messages to the governor. Tryon was also able to organize provisioning ships for Boston; to hire three local gunsmiths; to persuade Charles Inglis, an Anglican minister and a tory, to answer Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*; and to distribute counterfeit money to disrupt New York's economy. In December, persuaded that loyalists could make a difference, Tryon asked Gen. William Howe, who had replaced Gen. Thomas Gage as commander-in-chief, for "three thousand stand of arms." Howe declined; he would be in New York in the spring and wanted the tories to remain quiet to "lull the Rebels" into a false sense of security.⁴⁸

Tory propaganda, too, was irksome to whigs. "An Occasional Remarker" was incensed: "Of late, I have observed in Mr. Rivington's and Mr. Gaine's newspapers, sundry publications that have the same pernicious tendency with those that used to abound in those papers some months ago." When he urged that they be "rooted out," he was perhaps justifying what was about to happen. On November 23 Sears and about eighty volunteers, mostly from Connecticut, stormed into James Rivington's shop in New York City, destroyed his printing press, packaged up his type, and raced away. Sears defended himself, claiming there were not "Spirited and leading men enough in N. York to undertake such a Business." His conduct was in any case disturbing. He had acted without authority and had raised the prickly issue of whether whigs from one colony could intervene in another without approval from the Continental Congress or the provincial congress in the colony under attack. On De-

ember 8 the Committee of One Hundred informed the Provincial Congress of the incident, and on December 12 Congress wrote Gov. Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, condemning the raid. By way of punishment the Continental Congress refused to appoint Sears to a naval post already promised him.⁴⁹

Even more vexing to whigs was William Smith's scheme in December 1775 to revive royal government. McDougall called it "a Piece of Finesse difficult to obviate, considering the Temper of the Province." Distressed by the prospect of independence, Smith hoped to persuade the Provincial Congress to have its delegates in Philadelphia offer a new plan of reconciliation. If the Continental Congress then rejected it, he wanted the Provincial Congress to request a meeting of the New York General Assembly to consider Lord North's Conciliation Plan of February 1775. According to that proposal, Britain would recognize the Continental Congress and levy no taxes on America without the approval of the provincial assemblies; the colonies, for their part, would acknowledge parliamentary supremacy, and the Continental Congress would vote a revenue for the crown. The Continental Congress had rejected the plan in July 1775, for it required colonists to pay a tax; its only distinction was that they would be imposing the tax upon themselves. If the Assembly now approved North's proposal, as Smith hoped it would, that would most likely divide the colonies and end the threat of independence.⁵⁰

On December 4, Smith persuaded Tryon to address the colony's inhabitants, asking them to deliberate "in a constitutional Manner" upon North's plan. And on December 8, Smith's brother Thomas introduced four resolutions in the Provincial Congress, accusing Gage of starting hostilities, affirming the colony's allegiance to the crown, inviting Tryon to return to town under a guarantee of safety, and declaring that the king deserved New York's answer to North's proposal. The Provincial Congress, however, decisively rejected Smith's four resolves. All but one county voted for Scott's resolution "that nothing of a salutary nature can be expected from the separate declaration" on North's plan. And every county approved McDougall's motion that the colony was "effectually represented in the Continental Congress" which had "fully and dispassionately expressed the sense of its inhabitants" on North's proposal.⁵¹

Still hopeful that New York residents supported a more conciliatory course, William Smith convinced Tryon to dissolve the Assembly on January 2, 1776, and to call elections for a new one that was to meet on February 14. Afraid of what tories might attempt, whigs began campaigning at once. "Philo-Demos" said the contest was between "the friends to America and the friends to the ministry"; voters should only choose men

"whose principles are *well known*" and "meet with the approbation of the public." "Publicola" asked people to vote only for candidates who pledged to keep the Assembly's doors open while it was in session. And the Committee of Safety directed the members of the Second Provincial Congress to return by February 1, so that they might watch the Assembly. In the event, whig fears were unfounded. John Jay, John Alsop, Alexander McDougall, and Philip Livingston were nominated for New York City at a mass meeting of residents on January 17 and were elected without opposition on February 1. Of the twenty-nine candidates chosen throughout the province, twenty-four were whigs, and only four were tories. Thirteen of the patriots were also members of the Third Provincial Congress. The day the Assembly was to meet, Tryon prorogued it until March 14 and later until April 17. On that day the Assembly was dissolved, for Congress had cut all contact between the town and the warships in the harbor and Tryon was thus unable officially to prorogue the provincial legislature for a third time. The demise of the Assembly destroyed all hope for reviving royal government.⁵²

Though Smith's plan was aborted, the chain of events set in motion by Britain's decision in the autumn of 1775 to occupy New York City persuaded the Continental Congress to monitor the province closely. For example, on the night of October 9 some Continental soldiers had stolen blankets and other items from a royal storehouse in town. After Tryon announced that Vandeput would "execute his orders" to bombard the city unless restitution was made, the Provincial Congress agreed unanimously to return the supplies. But the radicals were outraged, and the Continental Congress directed that the supplies be given to American troops.⁵³ The Provincial Congress objected, arguing that it was unwise to endanger the city for the sake of 150 blankets, or to risk infecting American troops "by sending the small-pox among them"; several blankets "had been used in the Hospital, and the rest were destroyed by the moth." There the matter ended, but it put New York whig leaders on notice that they would now have to pursue policies acceptable to a continental as well as a local audience. The Continental Congress was pushing New York toward revolution, and the province could do little about it without jeopardizing colonial unity.⁵⁴

Even rumors of what the Continental Congress *might* do could cause a stir in New York. In October a motion had been made in that Congress to arrest Tryon. It failed to pass, but the governor learned of the motion and on October 13 warned city officials that if he were seized, Vandeput would "demand" his release and "enforce the demand" with the navy's "whole power." Mayor Hicks so informed the Committee of One Hun-

dred, which the same day denied that the Provincial Congress had an "order" to seize the governor. The next day Tryon demanded "their assurances, either of protection while among them, or security to remove on board the King's ship." Though the committee again assured him he was welcome to stay, Tryon fled to a naval vessel stationed in the harbor.⁵⁵

He was not the only one to panic. Before he left, tories had been boasting that they would "defend" him "at the Risk of their Lives." Their bravado persuaded already terrified residents that the navy was about to cannonade the town and that redcoats would soon be landing. People began to flee with their belongings. Some Provincial Congressmen even started moving furniture up the Hudson.⁵⁶ On November 4 a writer noted that "this great trading and flourishing city is now like an inland town, a vast number of its inhabitants moved away." Ten days later he reported that a meager two hundred people had voted at the election for delegates to the Provincial Congress.⁵⁷

When the Continental Congress asked the Provincial Congress about Tryon's departure, the Provincial Congress forwarded the letters between Hicks and the Committee of One Hundred but declared that "no application relative to that affair was made to this Congress, nor have we taken any part therein." Sears was so frustrated with most whig leaders that in early November he left for Connecticut, conceding that he had lost his struggle with the moderates for control of the patriot cause in New York. What he could not accept was that the cause had developed an institutional life and momentum of its own. Though he had played a key role in erecting the whig infrastructure, he could not dominate it or bend it to his will. In part, he had become the victim of his own success. He had helped to mobilize so many diverse interest groups that leaders adept at mediation and organization were able to seize control from those skilled more in agitation. Moreover, the flight of so many residents had made public opinion and crowd action that much less influential in city politics, thereby affording moderates a freer hand to follow their own inclinations. But New York's reputation had suffered. Maj. Gen. Charles Lee of the Continental Army lamented to McDougall, "Let your City no longer hold the honest in suspense by their shilly shally mode of conduct[. Is] this a time when whole communities are laid waste by the Dogs of War to address or suffer addresses to the delegate of an infernal Despot?"⁵⁸

In January Lee asked General Washington's permission to use troops from New Jersey and Connecticut to "effect the security of New York, and the expulsion or suppression of that dangerous banditti of Tories, who have appeared in Long Island." Washington was amenable. A British fleet was being fitted out at Boston, and he feared its destination was New York.

On January 8 he directed Lee to put the city "into the best Posture of Defence" and to disarm or to detain "all such persons on long Island and elsewhere . . . whose conduct, and declarations have rendered them justly suspected of Designes unfriendly to the Views of Congress." Washington also wrote New York's Committee of Safety about Lee's mission, but the letter was delayed in reaching its destination; and bad weather and the gout slowed Lee as well. Meantime, residents fretted that his arrival would provoke the navy to bombard them. On January 21, the committee wrote Lee, arguing that the city was short of gunpowder and that the season was too inclement for women and children to escape; the committee urged that fighting be delayed at least until March and that Lee keep his troops at the Connecticut border until he had informed the committee of his plans. Lee hastily wrote Washington, and a "violent debate" ensued in the Continental Congress. One side stressed the impropriety of ordering troops into a province without either permission from the local authorities or a direct order from Congress; to do so would set "the Military above the Civil." The other side "urged the absolute necessity of securing that province, the loss of which would cut off all communication between the Northern and Southern Colonies." By way of compromise, a delegation was sent to New York to confer with Lee and the Committee of Safety. The committee finally relented and let Lee's army enter the city.⁵⁹

Lee's month-long stay in New York proved contentious. On February 4, the day he entered town, Gen. Henry Clinton, second in command to Gen. William Howe, arrived by ship for a conference with Tryon. Though the river was filled with ice and the weather frigid, people again began to flee. Lee announced that if the fleet bombarded the city, he would make the first building to burn a funeral pyre for one hundred tories. Whether or not the British heard his remark, they never fired their guns. Lee began calling the naval threat a "*brutum fulmen*" and ordered the remaining cannons removed from the Battery. Though the navy had orders to commence hostilities if that happened, the naval commander shot off a handbill instead, claiming he had held his fire because it had been New England troops that had caused the trouble. "The people here laugh," Lee said, "and begin to despise the menaces which formerly used to throw them into convulsions."⁶⁰

Controversy continued to swirl after Lee tried but failed to get the Committee of Safety to cease resupplying the warships in the harbor and to cut off all contact with them. On February 16, because Tryon had persuaded some gunsmiths to leave town, Lee demanded that the Provincial Congress enjoin people from communicating with the warships. Congress refused, and Lee raised the issue again on February 18. This time Con-

gress tightened its rules but would not be as bold as Lee had urged. After the British seized some sloops carrying foodstuffs, the general insisted again, and once more the answer was no. Lee, however, was not one to let civil authorities interfere with military necessity. On March 1 Elias Nixen, the Dutch Reformed port master, informed Congress that Lee's troops had fired on some warships and had arrested two of Tryon's servants who had come ashore. Lee had even instructed Nixen that no more provisions were to be provided Tryon, whose people had seized flour on February 23 from an American sloop. The Provincial Congress was displeased: the Hudson was frozen, and the navy might try to starve the city by intercepting supply ships from New Jersey and Connecticut. But when Lee remained adamant, Congress stopped issuing passes for people to visit British vessels. Lee's detractors would get their revenge shortly thereafter when the Continental Congress transferred him out of New York for mistreating some Long Island loyalists.⁶¹

Lee's replacement, William Alexander, who claimed to be the Earl of Stirling and who had been a member of the governor's Council in the 1760s, quickly agreed with the Provincial Congress on a new plan for supplying the British fleet. Tighter restrictions were put on the trade, which would now be allowed only on "condition that there be no obstruction given [by a warship] to any Boats or Vessels bringing Provisions" into the city. To avoid misunderstanding, Tryon was sent a copy. Tempers cooled, and the city became a beehive of activity, a veritable garrison town, as it prepared for a British onslaught.⁶²

Upon arriving in April, Washington wrote the Committee of Safety that "the intercourse which has hitherto subsisted between the inhabitants . . . and the enemy on board the ships-of-war is injurious to the common cause." His logic was convincing: "We are to consider ourselves either in a state of peace or war with Great Britain. If the former, why are our ports shut up, our trade destroyed, our property seized, our towns burnt, and our worthy and valuable citizens led into captivity, and suffering the most cruel hardships? If the latter, my imagination is not fertile enough to suggest a reason in support of the intercourse." The next day the committee outlawed all contact with the navy. Denied provisions, the fleet soon dropped below the Narrows, and the city's symbolic link to the empire was severed.⁶³

In sum, because Britain had decided to make New York its base of military operations, the whigs felt compelled to turn the city into a garrison town. The presence of the Continental Army, in turn, convinced the residents who remained to put aside their doubts and to march down the road to war. New York had thus joined the Revolution almost in spite of itself.

Independence

As the imperial conflict grew more bellicose, New York whigs labored to justify their rebellious actions and to broaden the support for their cause. "Monitor," perhaps the most prolific apologist, inaugurated a series of articles in the *New York Journal* in November 1775 by avowing the colonists' right to wage civil war. It was "an evil" undertaken only "from motives of the most urgent necessity." Yet when one had "to defend the essential rights of humanity," it was "criminal" to refuse it. Though civil wars were "very sharp," they were short. But "once arbitrary government be introduced, people's miseries are endless; there is no prospect or hopes of redress." When tyranny threatened, "timidity and meanness . . . , falsely termed moderation and prudence," only "strengthen[ed] the hands of the common enemy."¹ "Monitor" also reviewed the troubled history of Anglo-American relations, from the Stamp Act to Lexington and Concord. Yet he believed the First Continental Congress could have resolved the conflict and safeguarded colonial rights if the New York Assembly had not, by itself, petitioned Britain. "Encouraged by the certain prospect . . . of a disunion," the cabinet "push[ed] matters to an extremity" and ordered troops to America. Though war was now inevitable, some New Yorkers were still pleading for a new peace overture. But "Monitor" warned residents not to delude themselves: Britain wanted "to bring them under the unlimited subjection to the Parliament." New Yorkers thus had "to strain every sinew in warlike preparations" and to "seize every opportunity of strengthening ourselves and materially weakening the enemy."²

Other writers joined "Monitor." "Philo Patriae," who first appeared in *The Constitutional Courant* in 1765, said that the "true patriot" was "more zealously concern'd for the public weal and prosperity, than for any private good of his own; and sedulously endeavours to promote it, by every medium within the compass of his power." The British were "strangers to this spirit; and not a few of the first rank and character endeavour to suppress" real patriotism "by cultivating a private selfish spirit." And "the same game they are now playing in America, by their agents, bribed into confederacy with that wicked ministry, by valuable sums in hand, the promise of pensions *in futuro*, or valuable tracts of land settled upon them, when America shall be subjugated to the iron yoke of their government." "An Occasional Remarker," who in November 1775 had forecast Sears's attack upon Rivington, declared, "I am ready to die" for liberty; and "I advise you to die, rather than to yield one tittle of your rights to the unjust, unconstitutional claims of a tyrannical Parliament and Ministry." "A Poor Man," who also had radical credentials, said that he "would rather die ten thousand deaths, than to see this country enslaved, and ruined by a venal, wicked, blundering parliament. Rouze then, Americans rouze, let no man sleep while the thief is at the door."³

Whig writers also undermined loyalty to George III. "Monitor" declared: "If we contemplate the character of the present B—t—sh Sovereign," it is "impossible to avoid the imputation of folly or tyranny."⁴ "Philo Patriae" added that if the king were devoted to his "kingdom's safety and happiness, he would . . . encourage every sincere Patriot, banish from his presence every despotic tory minister, suppress all their arbitrary tools of cruelty, and give no heed to the deceitful sycophants and court flatterers."⁵ Another whig wrote: "If the King gives his sanction to acts of Parliament, subversive of that grand charter by which he holds his crown, and endeavours to carry them into execution by force of arms, the people have a right to repel force by force."⁶ "Lucius" (a twelfth-century pope who was forced from Rome after it became a city-republic) bluntly warned the king: "The man in your situation, who loses the common people, is either a tyrant or a lunatic." How had affairs reached such a state in America? It was because of the king's advisers: "Mischievous, as they affect the interests of the individuals. Wicked, as they tend to dismember the empire, arbitrary, as they violate the rights of Englishmen." Hence, "they make you one day ridiculous, the next day contemptible, and the third day ——."⁷ "Obadiah" (a Hebrew prophet who prophesied Edom's destruction because of its treatment of the Israelites) spied a more vile ministerial plot: "It is more than probable, that whilst they are soothing King George's ambition and desire of absolute monarchy, they

are insidiously paving the way to pluck the crown from his head. . . . For this purpose, they have ensnared the King, by inducing him to connive in persecuting the American people, because they insist upon their constitutional rights."⁸

Talk of independence inevitably followed. In December "Lycurgus" (a wise Athenian) berated the Pennsylvania Assembly for instructing its delegates at the Continental Congress to vote against independence. He urged people to keep an open mind: "Are they sure, that 'tis best America should not be independent as to government?" In January "Memento" declared that Americans would sacrifice their lives before surrendering their rights and that it was "not in the power of Great Britain, with the most vigorous exertion of her whole united strength, finally to take them from us." He favored separation over submission, yet hoped the empire could be preserved, bloodshed avoided, and "mutual faith and confidence" restored.⁹ Later that month, Thomas Paine forthrightly advocated independence in *Common Sense*. "An Independent Whig" applauded Paine's conclusion: "We must be either independent, or be reduced to the most abject state of slavery; for an accommodation is utterly impracticable."¹⁰

Other whigs sought to allay people's fears of independence. "Candidus" argued that the city loses more than it gains by membership in the empire. When regulating trade and manufacturing, Britain always sought "rather to milk than to suckle" its colonies.¹¹ "Monitor" assured Anglicans that the "present commotion" was caused by "the intolerable oppression of the ministry" and was not "a plot to overturn the[ir] church" or "to reduce the whole continent under Presbyterian discipline and doctrine." If independence came, "a common interest would oblige us to avoid all discord and animosity, to form and cherish a well compacted government, capable of affording general security to all, and of preventing the ill effects of every kind of rivalry."¹² Another writer explained why reconciliation was impossible: "If the Colonies should be reunited to Great Britain, it must be to her as she is now at present, where the electors are bought, and the majority of the Commons are kept in pay by the Minister, and all places of honour and profit are conferred, not according to men's merit, by their wisdom and bravery, but as they vote, where the nation's money is expended by millions to pervert reason and support the Minister." That system had caused the crisis and would eventually provoke another, even should a compromise be reached this time.¹³

The fact that the newspapers were filled in March and April with essays advocating independence makes it clear that some people remained unconvinced. Yet there is compelling evidence that the public consensus in

favor of empire and liberty was breaking down, and that most New Yorkers were moving toward independence. In February the radical Hugh Hughes wrote John and Samuel Adams that several prominent whigs had pressured John Holt not to publish *Common Sense*. He did anyway, and Hughes reported that the public reception was overwhelmingly positive: "It is certain, there never was anything printed here within these thirty years or since I been in this place that has been more universally approved and admired."¹⁴

Hughes's radicalism may have colored his judgment. But on Monday, March 18, the radical Mechanics Committee ordered Samuel Loudon, printer of *The New York Packet* and a whig, to appear before it for advertising that he would soon have for sale *The Deceiver Unmasked; or Loyalty and Interest United: In Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled Common Sense*. When he did so, Christopher Duyckinck, an Anglican sailmaker who chaired the committee, demanded to know the author's identity. Loudon replied that it had been given to him by a gentleman whose name he would not reveal. When committee members threatened to burn the pamphlet, Loudon asked how they could destroy something they had not read. Since the Continental Congress had not declared independence, he argued, the committee could not censure the work, and he asked that the matter be referred to the Committee of Safety. The Mechanics instead went to his shop, nailed shut in a box the sheets already printed, and locked the door to a room where the rest were drying. On Tuesday night the Committee of One Hundred warned Loudon, for his own safety, not to continue printing the pamphlet. Though he accepted the advice, Duyckinck and about forty others returned to Loudon's shop and burned the fifteen hundred copies of *The Deceiver Unmasked* that had already been printed. A loyalist lamented, "There is a great talk of independence, and the unthinking multitude are mad for it. . . . A pamphlet called Common Sense, has carried off its thousands; an answer thereto has come out, but instantly seized in the printer's shop, and burnt in the street, as unfit to be read at this time. I fear, from this line of conduct, the people . . . will never be regained."¹⁵

Nor is it difficult to explain why the public consensus was moving toward independence. On February 16 Robert R. Livingston, Jr., wrote James Duane, "Another year of war and devastation will make me a republican though at present I wish to join hands with a nation which I have been accustomed to respect, yet I am persuaded that the continuation of the war will break my shackles." Though Livingston was slower than most to embrace independence, his comment underscores how momentous was Britain's decision to use force to crush the colonies. Not only did it

lead people to reassess their allegiance to the crown; but it provoked them to establish extralegal governments and committees and an army. Whig propagandists could thus argue that the colonies were already independent in all but name. That realization made it easier for New Yorkers, both intellectually and emotionally, to take the final step and to embrace independence rather than to travel an uncertain route backwards whereby to attempt to remake the empire into what it had been before 1763. In sum, at least for New York, Gage's pet solution to the recurring Anglo-American crises was a significant cause of the empire's undoing.¹⁶

II

What remained for those who favored the breakup of the empire was to convince the Third Provincial Congress, which was to convene on May 14, to declare independence. The effort began on the related question of whether to form a new government. Practical matters were involved. Gov. William Tryon had fled, and the Assembly had been dissolved. Congress and the Committee of One Hundred had filled the void, but only imperfectly. Whig leaders were at a loss over what to do about the court system, the criminal justice system, and the validity of contracts. Moreover, constitutional issues lurked beneath the surface: to create a new government, though expedient, was to declare de facto independence.

"Salus Populi" argued in February that the colonies were "in a state of absolute independence, without any settled form of Government," and were "obliged" to abolish their "present forms of government, and to create new ones." He thought a system like that in Connecticut, where people elected the governor, best suited to America: "The officer who is removeable by the people will serve the people with fidelity." "An Independent Whig" thought New York's colonial governmental structure acceptable, so long as the citizens elected the governor and the Assembly, and the latter chose the Council.¹⁷ In April "A Free Citizen" addressed the Committee of Safety: "We daily see . . . citizens sent to the guards kept by the Continental army, there confined for crimes cognizable only at common law, and therefore must suffer perpetual imprisonment, or submit to a trial by Court Martial." In short, New York had no choice but to adopt "some regular form of government, which may be a protection to ourselves, and consistent with the interest of the other American colonies."¹⁸

The Continental Congress was concerned about the problem. In April

John Jay wrote that the time had come "to erect good and well ordered Governments in all the Colonies, and thereby exclude that Anarchy which already too much prevails." On May 9 William Floyd, another New York delegate, wrote, "It cannot be long before our Provincial Congress will think it necessary to take up some more stable form of Government than what is now exercised in that Province." The Provincial Congress would doubtless have ignored the advice had not the Continental Congress resolved on May 10 that the people of the several colonies should form their own new state governments. On May 17 Robert R. Livingston, Jr., wrote Jay, who had returned home for the Third Provincial Congress, "I hope they are satisfied of the necessity of assuming a new form of Government." The more conservative Duane, however, wrote Jay the next day that New York should not "be too precipitate in changing the present mode of Government." But Jay replied, "So great are the Inconveniences resulting from the present Mode of Government, that I believe our Convention will almost unanimously agree to institute a better."¹⁹

When the Provincial Congress debated the issue in late May, Gouverneur Morris proposed that a constitutional convention be called "to frame a Government." John Morin Scott countered that Congress already had the authority to proceed by itself. The conservative Morris sought a convention because that would delay a decision; the more militant Scott thought Congress competent to act, for he wanted action.²⁰ The Provincial Congress finally approved a series of resolutions that declared New York's colonial government "*ipso facto* dissolved" and the system of congresses and committees "subject to many defects." It was thus "absolutely necessary" to establish "a new and regular form of internal Government and Police."²¹ Morris did not get his convention, for the idea was unwieldy: Would a convention and Congress meet concurrently? If not, who would oversee affairs while the former was in session? If so, could someone serve in both bodies? But he won a delay, for elections were to be held before a new constitution was to be written.

In the elections that followed, the Mechanics Committee objected that no provision had been made for the inhabitants "to accept or reject" the new frame of government. If the "supporters of oligarchy" in the next Congress were to draft one, and if it were not then ratified by the people, the new government "could be lawfully binding" only on "the legislators themselves." Put in an awkward spot, Congress neither recorded the protest in its *Journal* nor answered it. In calling for elections it had declared that it needed popular authorization to form a new government. Now the people, or at least some of them, were demanding the right to ratify the new constitution; and Congress was averse to hearing them. It doubtless

hoped by its silence to bury the idea of a popular referendum. And so for the moment it did, but the next Congress would have to confront the issue.²²

Independence became a more serious issue on June 3, when a newspaper printed the Virginia Convention's resolves directing its representatives in Philadelphia to press for independence. The next day Lewis Thibou, a saddler, and several other Mechanics petitioned the Provincial Congress "to instruct our most honourable Delegates in the Continental Congress to use their utmost endeavours" to persuade "these United Colonies to become independent."²³ Congress's response, given only after it had retreated behind closed doors to determine whether it should even accept the petition, plainly underscored its opposition to the proposal: only the Continental Congress could decide the issue, and the Provincial Congress would not issue "any declarations upon so general and momentous a concern; but are determined patiently to await and firmly abide by whatever a majority of that august body shall think needful." Two days later the New York Congress received a letter from the Virginia Convention, enclosing a copy of its resolutions and appealing for support. Congress evasively replied on June 6 that it would "pursue every measure which may tend to promote the union and secure the rights and happiness of the United Colonies." The next day Richard Henry Lee of Virginia asked the Continental Congress to declare independence. Robert R. Livingston, Jr., spoke for the measure, but the other New Yorkers were silent. In truth, they were in a quandary. Whatever their personal opinions, they lacked authority to speak for the province. According to their instructions they were in Philadelphia to work for the preservation of American liberty and the restoration of harmony in the empire.²⁴

After New York's congressional delegation wrote home for instructions, the Provincial Congress unanimously passed two resolves on June 11. One said that the people had not authorized the Provincial or the Continental Congress "to declare" New York "independent." The other recommended that "by instructions or otherwise" the voters in the province should "inform their said Deputies of their sentiments relative to the great question of Independency" at the upcoming elections for the Fourth Provincial Congress. However, Congress also ordered that "the publishing of the foregoing Resolves be postponed until after the election of Deputies with powers to establish a new form of Government." Apparently, the voters had to decide the issue, but Congress was not going to tell them so.²⁵

Why were New York's whig leaders so averse to action, particularly when there seems to have been such strong support, especially in New York

City, for independence? First, the Provincial Congress was feeling harried, what with preparing for the anticipated invasion of a city that was already a shambles and dealing with the tories who were expected to aid the British upon their arrival. Vexed and perplexed by these matters, many congressmen were doubtless too preoccupied to reassess the issue of independence.²⁶ They therefore clung to the policy of empire and liberty, though it had been devised months earlier under different circumstances. Second, declaring independence meant risking their own lives. A few blanched at the prospect, and some even acted cowardly. In 1775 Philip and Peter Van Brugh Livingston had reportedly fled New York City and Congress for fear of the *Asia*. And Robert R. Livingston, Jr., was "mortified" that in June 1776, during the debates over independence, Gouverneur Morris had been able to persuade the Provincial Congress to adjourn to White Plains because the British were about to land on Staten Island. In October Livingston would object that "Gouverneur thro' what cause God alone knows has deserted in this hour of danger" and "retired to some obscure corner of the Jerseys . . . while his friends are struggling with every difficulty and danger and while they make those apologies for him which they do not themselves believe."²⁷ Third, whig leaders had other, very justifiable concerns. If Britain won, it would surely constrict their rights and confiscate their property. Even if America won, the battle for New York would likely devastate both the city and the province. The decision to embrace independence was consequently a difficult one to make. Moreover, a number of patricians held huge land grants, in what was to become the state of Vermont, that were disputed by New Englanders. If the empire were sundered, who would settle the competing claims, and how would it be done?²⁸ Still other New Yorkers, of course, made their living by trade within the empire. They worried about how the economy and their own finances would fare outside the empire.²⁹

Most important, conservative and moderate whig leaders understood that independence meant republican government. The Mechanics Committee had made that clear on June 14, when it attacked the "selfish principles of corrupt oligarchy" and demanded that the new constitution be "freely ratified by the co-legislative power of the people — the sole lawful Legislature of this Colony."³⁰ In a series that appeared the same month in the *New York Journal*, "Spartanus" called for "a free popular government" that would vest power in the people who would annually elect representatives to a unicameral legislature. For the system to succeed, the people would have to reject "rich and aspiring" candidates who "will endeavour to corrupt, bribe and lead the populace." These "evil-designing men" speak fair but "will proceed from step to step, until you

are under their foot." If "Spartanus" represented public opinion, independence would require New York's patricians to enter into a strange new world, one for which they had no map. Small wonder that they would resist the inevitable as long as possible and focus their attention on the expected British invasion.³¹

If the Provincial Congress was composed of such reluctant revolutionaries, could a New York City mob have nudged them onward? In truth, no, for the radical leadership had already dispersed. Exasperated at the slow pace of events, Isaac Sears had left for Connecticut in November 1775. Though he returned on occasion (to destroy Rivington's press, for example), he was no longer a force to be reckoned with in city affairs. John Lamb had been wounded and captured by the British at Quebec in December 1775. Alexander McDougall would retire from politics in April 1776 to concentrate on military affairs. And by February 1776 most of the population had fled what was soon to become a war zone.³² The fewer the people in the city, the less able were the radicals to pressure Congress. Moreover, New York had become a garrison town, and Continental troops patrolled the streets to maintain order. Ironically, their presence enabled the Provincial Congress to hold out for reconciliation longer than it would otherwise have been able to do.

Still, however loath the Third Provincial Congress may have been to declare independence, it could not stay the course of events. On July 2, New York's Continental Congressmen again wrote the Provincial Congress, explaining that "the important Question of Independency was agitated yesterday in a Committee of the whole Congress, and this Day will be finally determined in the House." Aware that their instructions precluded them from voting for independence, the delegates wanted to know "what Part we are to act" once it was declared. The Provincial Congress never replied. Gen. William Howe landed on Staten Island the same day with ten thousand soldiers. In expectation of that event the Provincial Congress had on June 30 adjourned until July 2, when it was to meet at White Plains. But for lack of a quorum, it never met again. It was succeeded by the Fourth Provincial Congress, which met for the first time on July 9.³³

III

As soon as it gathered on July 9, 1776, the Fourth Provincial Congress declared independence, and the next day changed its name to the Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York. Finally, on

April 20, 1777, the Convention approved a new state constitution. As the Mechanics Committee had feared, the document was not submitted to a popular referendum.³⁴

The Constitution of 1777 established a bicameral legislature. Members of the lower house, or Assembly, were to be elected annually by county, each being allotted a number of representatives proportional to its overall population. Adult freemen possessing at least one of three qualifications could vote in Assembly elections: the right of freemanship in New York City or Albany; ownership of a freehold valued at twenty pounds or more; or a leasehold on which the annual rent was at least forty shillings. Members of the upper house, or Senate, were elected to a four-year term from one of four senatorial districts by adult freemen with property worth at least one hundred pounds. The governor, whose authority was rather circumscribed, was chosen for three years by persons eligible to vote in senatorial elections. A Council of Revision, which included the governor and the members of the Supreme Court, was empowered to veto legislative bills. A two-thirds majority in both houses was needed to override a veto. And a Council of Appointment, consisting of the governor and a senator from each district, was responsible for selecting people for major state-wide offices. The court system remained much the same as it had been in the colonial period, except for a Court of Errors and Impeachment that exercised final appellate jurisdiction.

The state's first constitution was thus less democratic than radicals would have liked. William Duer, a conservative New Yorker in the Continental Congress, "congratulate[d]" Jay, who served on the committee that drafted the constitution: "I think it upon the maturest Reflection the best System which has as yet been adopted, and possibly as good as the Temper of the Times would admit of." How had that victory been possible? One reason was that, while many radical leaders were serving in uniform, enough conservatives and moderates were heeding William Smith's advice that men of property should go "rather to the Cabinet than the Fields." Equally important was the long experience patricians had had in provincial politics, which helped them to understand the tactics they would have to employ. Commenting on Pennsylvania's conservatives, after that state had adopted a much more radical constitution, Robert R. Livingston, Jr., extolled "the propriety of swimming with a stream, which it is impossible to stem." Indeed, he said, "I long ago advised them that they shd yield to the torrent if they hoped to direct its course—you know that nothing but well timed delays, indefatigable industry, and a minute attention to every favorable circumstance could have prevented our being in their situation."³⁵

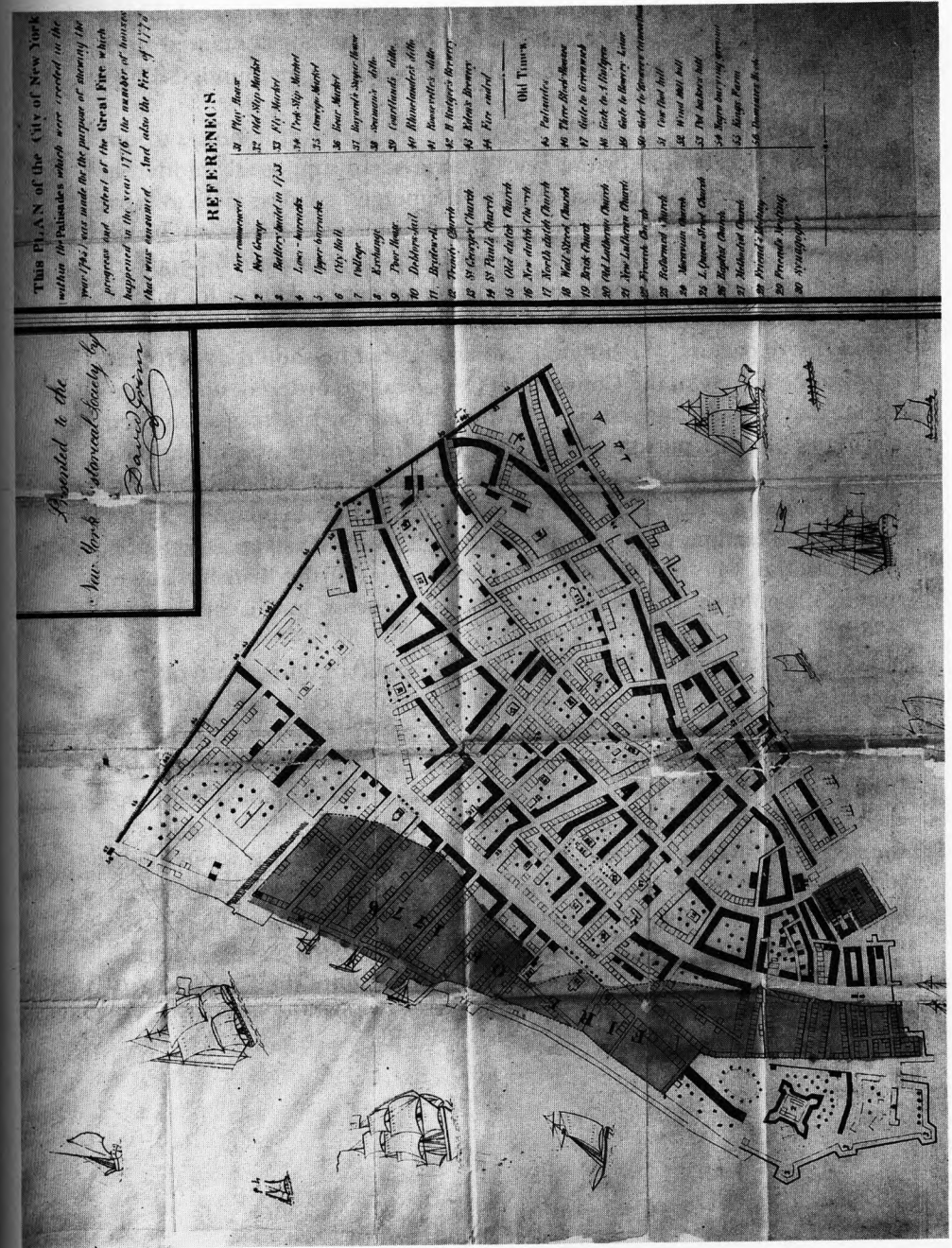
Though New York's Constitution of 1777 was a compromise that more closely resembled the government sought by the elite, radicals could nonetheless celebrate. Not only had a republican government been established, but the constitution permitted the secret ballot, prescribed annual elections for the Assembly, prohibited placemen from holding office in that body, and proclaimed the sovereignty of the people. Radicals would like to have achieved more, yet experience had taught them to balance their demands against the need for unity, and to recognize that New York's heterogeneous population was not yet ready to embrace their full agenda. Their pragmatism, in turn, was matched by the realism of the New York elite, who resisted change as long as possible, but who knew when it was time to accept the inevitable in order to forestall their own complete fall from power. In short, both sides understood, as they had in 1776 on the issues of revolution and independence, that the heterogeneity of New York's population required all sides to seek a consensus acceptable to the great majority of the people. They realized, too, that the Constitution of 1777 was but one battle in a struggle with a long history and a long future.

Given a political system that, supposedly, had already begun to decay by the early 1760s, New York's revolutionary leaders, despite their many differences and disagreements, had together accomplished a great deal in the tumultuous years that followed the Seven Years' War.³⁶ Moreover, in time, the political savvy and experience that colonial New Yorkers had acquired while learning to live in a mixed society would benefit the United States as its population grew more and more diverse.

The Demise of Colonial New York City

The final ordeal of colonial New York City, however, had begun well before the state adopted its first constitution. On July 2, 1776, the British army occupied Staten Island. After pausing for reinforcements and trying to persuade the whigs to lay down their arms, Gen. William Howe landed fifteen thousand troops on Long Island on August 22. Five days later he defeated Washington's main army in the Battle of Long Island. Although the patriots suffered over fifteen hundred casualties, Washington deftly evacuated his forces to Manhattan Island on the night of August 29. An informal peace conference on Staten Island on September 6 failed when the Americans refused to revoke the Declaration of Independence as a preliminary step before formal negotiations could begin. On September 15 British troops took possession of New York City.¹

New York's travails were not over, however. On September 21, sometime after midnight, a fire broke out at Whitehall Slip. The blaze spread "with inconceivable violence" and soon consumed all the buildings between Whitehall and Broad Street as far north as Beaver Street. At about two a.m. the wind shifted abruptly, driving the flames across Beaver toward Broadway. The situation was desperate. Few residents remained in town, and not that many redcoats had yet entered the city. Nor could a warning be sounded, for Washington had removed the bells from all the churches and public buildings. And to everyone's horror "the fire-engines and pumps were out of order." British soldiers and sailors were rushed ashore to fight the blaze, but the wind-whipped flames raced up both sides of New Street and crossed Broadway between Bowling Green



The New York Fire, 1776. (Collection of the New-York Historical Society)

and Trinity Church, which went up like "a vast pyramid of fire, exhibiting a most grand and awful spectacle." The blaze was not contained until about ten or eleven a.m., when it reached the yard that surrounded King's College.²

Many assumed that whigs had set the fire "to prevent the King's troops from having any benefit by the city."³ Patriots had supposedly hidden in deserted buildings on September 15 and emerged six days later to burn the town to the ground. Reportedly, some arsonists were arrested during the fire, with incriminating evidence in their possession, and others were killed on the spot for shooting holes through water buckets or for impeding fire fighters. No hard evidence of arson exists, however. And when, before his departure, Washington had asked what he should do if forced to evacuate the town, the Continental Congress had ordered, on September 3, that "no damage be done to the said city by his troops, on their leaving it." A lone person or a small band acting on its own might have started the blaze, but no one could ever prove it. Gen. James Robertson, the city's commandant, in vain offered a reward on September 25 for information leading to the arrest of those guilty. And as late as 1783 Sir Guy Carleton, who was then commander-in-chief of the British Army in America, would set up an investigatory commission, but it could prove nothing.⁴

Whether or not whigs were guilty, the fire symbolized the death of colonial New York City. Over a thousand buildings, or about one-fourth of all the homes in town, had been destroyed. Gov. William Tryon wrote the cabinet of how "afflicting" it was "to view the wretched and miserable Inhabitants who have lost their all, and numbers of reputable Shopkeepers that are reduced to Beggary, and many in want for their families of the necessaries of life." Worse, Howe used the argument that whigs might set a new fire to justify keeping "the executive powers of civil government dormant" and leaving "everything to the direction of the military." For the next seven years "a military autocracy" governed the city. Its residents would thus not enjoy the fruits of independence until the British evacuated the city on November 25, 1783.⁵

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10. Empire and Liberty

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8. Smith, *Memoirs* 1:222; Montagu to Graves, Apr. 26, 1775, Clark et al., eds., *Naval Documents* 1:228; Robert J. Christen, *King Sears: Politician and Patriot in a Decade of Revolution* (New York, 1982), 383. The first quote is from CC to Dartmouth, May 3, 1775, *CC Letter Books* 2:402; the second from Letter by a Real Churchman, May 2, 1775, Egerton Manuscripts, British Museum, London.

9. Smith, *Memoirs* 1:221; Jones, *History* 1:41.

10. *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State*, ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan, 2 vols. (Albany, 1868), 1:3-4, herein cited as *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts*. On Apr. 28, the committee asked the counties to appoint delegates; Isaac Low, *Committee-Chamber, New York, Apr. 28, 1775* [New York, 1775], Evans, 14323; *The Following Persons Are Recommended to the Public*, Apr. 27, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14034. The quotes are from McDougall, "Minutes of the Committee of Sixty," Apr. 24, 1775, McDougall Papers.

11. Draft of letter by the Committee of Sixty, Apr. 27, 1775, Robert R. Livingston Papers, Reel 18, NYHS (microfilm); "Military Association," New York City, Misc. Mss., NYHS; Ralph Thurman, *To the Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York*, Apr. 15, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14484; Christen, *King Sears*, 390-391; Roger J. Champagne, "New York's Radicals and the Coming of Independence," *JAH* 51 (1964): 23, n. 4; Robert Ernst, "Andrew Elliot, Forgotten Loyalist of Occupied New York," *NYH* 57 (1976): 285-320; "A Short Detail of the Conduct of the Collector of New York from December 1774 to March 1776," Andrew Elliot Papers, 1747-1777, New York State Library, Albany.

12. Both slates were published the next day; *The Following Persons Are Nominated by the Sons of Liberty* . . . , Apr. 28, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14033; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:222; Champagne, "New York's Radicals and Independence," *JAH* 51 (1964): 23; Christen, *King Sears*, 395.

13. Smith, *Memoirs* 1:222; *To the Freeholders and Freemen of the City and County of New York*, Apr. 28, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 42898.

14. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:448-449; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:222, 223; RRL to his wife, May 3, 1775, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL; Jones, *History* 1:42; *A General Association, Agreed to, and Subscribed by the Freeholders, Freemen, and Inhabitants of the City and County of New York*, Apr. and May 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14339. Christen, *King Sears*, 397-398, offers a different view of the Association's significance.

15. *Extracts from Bradford's Pennsylvania Journal of Apr. 26, 1775* [New York, 1775],

Evans, 14028; Jones, *History* 1:41-44. The quotes are from *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:449; and RRL to his wife, May 3, 1775, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL. Henry White, *To the Public* [New York, 1775], Evans, 14624. White had asked that troops not be withdrawn; Mr. W[hite] to [William Tryon], Dec. 7, 1774, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of the Earl of Dartmouth*, vol. 2 (*Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Pt. 10* [London, 1895]), 237.

16. *General Committee*, May 1, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14325; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:468; Christen, *King Sears*, 194, 218, 393-398; Jones, *History* 1:41-44.

17. Joseph E. Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania: A History* (New York, 1976), 310.

18. Champagne, "The Sons of Liberty and the Aristocracy in New York Politics, 1765-1790" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1960), 392; RRL to RRL, Jr., May 5, 1775; James Duane to RRL, Jr., Mar. 20, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:510-512.

19. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1534; Tryon to Dartmouth, July 4, Aug. 7, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:240.

20. Larry R. Gerlach, *Prologue to Independence: New Jersey in the Coming of the American Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1976), 327.

21. Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts*, 133-134. What was happening in New York was not unique. John M. Head, *A Time to Rend: An Essay on the Decision for American Independence* (Madison, Wisc., 1968), 19, xiii-xiv, argued that New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina, which "were populated by an explosive mixture of cultural groups" and had experienced stable or rapid economic development in the decade before 1774, suffered from "the absence of unifying institutions" and were "comparatively hesitant about or . . . strongly opposed" to independence. Although the various groups had managed to live in relative harmony, he said, the imperial crises of the 1760s and 1770s affected them all so differently that they lacked the internal unity needed to develop a united front against Great Britain.

22. For an alternate view of New York's political parties and their leaders, see Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (Baltimore, 1981), 78.

23. "Candidus," *Constitutional Gazette*, Mar. 16, 1776; Samuel Seabury, *Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress*, in Samuel Seabury, *Letters of a Westchester Farmer*, ed. Clarence H. Vance (White Plains, N.Y., 1930), 43-68. Concerning the spirit of materialism in New York, see Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York, 1975), 230; and William Livingston and Others, *The Independent Reflector*, ed. Milton M. Klein (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 33.

24. RRL, Jr., to Duane, Feb. 16, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL. Also see Milton M. Klein, "New York Lawyers and the Coming of the American Revolution," *NYH* 55 (1974): 383-408.

25. CC to Dartmouth, Dec. 7, 1774, *CC Letter Books* 2:373; John Holt to Joseph Reed, Aug. 24, 1775, Reed Papers, Reel 1, NYHS; "A Sober Citizen," *To the Inhabitants of the City and County of New York*, Apr. 16, 1776 [New York, 1776], Evans, 15110.

26. CC wrote Gage on May 4 that the committee "has assumed the whole Power of Government"; *CC Letter Books* 2:406. For its activities, see *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:468-470, 509, 522, 529-535, 636, 727. Address of the New York Association to Lt. Gov. Cadwallader Colden, May 11, 1775, *DCHNY* 8:585.

27. For Congress's activities, see *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:845-846, 934, 1046, 1242, 1245, 1254, 1255, 1262, 1265-1270, 1275-1286, 1292-1299, 1301, 1310,

1333-1338, 1793, 1800, 1806, 3:15, 20-25, 133, 139, 150, 213, 223, 235, 238, 262, 438, 445, 459, 466, 543, 625, 627, 644, 653, 660, 681, 690, 708, 726, 737, 750, 774, 778, 851, 936, 983, 988, 1118, 1150, 1181, 1206. CC to Capt. George Vandeput, May 27, 1775, *CC Letter Books* 2:413.

28. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1265, 1271, 1326-1327. Isaac Sears was elected to Congress on June 8, 1775, when George Folliot refused to serve; *Journals of the Provincial Congress, Provincial Convention, Committee of Safety, and Council of Safety of the State of New York*, 2 vols. (Albany, 1842), 1:36. Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts*, 6-9, 179. The report presented on June 24 was apparently based on a proposal John Dickinson had made to the Continental Congress in May. Nonetheless, the document adopted on June 27 contained significant changes, which reflected public opinion in New York: the call for a permanent Continental Congress and the denial of Parliament's right to interfere with religion as practiced in the colonies. John A. Neuenschwander, *The Middle Colonies and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1973), 93-95.

29. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1341; Tryon to Dartmouth, July 7, 1775, *DCHNY* 8:593; Gage to Tryon, July 18, 1775, *Military Papers of Gen. Thomas Gage*, Clements Library, Ann Arbor; Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists* (Knoxville, 1986), 61.

30. *Extract of a Letter from Philadelphia to a Gentleman in This City*, May 8, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14341; Christopher Smith to John Alsop, May 12, 1775, Misc. Mss., NYHS; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:618; *Journals of the Continental Congress* 2:60.

31. Isaac Hamilton to CC, May 26, 1775, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, 8 vols. (NYHS, *Collections*, vols. 50-56, 67 [New York, 1917-1923, 1937]), 7:297-298; and CC to Hamilton, May 27, June 5, CC to Gage, May 31, 1775, *CC Letter Books* 2:413-414, 417-418; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1274; *In Provincial Congress*, June 7, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14304; Champagne, *Alexander McDougall and the American Revolution* (Syracuse, 1975), 89, 116. *New York in the Revolution*, 57-65; the quotes are from pp. 57, 58, 59, and 65.

32. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1257.

33. Vandeput to Tryon, July 13, John Watts, Jr., David Matthews, and George Brewerton to Vandeput, July 13, 1775, C.O. 5/1106. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1305-1306, 1645, 1785-1786, 1792; the last quote is from p. 1792.

34. Tryon to Vandeput, July 30, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:1820, 3:533; Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York, 1985), 121-123.

35. Vandeput to Graves, Aug. 24, 1775, Kenneth G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, 21 vols. (Kill-o'-the-Grange, Ireland, 1972-1981), 11:82-83, herein cited as *Documents of the Revolution*; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:259-260, 535, 541-542, 5:1449; Holt to Reed, Aug. 24, 1775, Reed Papers, Reel 1.

36. Vandeput to the Mayor and Magistrates of the City of New York, Aug. 24, Vandeput to the Mayor and Magistrates of New York, Aug. 24, Whitehead Hicks to Vandeput, Aug. 24, the Mayor and Magistrates to Vandeput, Aug. 25, Vandeput to the Mayor and Magistrates, Aug. 25, 1775, C.O. 5/1106.

37. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:261; Extract of a Letter from New York, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 30, 1775; Tryon to Dartmouth, Sept. 5, 1775, *DCHNY* 8:632.

38. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:558, 564-565; *In Provincial Congress*, Sept. 1, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14311; *Constitutional Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1775; Morgan Lewis to Samuel Blachley Webb, Sept. 4, 1775, Worthington C. Ford, ed., *The Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, vol. 1 (New York, 1893), 102.

39. Graves to Vandeput, Sept. 10, 1775, *Documents of the Revolution* 11:104; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:902.

40. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:261; Extract of a Letter from New York, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 30, 1775; Tryon to Lord George Germain, Apr. 6, 1776, *DCHNY* 8:674; Lewis to Webb, Sept. 4, 1775, Ford, ed., *Correspondence of Webb* 1:102; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:265. Also see Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts*, 172; and Champagne, "New York's Radicals and Independence," *JAH* 51 (1964): 31.

41. Tryon to Dartmouth, Aug. 7, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:239.

42. The quotes are from Countryman, *People in Revolution*, xiii.

43. Germain to [Lord Suffolk], [June 16 or 17, 1775], Richard Lord Howe to Germain, Sept. 25, 1775, *Report on the Manuscripts of Mrs. Stopford-Sackville, of Drayton House, Northamptonshire*, vol. 2 (Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifteenth Report* [London, 1910]), 3, 9; Dartmouth to Gage, July 1, Aug. 2, 1775, Gage to Dartmouth, Aug. 20, 1775, Dartmouth to Gen. William Howe, Sept. 5, 1775, General Howe to Dartmouth, Oct. 9, 1775, C.O. 5/92; [Extract of a letter from Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne], John W. Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third . . .*, 6 vols. (London, 1927-1928), 3:242-245; Gen. Henry Clinton to Gage, Aug. 7, 15, Oct. 7, 1775, Sir Henry Clinton Papers, 1750-1812, Clements Library.

44. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 1:170-171, 172-173; William Tryon, *Proclamation*, Nov. 14, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14068; Richard B. Morris, ed., *John Jay, The Making of a Revolutionary: Unpublished Papers, 1745-1780* (New York, 1975), 1:172, n. 3; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:256; Paul H. Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 14 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1976-), 3:26; Carl Lotus Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison, Wisc., 1909), 228. Bernard Mason, *The Road to Independence: The Revolutionary Movement in New York, 1773-1777* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), chap. 4; the quotes are on pp. 115, 113.

45. McDougall to John Jay, Oct. 30, Nov. 15-16, 26, Dec. 24, 1775, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:174, 179-180, 181-182, 214-217; Gerlach, *Prologue to Independence*, 287, 294-295, 296, 303. For the situation in Bergen County, New Jersey, see Adrian C. Leiby, *The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley: The Jersey Dutch and the Neutral Ground* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1962), 29-34.

46. "The Intelligencer" [or Hugh Hughes] to Samuel and John Adams, Feb. [4], 1776, Samuel Adams Papers, 1635-1827, NYPL; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:260-261.

47. McDougall to Philip Schuyler, Nov. 14, 1775, McDougall Papers; McDougall to Jay, Dec. 24, 1775, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:214-215.

48. "Declaration of the Inhabitants of Queens County, New York," Dec. 6, 1775, *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts* 1:200-201; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 2:321-322; Tryon to Dartmouth, Nov. 11, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; Memorial of James Leadbetter, n.d., Testimonial of Tryon for Leadbetter, n.d., Audit Office 13/65, 44, 53, Public Record Office, London [Library of Congress microfilm]; Paul David Nelson, *William Tryon and the Course of Empire: A Life in British Imperial Service* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1990), 137-138; Tryon to General Howe, Dec. 13, 1775, C.O. 5/93; General Howe to Tryon, Jan. 11, 1776, *England and America, 1620-1782*, vol. 14, George Bancroft Collection, NYPL.

49. "An Occasional Remark," *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1552-1553; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Dec. 6, 1775; Rivington to Tryon, Dec. 4, 1775, C.O. 5/1107; Jones, *History* 1:66-67; Vandeput to Capt. Hyde Parker, Dec. 18, 1775, *Documents of the Revolution* 11:212-213; *Journals of the Provincial Congress* 1:210, 213-214; Jay to McDougall, Dec. 22, 1775, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:210. The Sears quote is from Christen, *King Sears*, 411.

50. Smith, *Memoirs* 1:244-251; the full plan is on pp. 245-246. McDougall to Jay, Dec. 8, 1775, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:193; *Journals of the Continental Congress* 2:224-234. For a whig critique of North's plan, see "Monitor," No. VI, *NYJ*, Dec. 14, 1775. For the best discussion of William Smith's plan, see Mason, *Road to Independence*, 118-129. A peace initiative coupled with military preparations or overt hostilities is rarely convincing and often ends in a conflict's escalation; Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts*, 195.

51. Mason, *Road to Independence*, 120-121; *Address of Governor Tryon to the Inhabitants of New York*, Dec. 4, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 14297; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:253-254. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 4:394-395, 406; the quote is from pp. 411-412.

52. Klein, "Failure of a Mission: The Drummond Peace Proposal of 1775," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 35 (1970): 343-380; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:254, 255; Smith to Tryon, Dec. 17, 1775, *DCHNY* 8:653-654; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 4:542, 1028; "Philo-Demos," *Constitutional Gazette*, Jan. 6, 1775; "Publicola," *To the Electors of New York*, Jan. 6, 1775 [New York, 1775], Evans, 15039; Becker, *History of Political Parties*, 242; Mason, *Road to Independence*, 130-131; *NYGWM*, Feb. 19, Mar. 18, 1776.

53. Smith, *Memoirs* 1:241-242; Tryon to Vandeput, Oct. 10, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; Francis Rhineland to P. Van Schaack, Oct. 2, 1775, Peter Van Schaack Papers, Columbia University, New York City; *Secret Journal of the Acts and Proceedings of Congress from the First Meeting Thereof to the Dissolution of the Confederation, by the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States* (Boston, 1820), 31; Champagne, "Sons of Liberty," 414-415.

54. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1314-1315; McDougall to Charles Lee, Dec. 20, 1775, McDougall Papers.

55. J. Adams, "Notes of Debate," Oct. 6, [1775], Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress* 2:125; Lyman H. Butterfield et al., eds., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1961), 2:195. The quotes are from *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1052, 1053, 1054.

56. Harris Cruger to Henry Cruger, Nov. 3, 1775, *Calendar of Home Office Papers of the Reign of King George III, 1760-1775*, 4 vols. (London, 1878-99), 4:481. The quote is from "Intelligencer" [or Hughes] to S. and J. Adams, Oct. 17, 1775, S. Adams Papers.

57. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1308-1309; V. Pearse Ashfield to Isaac Wilkins, Nov. 4, 14, 1775, *Calendar of Home Office Papers* 4:482, 487.

58. John Patterson to Robert Livingston, Nov. 6, 1775, Livingston Family Papers, Johnson Redmond Collection, Reel 6, NYHS (microfilm); "The Intelligencer" [or Hughes] to J. Adams, Oct. 16, 1775, Robert J. Taylor et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1977-), 3:205-207; "The Intelligencer" [or Hughes] to J. Adams, Oct. 17, 1775, S. Adams Papers; *Journals of the Continental Congress* 3:300; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1314; C. Lee to McDougall, Oct. 26, 1776, *The Lee Papers*, 3 vols. (NYHS, *Collections*, vols. 4-7 [New York, 1872-1875]), 1:214-215, herein cited as *Lee Papers*.

59. C. Lee to George Washington, Jan. 5, 24, Committee of Safety to C. Lee, Jan. 21, C. Lee to President of Congress, Jan. 22, 1776, *Lee Papers* 1:235, 242-244, 247-248, 259-260; J. Adams to Washington, Jan. 6, 1776, Taylor et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams* 3:395-396; Washington to Committee of Safety, Jan. 8, 1776, Instructions to Maj. Gen. Charles Lee, Jan. 8, 1776, George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Worthington C. Ford (New York, 1889-1893), 4:220-222; Committee of Congress to Committee of Safety, Feb. 1, Thomas Nelson to Thomas Jefferson, [Fe]b. 4, 1776, Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress* 3:181-182, 193; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:260; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 4:1096, 1100.

60. Andrew Allen to Sarah Allen, Feb. 5, 1776, Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress* 3:196-197; Extract of a Letter from New York, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Feb. 7, 1776; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:263; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 4:942; Champagne, *Alexander McDougall*, 103-104; C. Lee to Washington, Feb. 14, 1776, *Lee Papers* 1:295.

61. *Journals of the Provincial Congress* 1:284; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:272, 274, 281, 287, 308-309, 332, 337; Neuenschwander, *Middle Colonies*, 166; Joseph S. Tiedemann, "A Revolution Foiled: Queens County, New York, 1775-1776," *JAH* 75 (1988): 430.

62. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:354; John Jones to Duane, Apr. 14, 1776, James Duane Papers, 1680-1853, NYHS.

63. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:1451, 1453; *Constitutional Gazette*, Apr. 20, 1776.

11. Independence

1. *NYJ*, Nov. 9, 1775. For the development of sentiment for independence, see Bernard Mason, *The Road to Independence: The Revolutionary Movement in New York, 1773-1777* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), 134-177.

2. *NYJ*, Nov. 23, 30, Dec. 7, 21, 1775.

3. "Philo Patriae," "Patriotism," *NYJ*, Nov. 2, 1775; Peter Force, ed., *American Archives . . . A Documentary History of . . . the North American Colonies*, 4th ser., 6 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1837-1846), 3:1553, herein cited as *American Archives*; "A Poor Man," *Constitutional Gazette*, Nov. 25, 1775.

4. *NYJ*, Jan. 25, 1776.

5. *NYJ*, Nov. 2, 1775.

6. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 3:1106.

7. *Constitutional Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1775.

8. *NYJ*, Sept. 21, 1775.

9. *NYJ*, Dec. 21, 1775; *The New York Packet and the American Advertiser*, Jan. 25, 1776. For the struggle in Pennsylvania over independence, see Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765-1776* (Philadelphia, 1978), 149-176.

10. *NYJ*, Feb. 22, 1776. Also see A. Owen Aldridge, "The Influence of New York Newspapers on Paine's *Common Sense*," *NYHSQ* 60 (1976): 53-60.

11. *Constitutional Gazette*, Mar. 16, 1776.

12. *NYJ*, Feb. 1, 1776.

13. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:854-856.

14. *New York Packet*, Mar. 3, Apr. 18, 1776; *Constitutional Gazette*, Mar. 9, 30, 1776; *NYGWM*, Apr. 8, 15, 1776; *NYJ*, Apr. 18, 1776; "The Intelligencer" [or Hugh Hughes] to Samuel and John Adams, Feb. [4], 1776, Samuel Adams Papers, 1635-1827, NYPL.

15. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:438-440, 1389, 1441-1442. The quote is from Letter from New York, Mar. 22, 1776, John Almon, ed., *The Remembrancer or Impartial Repository of Public Events*, 17 vols. (London, 1775-1784), 3:85.

16. RRL, Jr., to James Duane, Feb. 16, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL. Duane, too, was very hesitant to seek independence; Duane to RRL, Jr., Mar. 20, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL. "To the Inhabitants of New York," *American Archives*, 4th ser., 5:854-856; "Salus Populi," *Constitutional Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1776.

17. *Constitutional Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1776; *NYJ*, Feb. 29, Mar. 14, 1776. A "Salus Populi" had already indirectly supported independence in the Dec. 27, 1775, issue of the *Pennsylvania Journal*.

18. "A Free Citizen," *To the Honourable Committee of Safety of the Colony of New York* [New York, 1776], Evans, 14384.
19. John Jay to Alexander McDougall, Apr. 11, 1776, Richard B. Morris, ed., *John Jay, The Making of a Revolutionary: Unpublished Papers, 1745-1780* (New York, 1975), 1:254; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:395; Worthington C. Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1904-1937), 4:342, 351, 357-358, herein cited as *Journals of the Continental Congress*; RRL, Jr., to Jay, May 17, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL; Duane to Jay, May 18, Jay to Duane, May 29, 1776, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:266, 269-270.
20. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:1332; Mason, *Road to Independence*, 151-152.
21. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:1338.
22. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:895-898.
23. The quote is from *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:614-615. NYGWM, June 3, 1776; Hughes to John Adams, May 29, 1776, Robert J. Taylor et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1977-), 4:219-220.
24. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:1362-1363, 1377; *Journals of the Continental Congress* 5:425; Thomas Jefferson, "Notes of Proceedings in Congress," [June 7-28, 1776], Paul H. Smith et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, 14 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1976-), 3:158-164; Edward Rutledge to Jay, June 29, 1776, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:280-281.
25. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:1395-1396.
26. On June 16, for instance, Congress learned of the "Hickey Conspiracy," a plot to kidnap Washington when the British invaded New York; Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists* (Knoxville, 1986), 156-157.
27. William Smith, *Historical Memoirs of William Smith, Historian of the Province of New York, Member of the Governor's Council . . .*, ed. William H. W. Sabine, 2 vols. (New York, 1956-1958), 1:257, herein cited as Smith, *Memoirs*; Jacob Walton to Henry Cruger, Nov. 1, Harris Cruger to Henry Cruger, Nov. 3, 1775, *Calendar of Home Office Papers* 4:480, 481; RRL, Jr., to Jay, [July 6, 1776], Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:282-283; RRL, Jr., to Edward Rutledge, Oct. 10, 1776, Livingston Family Papers, NYPL.
28. Vice Adm. Samuel Graves to Philip Stephens, July 16, V. Pearse Ashfield to Isaac Wilkins, Nov. 4, 1775, *Calendar of Home Office Papers of the Reign of King George III, 1760-1775*, 4 vols. (London, 1878-99), 4:394, 482; RRL, Jr., to Jay, July 17, 1775, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:158-160; Gov. William Tryon to Lord Dartmouth, Apr. 12, 1775, C.O. 5/1106; Roger J. Champagne, "New York Politics and Independence, 1776," *NYHSQ* 46 (1962): 286; William A. Benton, *Whig-Loyalism: An Aspect of Political Ideology in the American Revolutionary Era* (Rutherford, N.J., 1968), 176.
29. Seabury played on these fears in *Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress*, Samuel Seabury, *Letters of a Westchester Farmer*, ed. Clarence H. Vance (White Plains, N.Y., 1930), 43-68.
30. *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:897.
31. *NYJ*, June 20, 1776. Concerning "the Assault on Aristocracy" throughout America, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992), 271-286.
32. Champagne, "New York's Radicals and the Coming of Independence," *JAH* 51 (1964): 39-40. By February 1776 only 16,000 people lived in town; Smith, *Memoirs* 1:264. By August the number was down to about 5,000; Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr., *New York City during the War for Independence* (New York, 1931), 76.

33. New York delegates to the Provincial Congress, July 2, 1776, Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress* 3:371-372; *Constitutional Gazette*, July 3, 1776; *American Archives*, 4th ser., 6:1443-1444.
34. Peter Force, ed., *American Archives . . . A Documentary History of . . . the North American Colonies*, 5th ser., 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1848-1853), 1:1387-1388, 1394, 1410, 1466; Mason, *Road to Independence*, 230; Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (Baltimore, 1981), 163-166.
35. William Duer to Jay, May 28, 1777, Morris, ed., *John Jay* 1:406; William Smith to Philip Schuyler, Aug. 17, 1776, Smith, *Memoirs* 2:2-3; and RRL, Jr., to William Duer, June 12, 1777, Robert R. Livingston Papers, NYHS (microfilm).
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1. William Howe to Lord George Germain, Sept. 3, 21, 1776, C.O. 5/93; George R. Barnes and J. H. Owen, eds., *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, 4 vols. (London, 1932-1938), 1:156-157.
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3. Extract of a Letter from New York, Sept. 23, 1776, Almon, ed., *Remembrancer* 4:119.
4. NYGWM, Sept. 30, 1776; Tryon to Germain, Sept. 24, 1776, C.O. 5/1107; Worthington C. Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1904-1937), 5:733; Barck, *New York during the War for Independence*, 81.
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2. Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising," *WMQ* 14 (1957): 3-15; the quote is from p. 10. "A Freeman" to Printer, *WPB*, Nov. 28, 1765; "Freeman," "Liberty, Property, and No Stamps," *New York Mercury*, Dec. 23, 1765. Also see Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York, 1975),