

**Volume 7**

**Number 080**

**British Supporters of the American  
Revolution - I**

**Lead: Most Americans forget that the colonies were seriously divided over the Revolution. As a matter of fact, so was Great Britain.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Some scholars have rightly called the American Revolution the second English Civil War. While there were large British and Continental armies campaigning up and down the eastern seaboard of North America, the most intense and sometimes brutal conflict during the**

war years was between partisan groups. Tories and Patriots, operating out in the countryside, burned and pillaged their neighbors' homes and farms if they were closely identified with or insufficiently supportive of one side or another. Only about half the colonists vigorously backed the cause of independence. The rest were ambivalent about the Revolution or bitterly opposed.

Not surprisingly there was division in Britain as well. Attempts to put down the colonials, while wildly popular at first, were not universally supported. By 1779 that support was beginning to evaporate and after the surrender of General Cornwallis at Yorktown two years later, it simply

**disappeared.**

**For the most part Scotland backed the Crown in its war effort, but from the beginning there was serious and open opposition in Ireland, Wales and England. One of the most widely used political tools was the circulating petition. Approximately 45,000 Britons petitioned the government after 1775 on the conflict. Over the years the numbers of opponents and supporters of the American war were just about evenly divided. Pamphlets written against the government were distributed widely even before the phenomenal success of Tom Paine's *Common Sense* (1776). John Cartwright wrote in 1774 that honesty dictates that no man really**

**owns property if someone can “take (it) from him without his consent.”  
Next time: Wilkes, Rockingham and Edmund Burke.**

**At the University of Richmond,  
this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**Lutnick, Solomon, *The American Revolution and the British Press*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1967.**

**Smith, Paul H. *English Defenders of American Freedoms*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1972.**

**<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1791burke.html>**

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