

National Humanities Center

My Neighbor, My Enemy: How American Colonists Became Patriots and Loyalists

"The Crisis," Number IV, London, 1775

Although ignored by historians of the American Revolution, "The Crisis"—a serial that appeared throughout the colonies during the spring and summer of 1775—reached more readers than any other colonial publication before Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" appeared in January of 1776. Shrill, angry, even violent in tone, "The Crisis" spoke to the ordinate people of America in a political language they understood.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the author's attitude toward the king of England?
2. Why would the author characterize the conflict in America as a "civil war"?
3. On what grounds does the author assert a commonality of interest between the British and he Americans?

T H E
CRISIS.

N U M B E R I V.

*Ye Conspirators against the Liberties of Mankind at
St. James's, in St. Stephen's Chapel, the House of
Lords, or amongst the Bench of Satanical Bishops,
must surely think there is no God to judge, nor
Hell to receive you; or you could never be so far
abandoned as to stain your hands, and consent to
dye the Plains of America with the innocent blood
of her inhabitants.*

Nero had such Instruments of Slaughter.

THE steady and uniform perseverance in a regular plan of despotism, since the commencement of this reign, makes it evident to the meanest capacity, that a design was formed, (and it has with too much success been carried into execution) for subverting the religion, laws, and constitution of this kingdom, and to establish upon the ruins of public liberty, an arbitrary system of government: in a word, the destruction of this kingdom will soon be effected by a Prince of the House of Brunswick.

relief, and all the assistance in their power, to their oppressed and injured fellow-subjects in America

Let them heartily join the Americans, and see whether, Tyranny and Lawless Power, or, Reason, Justice, Heaven, Truth and Liberty will prevail.

Let them, together with the gentlemen of landed property, who must greatly suffer by this unnatural civil war, make a glorious stand against the enemies of public freedom, and the constitutional rights of the colonies; for, with the ruin of America, must be involved that of England.

Let them in plain terms, declare their own strength, and the power of the people, a power, that has hitherto withstood the united efforts of fraud and tyranny; a power, to which all Kings have ever owed their crowns; a power which raises them to a throne; and when unworthy of their delegated trust, can pull them down.

Let them declare to the world, they will never be so base and cowardly, as quietly to see any part of their fellow-subjects, butchered or enslaved, either in England or America, to answer the purpose of exalted villainy: and by that means become the detested instruments of their own destruction.

Let them declare to the world, they are not yet ripe for slavery, that their forefathers made a noble resistance, and obtained a decisive victory over tyranny and lawless power, when the STUARTS reigned; that they are determined to do themselves justice, and not to suffer any farther attacks upon their freedom, from the present Sovereign, who is exceedingly desirous, as well as ambitious, to destroy the liberties of mankind; but that they do insist upon a restoration of their own violated rights, and

T O T H E

Officers, Soldiers, and Seamen,

Who may be employed to butcher their Relations,
Friends, and Fellow-Subjects in America.

YOU can neither be ignorant of, nor unacquainted with the arbitrary steps, that the present King, supported by an abandoned Ministry, and a venal set of prostituted Lords and Commons, is now pursuing to overturn the sacred constitution of the British Empire, which he had sworn to preserve. You are not, or will not long be ignorant, that the King, the Lords and Commons, have, (to satiate their revenge against a few individuals) declared the whole people of America to be in a state of rebellion, only because they have openly avowed their resolution to support their charters, rights and liberties, against the secret machinations of designing men who would destroy them: and you are fixed upon as the instruments of their destruction. However, I entertain too good an opinion of you, to believe there is one **TRUE ENGLISHMAN**, who will undertake the bloody work. Men without fortunes, principles or connections, may indeed, handle their arms, in any desperate cause, to oblige a tyrant, or monster in human shape: But men of family and fortune, or of honest principles, I hope could never be prevailed upon to sheath their swords in the bowels of their countrymen. Englishmen, surely cannot be found to execute so diabolical a deed, to imbrue their hands in innocent blood; and fight

the French service. Be assured, if you can be prevailed upon to butcher, or enslave your fellow subjects, and to set up an arbitrary power on the ruins of public liberty, that your substance would soon be reduced to the miserable pittance of foreign troops; and you with the surviving subjects of England and America, be reduced to the miserable condition of being ruled by an army of Scotch Janizaries, assisted by Roman Catholics.

Let every English and Irish Officer, Soldier, and Seaman, seriously weigh these things; and then if they are valiant, courageous, magnanimous and free, like their forefathers; if they are true to their King and their country; if they value their religion, laws, lives, liberties, families and posterity; no consideration can prevail with them to engage against the Americans, in an inhuman bloody civil war.

Let every man then who is really and truly a Protestant, who wishes well to his country, and the rights of mankind, lay aside his prejudices, and consider the cause of America, and her success in this struggle for freedom, as a thing of the last consequence to England, upon which our salvation depends. for the present plan of royal despotism is a plan of general ruin. I say, let us all speedily unite, and endeavour to defend them from their open, and ourselves from our own secret and domestic enemies, and if any are luke-warm in this great public cause, and at this time of eminent danger, let them be made an example of treachery and cowardice; that the present generation may detest and abhor them, and posterity declaim against and curse them, as unnatural monsters, who would destroy the human race.