MANCHESTER AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By PETER MARSHALL, M.A., Ph.D.
PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

THE outbreak of the American Revolution set in train a series of events that would increase the importance of Manchester in national affairs, a development of particular interest in the light of the town’s continued exclusion from representation in Parliament. Despite this handicap, Mancunian responses to the Revolution enlarged throughout the nation an already widespread reputation for hostility to Whiggism and support for the established order.

These characteristics distinguished an urban centre whose population was undoubtedly growing but whose size depended upon the purposes and definitions of the estimator; as Professor Chaloner has pointed out, the parish, the township, and the town covered quite different areas, giving rise to plentiful confusion, even before the crucial problem was resolved of whether the total should include or exclude the inhabitants of Salford. It is, therefore, possible to say no more than that numbers were increasing rapidly, and that estimates for 1773-4 of a township total of 24,386 and for 1788 of 42,821 provide acceptable lower and upper figures. Though these totals did not place Manchester in the first rank of urban communities in the British Isles, they were quite sufficient to ensure it a prominent secondary position, and perhaps pre-eminence in the list of unincorporated, unrepresented towns in the country. The merchants, manufacturers, and professions to be found in this centre could not, either by past reputation or present activity, be consigned to obscurity.

When, in the summer of 1775, news reached England, first of the conflicts at Lexington and Concord, then, in the middle of August, of the far more alarming battle of Bunker Hill, the

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library on Wednesday, 9th February 1977.
North ministry proved less resolute than the King in the face of adversity. George did not hesitate, writing to his minister: "I am clear as to one point, that we must persist and not be dismayed by any difficulties that may arise on either side of the Atlantick; I know that I am doing my Duty, and I can never wish to retract." His stand was soon to receive popular support, and first of all from Manchester where, on 6 September, a gathering at the Bull’s Head Inn unanimously agreed to address the Crown. The signatories professed to look with horror on an unnatural war. Lenity had been of no avail; it had only aroused the Americans to daring acts of violence. To restore the situation, force was now necessary. Although presently prosperous, the Addressors declared themselves unintimidated by the check to their American trade, since many other channels of commerce remained open to them. It was impossible to "continue subject to lawless depredations from a deluded and unhappy people." and they were ready to support the King in any measures needed to punish the rebellion.

This Manchester Address provided the first public expression of support for a hard-pressed ministry. Sir Thomas Egerton, Member for the county, hastened to inform North of the meeting, which had been followed by a similar assembly at Lancaster. The news was immediately passed to the King, with the submission that

As this spirit has sprung up spontaneously in Lancashire... whether it ought not now to be encouraged, lest the Lancashire addressers who have behaved so handsomely should think themselves neglected, & complain of being unsupported... One or two addresses may not be of much importance, but a general run of addresses just before the opening of Parliament will be of great service, & lord North has reason to fear that the attack upon Government during the next Session will be very powerfull.

The King, equally promptly, expressed his gratification, observing that

1 George III to Lord North, 26 July 1775 (The Correspondence of King George The Third, ed. Sir John Fortescue (London, 1928), iii. 235).


3 Lord North to George III, 9 September 1775 (The Correspondence of King George The Third, iii. 255).
It is impossible to draw up a more dutiful and affectionate Address than the one from the town of Manchester which really gives me pleasure as it comes unsolicited; as You seem desirous that this Spirit should be encouraged I will certainly not object to it; though by fatal experience I am aware they will occasion counter petitions . . .

For the moment the example set by Manchester encouraged supporting rather than opposing gestures, infuriating Whigs where they occurred and suggesting that the King was somewhat too fearful of the power of the Opposition. So Richard Champion described the behaviour of the Bristol Tories only two weeks after the circulation of the original Address. The Mayor had been persuaded to call a public meeting.

As soon as the Mayor entered the Guildhall, he took his seat, said a few words about the Address, a Gentleman immediately produced one (of the Manchester Stamp), was desired to read it, which was by us injudiciously granted, as soon as it was done the Mayor sign'd it without a single Question being put, and notwithstanding all we could say, the Mayor would not hear any one, so unless we had made use of force, we could not prevent it . . .

The general, and unexpected, expression of support evoked the comment of Edward Gibbon that he had been told by a man "who might tell me a lye but who could not be mistaken, that no arts no management whatsoever have been used to procure the Addresses which fill the Gazette, and that Lord N. was as much surprised at the first that came up [at Manchester] as we could be at Sheffield".

In the Opposition Press attempts to discredit this loyal outburst soon appeared. The London Evening Post printed a letter, said to be written from Manchester on 8 September, whose author was concerned lest the town be considered hostile to Americans. He declared that the Address had been produced at a day's notice and did not express local feeling.

The advertisement was artfully penned, and the several Country gentlemen, of tory character, had been apprized of the meeting some time before, they therefore arrived on Wednesday, the 6th instant, to assist their friends in deceiving Govern-

1 George III to Lord North, 10 September 1775 (ibid. p. 256).
2 Richard Champion to Lord Rockingham, 20 September 1775 (Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, R1-1604, Sheffield City Libraries).
ment and injuring the whole community. You may depend upon it that the Address is signed by very few, excepting high churchmen, and men of jacobite principles ... it contains at least one notorious falsehood, in asserting the flourishing state of trade.¹

Another dissenting letter of the same date, while admitting that "Toryism prevails in this part of the country ", declared that "All the houses in Manchester, who have ever had any commerce with America, refused to sign the Address, as impolitick and ungrateful ".²

The denials of correspondents were, however, but the beginning of concerted protests. The King, with his anticipation of organized hostility, displayed a shrewd and accurate awareness of the likely course of political events. As he had predicted, the loyal Addresses stung the Opposition into action, and not least on account of the lead having been taken by Manchester. This provided a particular ground for the evoking of resentment and the expressing of abuse; to aroused Whigs, the political attitudes of Manchester derived directly from notorious Jacobite sympathies, with subservience to the Crown, irrespective of which royal house occupied the throne, a permanent characteristic of the town. Throughout the country the present behaviour of Manchester was linked to the part allegedly played by the town in the '45. So a Bristol gentleman who had attended the anti-American meeting in that city observed that:

It is remarkable, that some of the first promoters of the late address, did not address the late King in the rebellion of 1745. But they love to follow the steps of their friends at Manchester, whose attachment was so strong to the good old Stuart cause at that time, and whose present loyalty make them the first addressers now.³

Responses to the Manchester Address underlined the Whig preference to define political conflicts in seventeenth century terms.

In the course of the autumn of 1775 attitudes in Manchester towards the Revolution became more clear-cut. In common

² "Extract of a Letter ... dated Manchester September 8, 1775 ", ibid. p. 651.
³ Bristol Gazette, 28 September 1775.
with other towns Manchester responded to an appeal for funds to succor the troops in America. A meeting was called on 7 November at the Bull’s Head Inn by Thomas Marriott, the Boroughreeve, and Thomas Chadwick, the Constable. Some £886 4s. 2d. was quickly subscribed, and a further £151 14s. was forthcoming from Stockport and £240 from Blackburn by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the Whigs, as a counter to the Address, were preparing a Petition, which was to be delivered in the name of the county rather than from individual towns. During the week of 11 November a copy was placed in Crompton’s Coffee House for Manchester sympathizers to sign. The text conveyed a somewhat vague request for an end to be put to armed conflict and prayed the King “To exert his royal influence for the restoration of peace between Great Britain and the American colonies by such means as may put a stop to the dreadful and destructive consequences of a most unnatural civil war.” After attracting some 4,000 signatures throughout Lancashire it was presented to the King on 18 December, but there is no trace of its having been received with any of the delight that had greeted the arrival of the Manchester Address.

Throughout the country support was sought for declarations of loyalty and opposition to rebellion on the one hand, and of expressions of dismay and hopes for the restoration of peace on the other; who constituted the advocates of each opinion has been commonly determined by general assertions or newspaper allegations, neither of which can be considered to provide particularly reliable evidence. In the case of Manchester, however, the particular composition of the two groups can be investigated, for lists of subscribers to the Manchester Address and of local signatories of the Lancashire Petition have been preserved. Their names can be sought in the Manchester Directories for 1772, 1773 and 1781, issued by Mrs. Elizabeth Raffald and containing the names, addresses and occupations of numbers of inhabitants. Although an exact and complete

1 Manchester Mercury, 7, 21, 28 November, 12 December 1775.
2 Mary C. Hibbert Ware, Life & Correspondence of Samuel Hibbert Ware (Manchester, 1882), pp. 64-66.
3 Ibid. names from the Lancashire Petition. Names appended to the Manchester Address are given in American Archives 4th Ser., iii. 649-51.
identification remains impossible, a sufficient proportion of the subscribers can be traced to provide clear indications of the sources of Tory and Whig support in the town.

Of the two groups, the Tory was both by far the larger and the more clearly defined, containing 308 names as compared with 170 Whig subscribers, many of whom did business but did not live in Manchester. Some 250 of the Tories could be identified and only 11 resided outside the town. Over a fifth of their list, a total of 64, was made up of gentlemen and members of the Professions, in roughly equal numbers. A quarter could be described as manufacturers, overwhelmingly of cloth and textiles, and a third supplied goods and services to the town in general and presumably its wealthier elements in particular. The Address secured many signatures from shopkeepers, cabinet-makers, hatters, barbers and perruque makers, innkeepers and providers of most forms of alcoholic beverages. Almost a third of the lesser total of the Whigs do not appear in the Manchester directories and another fifth can be traced as country manufacturers and merchants trading in the town. The strength of the Petitioners was concentrated in manufacturers—they accounted for two in five of identifiable Manchester names and well over one in three of the entire list if country signatures are not discounted. In all other categories, however, Whigs were far inferior, both in numbers and in the proportions of their list. However rough these estimates may be taken to be, it seems clear that, in the early phase of the American war, Manchester opinion divided along social and economic lines in which the functions assumed by the town, in relation to the surrounding countryside, stimulated conservative sentiments at odds with more specifically local and ultimately industrial developments. For the moment, Manchester enjoyed a national reputation as a stronghold of either loyal or Jacobite attitudes, according to whether observers were of a Tory or Whig persuasion.

After this initial division of opinion and its consequent attraction of notoriety throughout the country, the next ten months saw the war exert little evident impact upon the inhabitants; since the principal source of information remains for
this period the *Manchester Mercury*, a weekly journal of stern Tory and Administration sympathies, it might be more accurate to conclude that there was little to report in the way of encouraging news about the suppression of the revolt. When, in October 1776, the landing on Long Island became public knowledge this phase of disappointment came to an end. Joseph Harrop, the *Mercury*’s editor, as he was wont to do when important news reached him too early or too late for his usual, Tuesday, edition, then issued a special supplement, which was distributed free to subscribers. Dedicated though it was to the anti-colonial cause, the *Mercury* provided its readers, both in its regular and extra editions, with a considerable quantity of American news. Mancunians were not kept in ignorance of the progress of events, though the bulk of their information was clearly assembled by the publisher from his reading of the London press. On 22 October 1776, however, it was reported that “On receiving the News of the Defeat of the American Rebells on Long Island, in many Places in this County, the Bells were set a Ringing, and in the Evening there were Bonfires, Illuminations, and every other Demonstration of Joy”.

This behaviour was confirmed from the opposing side by the Whig Josiah Wedgwood: “The people here”, he wrote from Etruria on 8 November, seem quite frantic with joy upon the taking of New York. At Manchester they will certainly keep no bounds, & at Bolton they had begun to break unilluminated windows upon the taking of Long Island; and such is the spirit throughout Lancashire that I shall not be surpris’d to hear of any lengths the Mob may have proceeded to there, especially in Manchester, where very warm Hand Bills had been circulated on both sides the question, & put the Town into such a ferment that they seem’d to be within a Gazett extraordinary of doing the most extravagant things.

Wedgwood’s reference to the clash of opinions in Manchester cannot, unfortunately, be expanded, but clearly some inhabitants were prepared to voice dissent amid widespread joy at British victories.

1 *Manchester Mercury*, 22 October 1776.
2 Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 8 November 1776 (*The Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* (Manchester, 1973), ii. 322-3).
The general reputation of Manchester remained that of a Tory stronghold whose attachment to the Stuarts far outstripped any respect for a Hanoverian monarch. Evidence of this feeling was regularly forthcoming. Early in January 1777 the *Mercury* reported that:

The Tragedy of King Charles the First, or, the Royal Martyr, performed for the first Time at our Theatre on Wednesday last, was received by a numerous and brilliant Audience, with... strong Marks of Pleasure and Approbation... the parting between K. Charles and his three children, in the last Act, is one of the most pathetic, affecting Scenes, that ever was represented in an English Theatre; and we are justified in this, by the Floods of Tears it drew from the Audience of Wednesday Night...¹

During the short visit to Manchester in June of Samuel Curwen, an American loyalist, ample signs of lingering Stuart sympathies were to be observed; an acquaintance's landlady proved to be "Quaker in religion and Jacobite in political principle", though she admitted that the numbers of her kindred had diminished since an English-born Prince had ascended the throne. Still, Curwen noted, his stay having been at that time of the year, Jacobitism was here, openly professed; all of that sect putting up large Oak boughs over their doors on the 29 May to express joy at the glorious Event of the restoration of the Stuart family to the English throne; many such I saw. The Ladies, who if they take a party are ever violent, scruple not, openly and without restraint to drink Prince Charles's health and their wishes for his restoration to his paternal Kingdom.²

At first sight it may appear somewhat surprising that a town so renowned, or notorious, for its Toryism, should not have attracted a part of that growing body of American Loyalists forced to seek refuge in the British Isles. If Curwen's impressions of the town can be considered as characteristic, this failure may seem to have rested on the particularly local qualities of its conservatism; while Manchester's physical growth offered much to admire, local manners could not be considered attractive to the visitor. So Curwen was unstinted in his praise of a thoroughfare such as King Street, finding "most of its houses noble;

¹ *Manchester Mercury*, 7 January 1777.
great additions of buildings and streets are daily making, and of a larger size than at Birmingham", but did not extend this approval to the inhabitants.

The disposition and manners of this people as given by themselves is inhospitable and boorish. I have seen nothing to contradict this assertion though my slender acquaintance will not justify me in giving that character... The dress of the people here savours not much of the London mode in general. The people are remarkable for Coarseness of feature and the language of the Country is to me unintelligible.

To the outsider, the attractions of Manchester were evidently somewhat less evident than its baffling peculiarities.

A reputation for Jacobite sympathies together with the demonstration of a fervent loyalty to the ruling monarch distinguished the town's political outlook. During the summer of 1777 Mancunians celebrated George III's birthday, the fourth of June, with particular ceremony and enthusiasm; bells were rung, volleys fired by the militia in St. Ann's Square, followed by the playing of God Save the King, and a day of rejoicing brought to a close by the holding of a brilliant Assembly. The next few months witnessed the regular receipt of heartening news; by 27 August 1777 the Mercury was able to announce that

The Hour is now Approaching, when all those vile Republican Miscreants, as well on this, so on the other Side the Atlantic (who have fomented and abetted a most wicked and horrid Rebellion, against the best of Kings, and the best of Ministers) must answer for all their Mal-Practices.

Unfortunately for the accuracy of this prediction, it had been occasioned by news that the suppression of the rebellion had entered a final stage as General Burgoyne advanced with his army from the St. Lawrence towards Albany and New York.

On 2 December 1777 George III received "the unpleasant accounts" of the surrender of Burgoyne and his army at Saratoga; within a week a "much pleased" monarch had received an offer from "Gentlemen in the Neighbourhood of Manchester to raise 1000 Men". This patriotic gesture had been undertaken well before news of its necessity had become generally known in

1 Ibid. 7 June 1777, pp. 365-6.
2 Manchester Mercury, 10 June 1777.
3 Ibid. 27 August 1777.
Manchester, for it was on the same day as the King had discussed details of the offer with North that the first meeting of the Committee for raising funds to recruit the regiment was held in the town. As with the presentation of the 1775 Address, the leading figure was Sir Thomas Egerton who, by 13 December, had furnished North with a list of gentlemen who might serve as officers in the corps. Although the King had no objection to the nominations, he did require the list to be kept private, since he felt that

if they apply for the recommendation of too many of the Officers or for very extraordinary advanced Rank to those of their friends to be advanced from other Corps into the ones they offer to raise it will give such general disgust to the Army and in particular to those Serving in America that it would be more dis-servisable than advantageous.¹

Some thirteen officers, the greater number with close local connections, were subsequently granted commissions in the new regiment, to be known as the Royal Manchester Volunteers, or 72nd Foot.²

The first meeting of the Committee had agreed that its membership should be extended to all who subscribed at least one hundred guineas towards the costs of raising the regiment. By the time of the second meeting on 22 December the presence of fifteen members indicated that funds were rapidly being pledged, and the process of recruitment was systematically approached; Manchester newspapers were to be used to secure subscriptions, a band was to be employed to beat up volunteers in the market place, with committee members present to supervise and encourage enlistment. Recruits were to be at least 5 feet 6 inches high and between the ages of 16 and 30—conditions slightly modified by a letter from Barrington, the secretary at war, to Egerton, which also stipulated that the regiment should be raised within four months. The amounts to be disbursed in cash and clothing to the volunteers were also agreed.³

¹ George III to Lord North, 9, 13 December 1777 (The Correspondence of King George The Third, iii. 504-5, 511).
² Listed ibid. p. 506.
³ "Minutes of the Committee Book and other Documents, relating to the raising of the 72d or Manchester Regiment in 1778 ", Manchester Central Reference Library, MS. fol. 356. 11 R 1, fols. 6-9.
The committee was to meet every Saturday evening at the Bull's Head to scrutinize the subscription accounts. On 24 December the first public muster had taken place when a number of the regiment's newly approved officers paraded the streets "with Drums and Fifes, the Regimental band of Music, and a handsome blue Silk Flag, to beat up for Volunteers". In the afternoon the recruiting party was joined in St. Ann's Square by a detachment of the 4th Dragoons who, "after paying a Compliment to the Flag, discharged several Vollies in honour of the loyal Toasts which were then Drunk. A Number of fine spirited Lads flocked to the Standard, and were enlisted in the course of the Day...". The enlistment campaign was then initiated, with the committee demonstrating considerable enterprise in its methods; the company performing at the Theatre Royal was engaged to provide a special performance of The Recruiting Officer, all the volunteers being given tickets in the Gallery. The play was presented on Friday 2 January 1778 to a very brilliant audience, most of the ladies wearing blue breast-knots, and the gentlemen blue cockades; at the conclusion of the play, the union, and a blue flag, with the words The Royal Manchester Volunteers wrote upon it, was brought upon the stage, when the music struck up, accompanied with the song of God Save the King, and was succeeded by Rule Britannia; both of which were re-echoed in chorus from every part of the house, concluding with three huzzas. Such warmth of loyalty from all ranks of people is a convincing proof of their affection to the best of Kings and a knowledge of the blessings we enjoy under a mild and just government.

The first months of 1778 were devoted to bringing the regiment to full strength. Recruiting parties were despatched as far north as Blackburn and south to Leek, with the Committee's allowance to their officers raised to payments of six guineas for each volunteer enlisted. By February the search for men had been extended to Nottingham, though the Committee always appeared uneasy at this, perhaps finding the distance too great to assure firm control of proceedings. Towns such as Wigan, Bolton, Stockport, Middleton, Oldham and Rochdale were more acceptable for the seeking of recruits attracted by bands, music,

1 *Manchester Mercury*, 30 December 1777.

2 *Bonner & Middleton's Bristol Journal*, 10 January 1778.
and the sight of the blue regimental flag. In Manchester the company at the Theatre Royal proved steadfast in its patriotism, composing and delivering a song "To the Manchester bold Volunteers", permitting John Philip Kemble, then one of the principal players, to deliver an Ode specially composed for the occasion by John Whitaker, the local historian—a piece of verse that exuded pride in local loyalty at the cost of escaping any merit as literature—and in February presenting the first Manchester performance of *The Recruiting Serjeant*, in which the military ardour of the audience was aroused by the Sergeant's "celebrated song", "O, what a charming thing's a Battle", and the play concluded with "a Dance by the Recruits, their wives, Lasses, &c". These activities did not go entirely unrewarded: the final accounts of the Committee noted the expenditure of £40 8s. 6d. on "Flambeaux, Ale and Play Tickets to Recruits".]

The combination of publicity and widespread recruitment—in respect of which a conflict arose with officers seeking to raise volunteers for the regiment being assembled in Liverpool—proved remarkably effective. By the end of March the Royal Manchester Volunteers had reached a full strength of over 1000 men and were reviewed in Castle Field prior to their departure for Portsmouth where they would embark for Gibraltar. Newspaper reports declared that local enthusiasm was intense and that the recruits regretted only that their destination was not to be America, "where they might more immediately have shewn their Loyalty and Courage, by seconding the Endeavours of their Fellow Soldiers, in chastising the Authors and Abettors of a most unjustifiable, unprovoked, and unnatural Rebellion". On their way to embarkation the Volunteers passed through Windsor, and were reviewed on Datchet Common by the King on 20 April. Attired in a uniform of "a White Jacket turned up with Blue", the Regiment was said to have gone through its various manoeuvres "with singular adroitness", and to have been highly praised by the King in conversation with Egerton and other members of the Committee present on the occasion.

1 John Eglington Nailey, "John Whitaker, the Historian of Manchester", *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club* iii. (1877), 160-2; *Manchester Mercury*, 6 January, 17 February, 21 July 1778.
They were, George thought, "A Number of the most healthy young Men he had ever seen at one Time".1

The raising, equipping, and financing of the regiment can be seen to have been completed with speed and success. 1082 recruits had been enlisted at a total cost of £7,583, the greater part of which had been distributed as bounty money. Since subscriptions had amounted to £8,075, a comfortable balance remained, and the Committee was able to conclude its meetings on 24 July 1778, noting that the Regimental Accounts appeared to be "particular regular and accurate". There seems no reason to doubt that, by eighteenth century standards of military efficiency, the establishment of the Regiment represented a very considerable achievement.2

Success in Manchester was transformed into notoriety elsewhere; Whig opponents of the war were quick to note that the army lost at Saratoga had been replaced by regiments raised in Manchester, Liverpool, and Scotland. This proved that a Stuart despotism would return, thanks to renewed support from regions distinguished for an inveterate attachment to Jacobitism. The King's reluctance to encourage the raising of new regiments allowed preference to be given to schemes providing funds to add, as one Opposition source put it, "ragged recruits into old battalions", with the consequence that Manchester and Liverpool stood conspicuous—or reprehensible—as the sole English sponsors of specific contingents. When loyalists elsewhere attempted to repair the military losses, their opponents accused them of attempting to infect the local body politic with contagious diseases incurred elsewhere. A Bristol newspaper contributor entitled the illness "the Manchester BLOODY FEVER" and described its symptoms:

It begins with a severe rigor or chill on all the affections and duties the subjects of Great Britain owe to their country, their sovereign, and the cause of liberty. This stage of the disease lasts a considerable time and is succeeded by a great degree of heat against those persons who are friends to the principles which drove out the tyrannical race of Stuart and brought the house of Hanover to the throne. It is accompanied with an intense thirst, which is satisfied with nothing less than

1 Manchester Mercury, 31 March, 7, 28 April 1778.
2 Ibid. 21 July 1778; Committee Minutes, MS. fol. 356. 11 R 1, fol. 26.
large draughts of human blood. The blood of thousands which has been shed, does not appear to have quenched this raging thirst, for they still call out, BLOOD! BLOOD! . . .

The raising of a subscription in Bristol to pay for the enlistment of recruits was both encouraged and denounced as having been initiated in Manchester.

In the town, events connected with regimental affairs were seized upon as occasions for patriotic demonstrations. When, early in October 1778, Roger Aytoun, a Captain in the Volunteers and considerable contributor to the subscription funds, returned from Gibraltar: "Soon after his arrival, the Bells were set a-ringing, and joy glowed in every countenance". In the following month John Wilson passed through Manchester on his way from America to take up his duties with the regiment; he, too, was greeted by church bells and received visits from many gentlemen. In December, the first anniversary of the raising of the Volunteers was made the occasion of a sustained and formal celebration. Bells were rung at intervals throughout the day and Sir Thomas Egerton presided over a dinner at the Bull's Head attended by many of the original subscribers. The evening passed "with the greatest Harmony & decorum" despite a potentially disabling series of Toasts, offered to

The King & Constitution—the Queen & Royal Family—General Clinton—& Forces in America—Royal Manchester Volunteers and the 16th of December—Lady Patroness—Britons strike Home—Lord North—Vigour in our Measures, and Unanimity in our Councills—Disappointment to the Enemies of Great Britain—Detection and Infamy to the Abettors of Great Britain—Prosperity to the County of Lancashire—Town and Trade of Manchester—Colonels and Corps—The Members of the House of Commons, who voted in favour of the Trade of the County of Lancaster, the last Session of Parliament—Governors and Garrison of Gibraltar—Every British Tar—Mr. M'Donald—Major Horsfall—Lord Cornwallis—Sir William Erskine—The Spirit of the Nation properly exerted—May the British Standard never suffer by French Fire—May the spirit of the Manifesto be carried into Execution—Army and Navy of Great Britain.

1 Bristol Gazette, 19 February, 22 January 1778.
2 Ibid. 1, 15 January 1778; Bonner & Middleton's Bristol Journal, 24 January 1778.
3 Manchester Mercury, 6 October 1778.
4 Ibid. 3 November 1778.
5 Ibid. 22 December 1778.
In subsequent years the King's birthday and the anniversary of the raising of the Regiment proved occasions for demonstrating the strength of local loyalty through carefully prepared celebrations. To these fixed events could be added other proofs of support for the war in the wake of news of victory. So, in June 1780 the Mercury reported that:

On receiving the News on Saturday last of the taking of Charles Town, in South Carolina, Joy glowed in every Countenance, the Bells at all the different Churches in Town were set a Ringing, and rung at Intervals the whole Day, and great part of Sunday. On Monday a Party of General Holroyd's Dragoons, and a Party of the 48th Regiment of Foot, quartered here, paraded to St. Ann's Square, and there fired a Feu de Joy, on the great and glorious Event, amongst the Acclamations of thousands of Spectators...¹

The encouragement of popular rejoicing at campaign successes perhaps reached its peak as the war drew to a close; the shame of Yorktown could be erased by the glory of Rodney's victories in the West Indies. On 30 May 1782 the local garrison and gentlemen employed the day in public rejoicing, and on 4 June even more elaborate festivities were staged in Stockport where

In the Evening, the Company, preceded by a Band of Music, the Bells ringing, Bonfires blazing, and Colours flying, exhibiting the Ville de Paris in the Possession of the gallant English Admiral, went in Procession through the different Streets, and assembled in the Market Place, where a large Bonfire was prepared, and Wine and several Barrels of Ale were given to the Populace, and suitable Toasts were there drank under Discharges of Cannon...²

The war had stimulated political awareness and response on an unprecedented scale, a development that had been carefully and steadily nurtured by the leading Tories of the Manchester area.

Sympathy for the war was dominant but not absolute, as events imposed strains and did not merely demand rejoicing. There is no evidence that the minority who supported the Whig Petition later became advocates of the war; amongst the complete list of names of subscribers to the Volunteers only a bare handful can be traced as signers of the Lancashire Petition. The conflict did not turn Manchester Whigs into Tories on any appreciable scale. For want of evidence it must be concluded that resistance to the war was passive, but during its later phase

¹ Ibid. 20 June 1780. ² Ibid. 11 June 1782.
incidents are reported in the *Mercury* which indicate that the social and economic consequences of the conflict were fostering civil disorder.

In July 1780, less than three weeks after the celebrations at the fall of Charleston, a mob sought to prevent the punishment of a Private in the 48th Foot for mutiny. The magistrate could not persuade them to depart and, after reading the Riot Act in five places and waiting, fruitlessly, for an hour for the return of peace, was obliged to call on the military for assistance in dispersing the mob. There were no fatalities but the violence was evidently alarming, since the report praised the rôle of the soldiery and of the principal inhabitants who "gave their early and active Assistance on this occasion; and still continue, by Nightly Patroles, and every other Means, to preserve the Peace of the Town, which is now, we flatter ourselves, happily restored".¹

The summer and autumn of the following year saw lengthy and widespread outbreaks of disputes between the manufacturers and weavers of small-wares. The stoppage, which began in late July 1781, continued, accompanied by charges and counter-charges of considerable bitterness from both sides, until late September.² Trouble was not confined to one quarter; the fustian dyers offered rewards for the theft of materials, evidently taking place on a considerable scale, from their properties. September must have been a period of widespread and disturbing discontent, since the Justices of the Peace ordered that notices be distributed throughout the neighbourhood, as

there have lately been numerous Meetings of Weavers and other Artificers, in *Manchester, Oldham, &c* under the Pretence of regulating Trade and Prices of Labour, which said Meetings may be of dangerous Consequence to the People who attend them, and to the Country in general.

The magistrates declared their determination to suppress and prevent all riots and tumults. The reading of the Riot Act would be marked by the display of a Blue Flag. If violence

¹ Ibid. 11 July 1780.

ensued or the crowd did not disperse within an hour, a Red Flag would indicate that force was immediately to be used.¹

Economic conditions were clearly not improving. In December the *Mercury* announced on "the Authority of the Boroughreeve and Constables" that it was "almost certain" that by the following April near ten thousand bags of white cotton would be imported, "which is more than has been imported into this Kingdom for the two last Years, a considerable Part of which is daily expected".² In March 1782 the arrival of three West Indian cotton ships at Liverpool was announced but this, despite assurances, did not transform the situation, for in April a correspondent warned manufacturers against the activities of speculators. Cotton was alleged to be arriving in large quantities from the Caribbean and from Leghorn, but it had obviously not yet reached the manufacturers, since it was concluded that

"The Consumers will act very wisely in buying small Quantities at a Time, of that Article, which, it is presumed will overturn the Schemes of the Engrossers, and bring down the Price within some reasonable Compass..."³

Whatever victories there had been to celebrate, local manufacturers had not easily surmounted the economic problems of war-time.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the prevailing political outlook in Manchester was no longer Tory. The sympathies of the leading citizens remained unmistakably aligned with the established order. When, in the autumn of 1782, Wyvill's County movement solicited support for its programme of parliamentary reform, the response of the Constables of Manchester offered no encouragement: since there was "fortunately no Corporation", they had consulted many of the principal inhabitants, who were generally agreed that it was no time for a change.

They are afraid it will tend to disturb that harmony and unanimity now so essentially necessary to the welfare of this Country, and to divert the attention of our Rulers from what ought to be the first of their concerns, namely to bring to a

¹ *Manchester Mercury*, 18 September, 9 October 1781.
² Ibid. 18 December 1781.
³ Ibid. 5 March, 23 April 1782.
speedy and happy end the present dangerous and expensive war, upon the event of which not only the future improvements of constitution, but even the existence of the British Empire depends.¹

Loyalty to a cause had been accompanied by loyalty to the politician who had, for the greater part of the war, sought to ensure victory. In August 1782, relieved of the burden of office, Lord North, with his family, visited Sir Thomas Egerton at Heaton House. The visit was intended to be a private affair, but the enthusiasm of Mancunians transformed it into a public demonstration of political support. With some difficulty North was persuaded to attend a public dinner offered him at the Bull's Head by some ninety gentlemen. After declaring his devotion to the commercial interests of the town and his delight at his reception, he agreed to show himself at a window to a crowd of several thousands, and to drink a health to the town. His coach was drawn to Ardwick Green by the people as all expressed their regard of "an HONEST MAN AND AN UPRIGHT MINISTER".² Whatever judgements other parts of the country had passed on the Prime Minister, his reputation remained unchallenged in Manchester.

The end of the war allowed Manchester's trade with Europe and the Americas to resume its normal course. It also saw the return of its regiment from Gibraltar. The Royal Manchester Volunteers returned to the town and were disbanded in September 1783, having played a creditable part in withstanding the siege by the French and Spanish forces and without having suffered a serious number of casualties.³ There are no indications that Mancunians regretted the aid offered by the town in prosecuting the American war.

It should not, therefore, be concluded that the war years were of little significance in local developments. At the outbreak of the conflict Manchester's political reputation was still primarily that of an enduring Jacobitism: by its close, differences had become those of the more conventional Tory and Whig. If

¹ Christopher Wyvill, Political Papers... (York, 1794), ii. 95-96.
² Manchester Mercury, 27 August 1782.
the Tories quite evidently held the upper hand in the town's politics, their activities, and the organization that they found necessary to ensure their dominance, provided a political stage which the unincorporated and unrepresented community otherwise lacked. Where the Tories led their opponents would follow; the political events of the 1790s in Manchester cannot properly be understood without an appreciation of the developments in political attitudes brought about by the events of the American revolutionary war.