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Revolution on the Hudson New York City and the Hudson River Valley in the War of American Independence

By George Daughan.
432 pages.
W. W. Norton & Company, 2016.
\$28.95. Reviewed by Joseph F. Callo

At the beginning of his wide-ranging account of the American Revolution, George Daughan identifies the strategy established by Britain's king George III to bring the war to a favorable conclusion for his country. The basic idea was that one British force would drive south along the lake and river system leading from Quebec to Albany. A second force would drive up the Hudson River to Albany from New York City. The king believed the simultaneous campaigns would detach New England and New York from the middle and southern colonies. As Daughan puts it, "It looked to George III and his advisers that by seizing the passageway connecting Manhattan with Canada they could isolate New England's radicals, destroy them, and end the rebellion in a single campaign season."

The king assumed that "once New England's Loyalists saw Britain's awesome power... they would flock to his banner, as would political fence sitters, while rebels would be cowed."

Inherent in the king's strategy was a contemptuous attitude toward the American



King George III of England had a simple strategy: crush the colonists

colonists that typically gets only passing attention—if that. As one of the king's most influential ministers, first lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich, famously declared in 1755, the colonials were "cowards who would soon submit."

For their part, the rebels believed that they were pursuing the cause of liberty, and they felt strongly that their government was treating them unfairly. In a letter to a member of the Continental Congress, John Paul Jones, who captured the idea of liberty before he captured a single British ship, put it this way: "The situation of America is new in the annals of history, her affairs cry haste, and speed must answer them."

As the rebellion continued, the colonists increasingly resented being treated as scurrilous traitors; that unity was

an important—possibly the most important—factor that offset the military shortcomings and political incoherence of the nascent United States.

Within the extraordinary detail of *Revolution on the Hudson* is a message: Warfare involves a lot more than blowing up bridges, turning the enemy's flank, and making forced marches to launch surprise attacks. War also is a matter of intangibles, such as the deep-seated attitudes driving the antagonists. That's nourishing food for thought concerning our national behavior in a troubled world. MHQ

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