Impact of Class Relations and Warfare in the American Revolution: The New York Experience

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Class conflict between landlords and tenants on the great Hudson River estates has been the central theme in the historiography of the American Revolution in New York since the publication in 1909 of Carl Becker’s classic study of the province. It has been argued that the lease system as practiced by landlords like the Livingstons, Beekmans, Van Rensselaers, Philipses, and Van Cortlandts in the mid-eighteenth century was onerous, oppressive, and exploitative, with the result that the tenants became impoverished, resentful, and radicalized socially and economically, and that their radicalism, first manifested in the widespread antirent agitation in the 1750s and 1766, was carried on into the revolutionary period, affecting both the course and outcome of the Revolution. The stubborn pursuit of socioeconomic justice by the tenants not only made their Whig landlords reluctant revolutionaries but also accounted for several democratic achievements, such as the confiscation and distribution of the huge Loyalist estates and the establishment of the secret ballot as a mode of voting in elections. In the evolution of the historical drama, the tenants were never passive agents. Although they were not the precipitants of the Revolution at its beginning as the urban radicals in New York City were—so the argument goes—they nevertheless consciously used the Revolution as a vehicle for obtaining socioeconomic justice, a freehold estate, at the expense of their landlord’s land title. In sum, because of the radical behavior of the tenant class, historians have maintained that the Revolution in New York was a struggle for “who should rule at home” as well as for home rule.1

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The range and complexity of the subject prohibit a full discussion of all the points raised here. This essay will limit itself to two important questions: First, did the tenants' class relations with their landlords on the Hudson and Mohawk rivers affect their choice of loyalism or whiggism in the revolutionary war? Did they ever take the opposite side of their landlords in the contest because of their alleged traditional class hatred and commitment to a radical socioeconomic plan? Second, in what way did the war influence their attitude toward the Revolution?

Before turning to these questions, it is necessary to outline the general conditions of New York tenantry in the decade preceding the Revolution. By 1775 there were at least six or seven thousand tenant families on about thirty large estates. A considerable number of them were situated on seven large patents, Renselaerswyck Manor (750,000 acres with about 1,000 tenants), Livingston Manor (160,000 acres with about 500 tenants), Philipse's Highland Patent (200,000 acres with about 500 tenants), Henry Beekman's two patents (100,000 acres with 359 tenants), Philipsburgh Manor (92,000 acres with 272 tenants), Cortlandt Manor (45,000 acres with about 100 tenants), and the Johnson family land (200,000 acres with about 450 tenants).

As I have discussed elsewhere, these tenants, generally unencumbered by feudal obligations and exactions, enjoyed a secure lease tenure. Since they were entitled to an equity in whatever they improved on their leaseholds, they became enviable property owners. Indeed, by 1775 the value of such improvements as house, barn, orchard, nursery, fences, pasture, and cultivated land had generally grown to the point where it rivaled their landlord's soil rights. This equity provided the tenantry with a shield against the landlord's possible tyrannical inclination, for the latter could not threaten eviction to tenants for their delinquent behavior unless he was prepared to pay for the equity. The leaseholds were coveted objects of transactions, like any other commodity, in the real estate market. Newspaper advertisements for leaseholds on sale clearly show that their owners exhibited the usual pride characteristic of property holders. Contemporary observers too perceived the mid-eighteenth-century tenancy to be "profitable," "rich," "thriving," "prosperous," "easy," and, above all, "independent."

The prosperity of the tenantry was related as much to the booming economy of New York during the 1760s and early 1770s as to their liberal leases. Its main staple, food products, commanded high prices both at home and abroad, especially in New England, the West Indies, Ireland, and southern Europe. While the New Englanders were bemoaning land shortage and depression in

their region's economy, New Yorkers were singing a rhapsody of good times. These circumstances explain why so many Yankees and foreigners sought land and settlement in New York, which resulted in the doubling of the province's population from 100,000 to 200,000 in the prerevolutionary decade. It is worth noting that the great Hudson and Mohawk river estates, which had remained sparsely settled in the first half of the century, took a lion’s share in this rapid demographic expansion.

To be sure, the record of New York landed society was not all rosy. Several of the estates had been the scene of riots—notably John Van Rensselaer's Claverack (80,000 acres), Livingston Manor, and Philipse's Highland patent in the 1750s and, in 1766, Cortlandt Manor as well. But, with the exception of the last, the conflict revolved around rival land claims and titles between manorial proprietors and squatters. The bone of contention was land itself, not the prevailing lease conditions. Besides, the disturbances were extremely localized events in the areas adjoining the New England colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The outbreaks in Albany County (at Claverack and Livingston Manor) essentially involved aggression by the people from Massachusetts against New York's territory. In the case of the Highland estate, it was simply an insurgency inspired and led by squatters. Only in Cortlandt Manor was there an antilandlord struggle waged by aggrieved tenants, but the conflict was very limited in scale, involving a dozen or so tenant families and one of ten Van Cortlandt proprietary families. Besides, the riot was never directed against the lease system itself but against what the rioters perceived to be an unfair abuse of it by a landlord.

During the first half of the eighteenth century manorial society remained tranquil and orderly. An unusual fact about New York agrarian society is, not that the disturbances occurred in mid-century, but that when violence did occur it failed to spread and spawn a general uprising involving a larger number of tenants. Why was this? The tenancy seems to have had too much at stake in the lease system to rebel. Moreover, the tenant society, composed of individuals holding varying degrees of equity in improvements and subject to frequent turnover of its membership, was not conducive to the growth of class consciousness. Spurred on by the higher expectations of the New World, some tenants, like indentured servants, refused to accept their present lot as their permanent station. Tenancy naturally failed to engender a sense of enduring connection and cohesion among the tenants or to cause them to initiate a collective action on their own. The mentality of the farmers was typically that of petit landed bourgeois; it was conservative, traditional, and apolitical. 2

After the so-called Great Rebellion of 1766, New York manorial society was politically in the doldrums for nearly a decade. The acute constitutional controversy about Anglo-American relations between Whigs and Loyalists was too academic and too complex to interest ordinary farmers. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, a farmer-intellectual with 370 acres of well-improved land in

2 For a more detailed account, see Sung Bok Kim, Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775 (Chapel Hill, 1978).
Orange County who was married to a daughter of a Philipsburgh manor tenant, gave us an insight into the attitude of the country farmers in general when he wrote of his own plight and confusion in the controversy: "As to the argument on which the dispute is founded, I know little about it. Much has been said and written on both sides, but who has a judgment capacious and clear enough to decide? The great moving principles which actuate both parties are much hid from vulgar eyes, like mine." 3 The farmers' intellectual indifference was also matched by their apathy toward any of the political issues that generated so much heat and emotion in New York City. Accustomed to the deferential way of politics in which their social and economic betters thought and acted for them in imperial and provincial affairs, the farmers were not disposed to step forward and try to affect the course of events involving the fate of America in the British Empire.

This apathy and inaction were exemplified by the Cortlandt Manor inhabitants. Both the Whig and Loyalist leaders were equally exasperated with the tenants' "inattention to political matters" and "lethargy." In the early months of 1775, partisan newspaper articles warned the residents of the danger of such indifference and asked them to express their political "sentiments" publicly by action. It is doubtful that these appeals made any lasting impression upon the farmers. The persistence of this apathy was evidenced in another "Address" by a partisan to the same constituents in midsummer in which he denounced them as "very indolent inhabitants." 4

The farmers' attitude was partly a conditioned reflex of their traditional conservative frame of mind. But it also appears to have been a defensive posture at a time of gathering political storm, consciously adopted against anything that might interfere with their ordinary life. To these farmers, politics without immediate local implications and material benefits was at best a burden and nuisance. This was especially true of the poorest farmers. They always exhibited an extreme aversion to any distraction from farm business, like militia muster, for the loss of time on such occasions could mean the difference between famine and survival for their families.

The Cortlandt Manor farmers were fortunate in that they could continue to enjoy inaction with only a mild rebuke from a chagrined Whig. This was due to the absence of an aggressive leader on either side of the contest. Pierre Van


Cortlandt, by virtue of his being one of the two resident landlords and the manor representative in the General Assembly since 1768, was the person most likely to have assumed a leadership role. But his influence was checked not only by his lack of vigor but also by the efforts of several Loyalist absentee landlords, including the powerful Delanceys. He was certainly known as a warm advocate of American liberties. But his attitude at this time was ambivalent. While New York City was seething with revolutionary ferment after the Lexington-Concord incidents, Van Cortlandt, the only Whig member of the assembly, joined his Loyalist colleagues in petitioning Gen. Thomas Gage, the commander-in-chief of the British forces in North America, not to take a step that he feared would inevitably lead to the breakup of the empire. His moderation, one might add, mirrored as well as reinforced the complacency of the manor inhabitants.

The tenant farmers in other areas could not remain as inert as those at Cortlandt Manor, because their landlords did not permit it. In marked contrast with Van Cortlandt, other proprietors were activists of one persuasion or the other. Frederick Philipse III, the owner of Philipsburgh Manor in Westchester County, was an aggressive Loyalist. So were Beverly Robinson and Roger Morris of Philipse's Highland Patent in Dutchess County and Sir John Johnson and Guy Johnson in Tryon County. Aligned against them were such Whig leaders as Robert Livingston, Jr. of Livingston Manor ("upper manor"), Robert R. Livingston of Clermont, John Van Rensselaer of Claverack, and Abraham Ten Broeck, manager of Rensselaerswyck. While Van Cortlandt was cautious and his whiggism barely noticeable, these partisans were vocal and vigorous in pushing their tenants to action.

When landlords took a firm course, their tenants generally followed them. In April 1775, Philipse "used all his Influence" to mobilize 300 farmers—at least 68 of whom were his tenants—at White Plains in order to reaffirm their loyalty to George III and to reject the "authority of the congress." In the opinion of the New York Committee of Safety, Philipse's "great estate" in Westchester County inevitably "created a vast number of dependents on his pleasure," and "the shameful Defection" of his tenants and the county inhabitants was "in great measure owing to his influence." Following the order of the Provincial Congress, dated May 27, 1775, Robert Livingston, Jr., a staunch Whig, ordered all of his tenants to assemble with arms at the manor seat on June 16, and he

6 Frederick Philipse's testimony, Oct. 25, 1784, class 12, vol. XIX, pp. 385–86, Audit Office Series [Public Record Office, London, Eng.], New York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury, April 17, May 15, 1775. Frederick Philipse contended that the "friends to order and government" consisted of two-thirds of Westchester County's inhabitants. See also Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 555; American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, 5th series, ed. Peter Force [3 vols., Washington, 1848–1853], III, 1205–07. Echoing the view that the wealthy exerted strong influence on other men, Abraham Yates, Jr., a fervent Whig in Albany, stated that "we know by experience that there would not have been a Tory in fifty of our late struggles if they had not been disaffected by the rich." Speech to Delegates in Congress, 1786, box 4, Abraham Yates Papers [New York Public Library].
persuaded "about two thirds" of them to sign the "Association," a manifesto adopted by the Congress, which vindicated the American right to resist the parliamentary "tyranny" with force, if necessary. The meeting was adjourned with "the rest" promising to "consider of it" in two weeks. Available evidence indicates that "many" of those uncommitted opposed it "warmly." Nevertheless, it is significant that a great majority of the Livingston tenants took their landlord's side and that the landlord at this time was confident enough about his tenants' sympathy with his whiggism to leave them under arms.

Tenants elsewhere displayed a similar pattern of behavior. In the spring of 1775, the farmers on Philipse's Highland Patent—comprising three southern precincts (Fredericksburg, Charlotte, and South-East) in Dutchess County—followed the lead of their Tory landlord and "almost unanimously" opposed what they called "all nonconstitutional representation" to a provincial congress, while northern precincts under the whiggish influence of Judge Robert R. Livingston of Clermont supported it. One unhappy Whig leader, reporting on the situation in southern Dutchess County, stated that the "British agents" in the county "have corrupted the minds of many of the ignorant and baser sort of men among us, maliciously telling them the whigs are in rebellion: the King would conquer them, and their estates be forfeited; and if they take up arms against them, the King for service will give them the whig's possessions." By "British agents," they undoubtedly meant Robinson and Roger Morris, two principal Loyalist landlords. No dissension on the part of tenants from their Whig landlords' position was evidenced in either Claverack or Rensselaerswyck throughout 1775. Although lists of the associators from these districts are not available, the reports that they were returned promptly, while those from other Albany Court districts were not, suggest that a Whig solidarity there was firm. Furthermore, a fairly complete record on the two districts' revolutionary committee's activities turns up not a single instance of Loyalist opposition. Jarring disputes occasionally developed between Robert Van Rensselaer and George Smith of Claverack, but they concerned the issue of a militia organization, not political ideology. In every instance, Smith was badly outvoted by the tenants in favor of the landlord. In Tryon County, the home of the huge estate of the Johnson family, the Loyalist landlords were once again supported by their tenants and pro-British Indians. No evidence is available to show that this pattern of tenant behavior differed elsewhere. J. Franklin Jameson was correct, as far as the pre-1776 conditions were con-

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7 Robert R. Livingston to Robert R. Livingston, Jr., June 17, 1775, roll 31, Historical Collections [Morristown Historical Park, Morristown, N.J.].
9 Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778 (2 vols., Albany, 1923-1925), I, 124, 211, 231.
cerned, when he observed in a seminal study that "on the large manorial estates the tenant farmers sided with their landlords if they took sides at all.""11

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the tenants quickly became vigorous Loyalists or Whigs with strong intellectual convictions. Their action was passive at best. It largely reflected the wishes of their landlords who were then the most powerful force in their midst and with whom they had maintained good relations in the past. It did not necessarily indicate willing engagement in the emerging revolutionary situation, the full range and implications of which they did not always understand. The view of Conrad Van Dusen, a Rensselaerswyck tenant, was probably typical of the majority of the tenant farmers when, after the war, he said that he "took the oath" of allegiance to America, "but he does not know what was the substance of it."12 He did what he did because he was told to do it. Indicative of the character of tenants' behavior was the conspicuous absence of anything remotely resembling a collective deed under their initiative; they took steps neither to enlist in military service nor to articulate their views.

During the subsequent war years, however, tenants did at times reject their landlords' leadership. Even in these instances, their attitude did not systematically exhibit the hallmarks of class conflict. Instead, their behavior can best be understood as a reaction to shifts in the local military balance of power or to threats (such as the military draft) to their preferred condition of non-involvement. Nothing animated them more than fear for their estates and families.

The Whig landlords' hold on their tenants' support underwent its most severe test in 1776 and 1777. The occasion was the British army's massive three-pronged invasion of New York following the disastrous American campaign in Canada. In the spring and summer of 1776, the pro-British Indians and Loyalists under the command of Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant became more ominous on the western frontier as the British army under Sir Guy Carleton pushed southward along the Lake Champlain–Lake George corridor. These movements were soon followed by the Howe brothers' successful occupation of New York City, Long Island, and the neighboring areas. When the British resumed their march southward from Canada in the summer of 1777 under Gen. John Burgoyne, New York's Whig leadership found itself controlling "little more than 4 Counties . . . out of 14" that it has once possessed.13 The state was literally under siege. The Continental army, shattered by the defeat in Canada and on Long Island, was reeling back in the face of the advancing enemy forces. Until the battle of Saratoga, the American army was very weak in every military sense, suffering from poor supplies of men and

12 Conrad Van Dusen's testimony, Nov. 9, 1787, class 12, vol. XXXI, pp. 1–3, Audit Office Series.
material, poor morale and discipline, a high desertion rate, and contagious diseases like smallpox and "putrid fever." In short, they appeared to be a broken reed incapable of protecting good Whig inhabitants and overawing Loyalists.\textsuperscript{14}

The effect of the British military presence and might was felt everywhere in New York. It emboldened the Loyalists, who had long been in disarray and timid, and increased their number, and it threw the Whigs deeper into what Lewis Morris called the "Sin of Fear." A consequence of this situation was that the British army threatened to displace the Whig landlord as a primary influence in his tenants' lives, while the Tory landlord's solidarity with his tenants was strengthened.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, as the war intensified in New York in 1776 and 1777, some of the tenants in Whig-landlord-controlled Livingston and Rensselaerswyck manors became increasingly "disaffected" from the American cause and their landlords' views. Significantly, few, if any, of the tenants on the Johnson estates, Philipse's Highland Patent, and Philipsburgh defected from their landlords' loyalty in the course of these changing circumstances.

The first sign of an open breach in tenant-landlord unity appeared in Livingston Manor in mid-February 1776 when an unknown number of tenants in the Taconic area were reported to have voiced Tory sentiments. The situation was grave enough for the Albany County Committee of Safety to dispatch three militia companies from neighboring districts (including Claverack) in order to arrest and disarm "all such suspected persons" there.\textsuperscript{16} A month later the committee was also alarmed by a rumor that four or five tenants in Stephentown in the easternmost section of Rensselaerswyck had disrupted the local committee of safety. Then, in May, it came to the committee's attention that a tenant named Daniel Litts had "Cursed" the Albany committee and spoken "disrespectful" of the Whigs in general. These were, however, all sporadic and isolated incidents which the committee felt the Rensselaerswyck committee could handle administratively by itself. As it turned out, the


\textsuperscript{16} The only person specifically named to be apprehended was Christopher Cooper, who had been on a small lease farm since 1771, Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 336. His lease indenture is in roll 8, Livingston-Redmond Papers [Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.].
Rensselaerswyck Whig leadership, composed largely of tenants, was effective in policing internal affairs. By June 1776, the Whig leadership there had achieved such a reputation for its vigor that the Albany committee even asked its manor tenant militia under Kiliaen Van Rensselaer to discipline the manor’s freehold neighbor, Loyalist-infested Kinderhook Township.17

The disaffection in Livingston manor had spread farther than in Rensselaerswyck; so its committee found it necessary in late May to invite in 400 Dutchess County militiamen and 6 Albany County committeemen to “assist in the management” of the growing evil. In September, the committee was informed that Jury Wheeler, a tenant, had boasted that if he were forced into military services the “first” person he would “shoot” would be his captain. Many other tenants, like any ordinary country farmers, would rather have been fined than drafted.18 The reason for their antidraft sentiment is hard to determine. It was perhaps too early for overt toryism to be a factor. Probably, the general political apathy and concerns for their farms and families were the overriding considerations.

By October, Tory activities among the Livingston Manor tenants completely overshadowed their antidraft sentiment as a critical issue for the committee to handle. It was reported that “a number of Disaffected persons” were hiding in the woods in the “South East Corner” of the manor where some of them had signed “a Kings Book,” pledging allegiance to the king. It was also reported that these secretive Loyalists believed that the American army was “Defeated at Port Washington,” that the “Kings Troops” were “Expected at Poughkeepsie,” and that “if the Regulars should come up in the Country they would be rejoiced” and reimbursed for all the fines they had paid for their delinquencies in militia service. The Tory actions soon became more menacing: shots were fired at two “Young men” walking home and into the “very beds” of some active manor committeemen like Dirck Jansen at night.19 Even one Tory relative of Robert R. Livingston, the Clermont proprietor, hatched a “regular plan” to kidnap his kinsman, but it was aborted by “a discovery that very night” when it was supposed to have been executed.20

17 Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 353, 403, 450.
19 “Minutes of the Committee of Safety of the Manor of Livingston,” 328–31. The northern-frontier Tories at this time believed that two of the “king’s Armies” were coming down, John Burgoyne by way of the “Lake” and John Johnson by the Mohawk River with another British army, and that some of their “Kinderhook Friends” had already marched north to join them. Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 528–29.
Fearful of an impending Tory "Rising" against "Members of the Committee," the manor committee on October 10 sent an urgent appeal to Peter R. Livingston, the eldest son of the manor proprietor and president of the state convention, which stated that unless a militia company composed of at least "Sixty Men" was raised "very soon" in the district, they would be "a ruined people." They also noted that the Tories "Increase daily." If the disaffected ranks swelled, the new recruits seem to have come largely from those passive Whigs like Henning N. Loester, a tenant, who soon regretted that "he had signed the Association, as he Expected that the Kings Troops would Conquer America" shortly. The political vacillation of the manor tenants according to changing military dynamics was and would be duplicated by many other Whigs elsewhere.\(^{21}\) In any event, the convention quickly authorized the committee to raise a ranger company of forty-nine. The company proved to be fairly adequate to the tasks for which it was raised, arresting several Tories, protecting committee men, and preventing any further overt actions by the disaffected.\(^{22}\)

In mid-October, Rensselaerswyck also suffered a moment of alarm because of some unrest among its farmers. As it turned out, there was an insurgency of about ninety people concentrated at the rough Helebergh escarpment and at Beaver Dam, locations on the westernmost part of the manor which only recently had come under settlement. It was no more than an expression of resistance to an order for the militia to march toward Fort Edward. According to a Whig spy at their meetings, a majority [about twenty] of those at Helebergh were "friends to the Country," but they "won't fight if they [could] help it," nor would they be "against the King." This neutral sentiment had been cultivated aggressively by John Read of Helebergh and John Cummins, a Scottish merchant who in 1774 had settled in the Catskills just south of the manor with "above 200" countrymen of his. It was Cummins who persuaded some of his tenants in the Catskills to "join the Kings army" under General Carleton and Sir John Johnson, on the condition that he, remaining at home, would support and protect their wives and children. On October 21 Cummins also invited to his Catskill house some of the Rensselaerswyck militia men and warned them not to march by threatening them with ruin when the British army conquered "this Country in a months time." Apparently, the manor draft dodgers were persuaded, for by October 25 three companies of thirty men were organized in the manor settlements of Helebergh,\(^{21}\) "Minutes of the Committee of Safety of the Manor of Livingston," 332, 334; \textit{Journal of the Provincial Congress}, II, 319–20. Reporting on the situation in the Schoharie area, John Barclay, chairman of the Albany County committee, stated that "nearly" one-half of the Whigs there "have laid down their arms, and purpose to side with the Enemy all which change has taken its origin from the desertion of Tyconderoga, the unprecedented loss of which we are afraid will be followed by a Revolt of more than the one half of the Northern part of this [Albany] county." John Barclay to Schuyler, July 22, 1777, box 2, Schuyler Family Papers [New-York Historical Society]; \textit{Journal of the Provincial Congress}, I, 1010, 1006, 1019, II, 507, 518; Duer to Abraham Ten Broeck, Feb. 25, 1777, roll 2, McDougall Papers.

Niscuthay, and Normans Kill to resist the draft and other Whig directives that threatened local neutrality. The groups also agreed to keep up "a correspondence" with those Scottish Tory tenants in the Catskills.23

Informed fully of almost every detail of this ominous development, the Albany County Committee of Safety promptly dispatched several militia companies, including a manor company, to the different places where insurgents were reported to have assembled. Contrary to the committee's expectations, these Whig forces numbering about 185 did not encounter resistance from the insurgents and were able to capture suspected persons. Upon the information that there were about 300 Loyalists at "a Certain Place," a militia detachment set off "in high spirits" only to find not a single person there. As its commander ruefully confessed, the information was entirely faulty. Robert Yates, the county committee chairman, also concluded several days later that the "Defection in that Quarter has as usual been much exaggerated" and that even those who were apprehended "as Tories" were not "Dangerous." The Rensselaerswyck committee, to which the cases of those arrested were referred, discharged all of them because it had "proof" that they were "ignorant," "deluded," and willing to "return to their Duty" once their "past misconduct" was forgiven. It attributed the entire episode to "some designing men" trying to "sow the seeds of a Revolt."24

There had been a real possibility the Loyalists might exploit the increasing antidraft sentiment and convert it into explicit toryism. The timely countermeasures by the county revolutionary leadership, however, prevented this from happening. The disturbances were in no way connected with an anti-landlord struggle. Cummins, the principal leader in the conspiracy, was a landlord himself and would not have instigated and directed the insurgency if he had perceived it to be directed against the very lease system upon which his fledgling economic enterprise was built. Besides, the Slingerlandts and others of Normans Kill, the arrested insurgents who contributed a dozen or so men to the attempted revolt, were not even tenants. They were freeholders of the ancient Baals Patent, one pocket of freehold landholding containing about 700 acres within the manor jurisdiction, and therefore had no socioeconomic reason to rise against the landlord Van Rensselaers.25

23 Deposition of John Vanderburg, Oct. 25, 1776, Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 515–16, 523; John Cummins's testimony, Nov. 12, 1783, class 12, vol. XX, pp. 37–39, Audit Office Series. On July 10, 1776, John Read leased, for two years, a farm of 100 acres in Rensselaerswyck for the annual rent of 3 scheeps and one day's work. Rensselaerswyck Rent Ledger, 1768–1789, pp. 75, 256, Rensselaerswyck Manuscripts (New York State Library, Albany, N.Y.).

24 Lynd and Alice P. Kenney both give the impression that 400 disaffected men were in arms and that toryism in the manor was widespread. Yet, as Robert Yates, the county committee chairman, testified repeatedly, this was simply untrue. Lynd, "Tenant Rising," 169–70; Kenney, "Albany Dutch," 340; Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 505–13, 521–25.

The backwardness of the militiamen in responding to calls for action continued to perplex the Albany County Whig leaders. It was especially serious in Livingston Manor, where that committee's main business reverted to coping with the enlistment problem. Peter R. Livingston, commander of the manor regiment, was ordered on December 21 to march three manor companies to North Castle, Westchester County. He sadly reported that only "45 men could possibly have been sent at this Season" because he had to excuse 105 men from the draft for one reason or another. In January 1777, a recruiting officer for the manor was threatened with physical violence by several draft resisters. One corporal named John Concklin bitterly complained that the drafting was "unfair." The most common excuse that the potential draft dodgers gave was illness, but the skeptical committee tried in March to eliminate this loophole by having a physician examine every draft-age person who feigned illness. Because of this action and its exercise of revolutionary authority, the committee inevitably became a source of resentment to the manor inhabitants, whose principal desire was to remain uninvolved in public affairs.26

In the first three months of 1777, Livingston Manor appeared to be calm despite or perhaps because of the disbanding of the ranger company in mid-January. A militia call in February to march northward stirred not a single person. The manor remained calm largely because the Albany County Tory leadership—Cummins of Catskill, John Hueston of Lunnenbergh [a retired British half-pay officer], Capt. Andrew Palmetier of Kings District, and Alexander Crookshank of Albany City—believed that it was best for them to wait until the expected arrival of the British army, both by land and water, sometime in the spring or, at the latest, by the middle of June.27 In the meantime, however, the manor Tories kept up their underground activities. They combed the manor and neighboring districts for new converts and proved to be very good at recruiting. Aenout Viel, a twenty-year-old Tory who had never been


27 John Cummins and Alexander Crookshank, who had returned from their trips to New York City in early February, spread the word about the coming of the British army among the Tories on both sides of the Hudson River. While in the city, they met Gen. James Robertson and Col. Allen McLean of the British army and Abraham C. Cuyle, former Tory mayor of Albany, and were instructed to prepare the upstate Tories for the British invasion. Although they were imprisoned soon after their return home, it is reasonable to assume that Livingston Manor and Rensselaerswyck Tory elements heard of the story. Deposition of John Cummins, Alexander Crookshank, and Hugh Denniston of Catskill, March 1777, Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 672–75, 677–78. Regarding John Hueston and Andrew Palmetter, see ibid., I, 527, 530, II, 225–28. On the tenant-Tory activities, see ibid., II, 83, 199–200, 229; Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 83.
"backward in turning out with the militia," alone converted sixty to seventy men in the manor, at Claverack, and in Kings District. Each of these new converts was promised standard compensations for military service—a bounty of five dollars, British regulars' pay from the time of their joining the king's army, and 200 acres of land. They were also given to understand that Hueston had orders from Gen. Sir William Howe, Gov. William Tryon, and Sir John Johnson to grant such promises and to organize them into "a Battalion of Loyal Volunteers" in Albany County.28

By the middle of April, it appears that "Almost every body" in the manor, especially in the Taconic area, including "one third" of the manor militia officers, had pledged either the oath of secrecy or allegiance to the crown. Encouraged by their success in recruitment and by the gloomier turn of military events for Americans, the manor Tories became more audacious than ever. They "publickly" plundered and disarmed Whig tenants like "Mr. Van Veghten" and his sons and "many of his neighbours." Robert R. Livingston, the Clermont proprietor, was "more and more convinced that something [was] in agitation among the Tories." Late in the month, while the inhabitants were busy with their farm work and were complaining about the recent orders to impress twenty-four wagons and to draft fifty-two militiamen for the northern frontier defense, the Tories fired "several" shots into the house of a committeeman at night obviously to "terrify" the "whole" committee. About the same time, Nine Partners' Tories stole 900 pounds of powder from Robert R. Livingston's powder mill, and they took lead from the nets strung across the Hudson to obstruct the British ships.29 No Whig with any sense at all could miss the grave implications of this last deed coupled with the intelligence provided by the arrested Tories on the expected arrival of the British: a Tory uprising against the committee and Whigs was imminent.

The state convention's reaction was swift. On May 2, it ordered the militia units of Claverack, Dutchess, and Ulster counties and of Egremont, Massachusetts, into the Taconic section of Livingston Manor to crush the Tory conspiracy. A series of skirmishes ensued there lasting three days, and the armed Tories, constituting no more than 150 men, were outnumbered, outgunned, and outsmarted by the Whig forces. Three Tories were killed and several were wounded, but the Whigs suffered no casualties. In the course of the mopping-up operation afterward, about 300 "sworn" and "not sworn" Tories in the manor, Nine Partners, and Kinderhook were arrested and sent away for interrogation. A majority of them were "upper" manor tenants, but their exact number cannot be verified.30

The spread of Toryism at Livingston Manor has convinced some historians of


30 Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 129–30; Deposition of Richard Esselystyn, [May 1777], Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 581.
the existence of class conflict between the tenants and their Whig landlord. Close examination of the Tory insurgency and its aftermath does not bear this out. Ironically, the most effective Whig troops in combating and apprehending the Livingston tenants were about "100 and odd" tenant militiamen under Robert Van Rensselaer of Claverack and John R. Livingston of Clermont and the Yankees from Massachusetts who, in partnership with the Taconic tenants, had fought the Livingstons over the Taconic land in the 1750s and 1766. Moreover, it was their Whig landlord, especially his sons Peter R., Walter, and Henry Livingston, to whom the suspected, hiding, or arrested tenants did "fly" for "favors" and protection from the revengeful committee shortly after they were routed. On May 5, even before the gunsmoke dissipated, the hiding tenants contacted the proprietary family with an overture that they would surrender their arms to the landlord and submit themselves to a "Trial by the Manor Committee," provided they were guaranteed against eviction from their leases. These farmers were willing to exchange Toryism for their tenant farms, which they apparently valued more. The committee's instant response was to reject the proposal, but such a recourse "greatly" upset the proprietary family, who thought the tenants were "sincere" and dreaded the consequences of a punitive measure. By the end of June, the landlord's conciliatory policy prevailed, and all but three of the manor Tories were discharged of their disloyalty by taking an oath of allegiance to America.\[^{31}\]

The tenants seemed very appreciative of the Livingston family's good offices as was demonstrated by the fact that in early July when Burgoyne's army was pushing toward Albany, an unprecedented number of manor militiamen, "above 200," were willing to march north despite the pressing demand of labor at their farms. The landlord was probably unsure in this plowing season whether he should rejoice in the militia turnout for the cause of liberty or fear a "Famine" from it.\[^{32}\] The militia zeal proved to be ephemeral, however. A month later, following the loss of Fort Ticonderoga, an event that "dejected" the people "in general," the militia was called up again to march for Stillwater, but the manor committee found it "impossible to get any of them to go." Their old habit of apathy—not necessarily their "disaffection" as Jansen, a manor committeeman, suspected—seized them again, this time for good. The manor militia-farmers' behavior was nothing peculiar because farmers in Schenectady, Schoharie, Dutchess County, and Orange County, were also very backward in militia service at this time.\[^{33}\]


Rensselaerswyck too was not entirely free of Loyalist activity during the spring and summer of 1777. Its committee, which had been more concerned about the Tory strength in Kinderhook than about its own situation since the last disturbances in Hellebergh, was freshly alarmed by a report on April 19 that a "Party of 46" suspected persons "lay concealed in the Woods about three Miles" from Albany.34 A Loyalist party of twenty-four under Captain Palmetier from Kings District, which adjoined Rensselaerswyck on the south-east, was indeed meeting at the house of John Ebenezer, a manor tenant. The objective of the outsiders moving into the manor was to proselytize the manor tenants and form a Tory company to prepare for the junction with the British army. Palmetier and his men seduced some manor residents with a scary tale that the reason for "raising the Company" and for administering the loyalty oath was to "prevent our being destroyed by the Indians, who . . . were coming down in Great Numbers" and "would destroy all that had not a certificate of their being true to the King." The Kings District men, as the Catskill Tories had done earlier, also tried to get across the idea that Americans would never be able to win their "Cause." In the evening of April 20, the manor militia under one Capt. James Dennison encountered the Tory contingent at the house of Thomas Blewes, another manor tenant, and routed the Tories, but not without suffering the humiliation of seeing two of their men taken away by their enemy.35

A month later, the manor and Albany County committees were disturbed again by a report that "a number of disaffected Persons [who] skulk in and about the Hellebergh . . . [have] induce[d] many of the wellmeaning tho' misguided Inhabitants to enter into Combinations against . . . the United States."36 In August, when Burgoyne's army was near Saratoga, the manor suffered another intrusion into its "East part" by the Palmetier men from Kings District who robbed the manor inhabitants of clothes and furniture. In both instances the manor revolutionary authority, which was praised earlier by the Albany County committee for its vigor and commitment to whiggism in "detecting and defeating . . . our internal Enemies," brought the situation under control.37

The British army and Loyalist elements in New York, however, persisted in their campaign to stir up the Hudson River tenantry against their Whig landlords. John Watts, a Cortlandt Manor Tory proprietor related to the Delanceys, recommended to the British ministry through a Philadelphia newspaper and Samuel Loudon's New-York Packet that the Whig estates be vacated by a parliamentary action. He urged the crown "by proclamation" to declare that the tenants presently in "an absolute state of vassalage, being all tenants at will to Rensselaer, Livingston, Beckman, and Philipse," be given freehold

34 Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 727.
36 Harry B. Livingston to William Livingston, June 10, 1777, box 13, William Livingston Papers, Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 740–42.
37 Gershom French was captured soon. Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 740, 821, 823, 839.
farms "for ever" on condition that "they in person take up arms" in the British service. Watts was confident that these measures would "instantly" bring out "at least" 6,000 tenant Loyalist soldiers.\(^{38}\) Obviously written shortly after he heard of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, Watts's recommendation reflected his desperation, wishful thinking, and vindictiveness toward New York's landed Whig leadership rather than a correct reading of the prevailing tenant-landlord relationship and the mood of tenantry. He was disappointed in his scheme, for neither did the British government adopt it nor did the tenants, whom he wrongly characterized as holding leases at the will of their landlords, respond enthusiastically to his idea.

Nevertheless, as British strategy shifted in 1778 toward heavier dependence on loyal Americans for their manpower needs, Sir Henry Clinton and Tryon kept sending agents to the upstate area in order to recruit soldiers and agitate, especially among the Livingston tenants. But they were not very successful in disturbing the tenants out of their entrenched apathy.\(^{39}\) Despite the widely publicized disaffection among them and the promised bounty of freehold land, the Livingston tenant families sent only five sons to the British army during the 1779–1780 period. The number is distantly few compared with the contributions from much smaller precincts in Dutchess County—twenty-one from Rumbout, nineteen from Beekmans, twenty-one from Poughkeepsie, sixteen from Fredericksburg, and fifty-five from Charlotte (the last two were under the influence of Robinson and Roger Morris). The "spirit" of disaffection in the manor was virtually dead, and it would never raise its head again even though the manor landlords became tougher in enforcing the rent collection and the committee continued its vigorous war efforts.\(^{40}\)

Elsewhere, the pronounced solidarity between landlords and tenants continued. Robinson, a notable Tory landlord with 166 "thriving tenants" on his estate in Dutchess County, could boast that he had raised a Loyalist regiment of 250 men during the war, "many" of whom were "his own Tenants and most of them from his own County." James Fallon, a senior physician of the General Hospitals at Quaker Hill, the heartland of the Robinson estate, reported in 1779 that there were "only 4 whigs" there and that the rest were the "very essence and quintessence of Tories." A militia regiment of Philipse's Highland Patent, like its counterpart in other Whig-controlled areas, was largely nonfunctional since the "greater part of them by farr Refuse to

\(^{38}\) Pennsylvania Ledger: Or the Weekly Advertiser, Oct. 29, 1777; Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 274–75.

\(^{39}\) For full discussion of the shift in British strategy, see John Shy, A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence [New York, 1976], 185; John M. Beeckman to Clinton, April 1, 1778, Public Papers of George Clinton, ed. Hastings and Holden, III, 109–10. In April 1778, the Livingston Manor proprietors were alarmed by a Tory rising in Nine Partners, but it ended short of affecting the manor. Margaret Livingston to Susan F. Livingston, April 11, 1778, box II, William Livingston Papers; Robert R. Livingston to John Livingston, April 11, 1778, box J-M, Livingston Miscellaneous Manuscripts [New-York Historical Society].

March" when ordered to do so, either because its men disliked service or because they were loyal to their Tory landlords.41

Similarly, the behavior of the Philipsburgh tenants indicates that the war was an occasion for them to demonstrate their deference to their landlord. Although their landlord, Philipse, had been exiled from the manor since August 1776 and the area was contested and thus subjected to extreme devastation by the contending armies and bandits like "Skinners" and "Cowboys," many of those tenants remaining at their farms faithfully paid their annual rents to their landlord. Extant rent rolls show that 80 of them paid their 1777 rents and 173 their 1778 rents to the landlord in New York City. The tenants' conduct, risking their lives and the wrath of the American army by going across the American lines, is a remarkable testimony to their unwavering commitment to their landlord even at the height of war.42 It is indeed remarkable because they could have easily gotten away with nonpayment on one pretext or another, by arguing that they were impoverished by war or that they lacked means to reach the landlord behind the British lines. This does not mean, however, that every one of the Philipsburgh tenants was a Loyalist or antiwhigish in sentiment. There were several active Whigs like Peter Van Tassell, Jonathan G. Graham, John Relyea, and James Hammon among them, but it is fair to say that the overwhelming majority of the tenants were either active or indifferent adherents to their landlord.43

The story of the tenants on Sir John Johnson's estate on the Mohawk River was much the same. They continued to fight together with their landlord and their Indian allies, terrorizing and devastating the scattered Whig settlements in the western frontier throughout the war. One concerned militia officer stationed at "Caughnawaga" reported in 1779 that "we have upwards of 300 Dis-affected familys back of us, mostly tenants" of the landlord.44 Even in Cort-


42 The ratio between those remaining and those absent is unknown. Many of the tenants, however, took refuge in Dutchess County in order to avoid the ravages of war. See the "petition" of thirty tenants to New York State Legislature, March 12, 1782, in Tarrytown Argus, April 28, 1894. In August 1776, Philipse was imprisoned by the order of George Washington and taken to New Rochelle, to New Haven, and then to Norwich, Connecticut. In 1777 he was banished to New York City. See Frederick Philipse to Elizabeth Philipse, Aug. 14, Aug. 20, Aug. 22, 1776, PA 824, 825, 826, Philipse Papers (Sleepy Hollow Restorations Library, Tarrytown, N.Y.). For tenants' rent payment records, see files PA 817, PA 822, PA 823, ibid. For additional information about Philipsburgh and its tenants, see class 12, vol. XIX, pp. 370–83, Audit Office Series.

43 Regarding Peter Van Tassell's active role in the American cause, see New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, Nov. 24, 1777. There was a Philipsburgh militia regiment during the war, but it was not operational, as suggested by the fact that its fourteen officers had neglected to swear the oath of allegiance to the United States until July 8, 1778. New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, 28 (1897), 2; Journal of the Provincial Congress, I, 159, 304, 331; Gilbert Van Cortlandt et al. to Philip Van Cortlandt, Nov. 13, 1775, Mss. no. 11326 [New York State Library]; Cornelia Beekman to Philip Van Cortlandt, Nov. 12, 1775, Van Cortlandt-Van Wyck Papers [New York Public Library].

landt Manor, where apathy and lethargy were most conspicuous in 1775, tenants by and large tended to side with their landlord in subsequent years. As the war escalated and the militancy of the partisans from within and without mounted, some of them probably found overt neutrality to be a luxury in which they could no longer indulge, unless they were prepared to antagonize both Tories and Whigs. Of the manor's one hundred or so tenants, twenty-seven were active and the rest managed somehow to stay outside the vortex of conflict. Of those active partisans, it appears that twenty-one (78 percent) were on their landlord's side, while only six (22 percent) rejected the cause of their landlord.45

In Claverack, the overwhelming number of the approximately 150 tenants stayed with their Whig landlord, if they took sides at all. Throughout the revolutionary period, not once was Claverack under John Van Rensselaer and his son Robert Van Rensselaer threatened by an organized Tory conspiracy. Its tenant militia was regarded by the county revolutionary authorities as most dependable not only for policing Tories in the surrounding areas like Livingston Manor, Kings District, Kinderhook, and even the western part of Rensselaerswyck across the Hudson River but also for defending the northern frontier. Their reputed readiness to serve the Whig cause, however, led to their frequent mobilization, which in turn "Harrassed" and exhausted them "exceedingly" by the middle of 1778. To be sure, they were reluctant to march at the time of pressing labor demands at home, but every farmer displayed this understandable characteristic.46 Claverack lost about fifteen of its inhabitants to the Tories in the spring of 1777 when Tory activity in southern Albany County was at its peak. Most of them, however, appear to have come from the western part of Claverack where the Van Rensselaers' land claim clashed with that of other settlers.47 Much of the Whig cohesion and control in Claverack was due to the zeal and leadership of Robert Van Rensselaer, which Gen. Philip Schuyler contrasted with the "inactivity" of Peter R. Livingston at Livingston Manor.48

Although there were sporadic disturbances in Rensselaerswyck in 1776 and 1777, a great degree of amiability existed between Stephen Van Rensselaer and his 1,000 tenants. The major pockets of defection were in Hellebergh, Stephentown, and Normans Kill. Almost all of the settlers in the first two settlements


46 Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 530-31, 581; Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 725, 795-96; Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 127, 293, 422; Robert Van Rensselaer to Clinton, May 2, 1778, Public Papers of George Clinton, ed. Hastings and Holden, III, 255-56.

47 A case in point is Christian Wehr, a Tory from Claverack. He had two pieces of land, one of 30 acres and another of 100 acres, in western Claverack for which he had no legitimate deed. The first tract in his possession was, however, claimed by the Van Rensselaers. See his testimony [1784], class 12, vol. XXVI, p. 326, Audit Office Series. For the other Loyalists, see class 12, vol. XXVIII, p. 274, ibid.; Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, I, 187, 222-23, II, 199; Minutes of the Committee and of the First Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, I, 48, 95, 156-57, 203, 219.

48 Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 293.
were recent arrivals. Twenty-four tenants actually joined the British army and John Johnson's Loyalist troops, mostly in 1777 during Burgoyne's southward march; and forty-one residents, nine from East District and thirty-two from West District of the manor, were "indicted for adherence to the Enemies of the United States" throughout the war. 49 That the disproportionately large number of Tories came from the western part of the manor, which was exposed to the ever-present menace of John Johnson's strong Tory arms and pro-British Indians, shows the extent to which the military situation affected the attitude of the manor inhabitants. In any event, these statistics and other circumstantial evidence suggest that a maximum of only about 100 tenants were Tories or Tory sympathizers. This manor's Tory strength, however, pales into insignificance when one considers the situation in Albany County as a whole, where "almost half" of the inhabitants were known to be "disaffected." 50 Without the willing majority (90 percent) of the manor tenantry, its revolutionary leadership could not have silenced its internal and external foes as effectively as it did. Behind the Whig predominance were the powerful stature and influence of the landlord and especially his uncle, manager of the estate, Brigadier General Ten Broeck, commander of the Albany County militia which the British army threatened but failed to break.

The years 1776 and 1777 were the crucial period of the Revolution in New York. With the recession of a serious British threat thereafter, landlord-tenant relations were largely harmonious. In general, tenants in New York adopted the political position of their landlords. The only conspicuous exception was the widespread defection by the Livingston Manor tenants. Where the tenants on the Whig-owned estate became Tories, was this due to their socioeconomic antagonism toward their landlord? The Livingstons indeed suspected and feared at the outset of the war that "Some" of the tenants would "take advantage of the times and make their Landlords give them Leases forever" on the kind of terms that the Rensselaerswyck and Claverack tenants were enjoying. 51 Their fear at the time was natural, a reaction that we could expect of the family who had repeatedly been harassed by the persistent attempt of western Massachusetts men to challenge their manor titles in the 1750s and 1760s. They knew that the disaffection was centered in the Taconic area where the Yankees' tenant collaborators (about twenty) resided. As subsequent events demonstrated, such suspicions and fears were totally groundless. The Taconic Tories received no help from the whiggish Yankees across the border, and they never targeted for attack their landlords' persons or houses or Robert Livingston, Jr.'s four nearby iron works, which produced cannon balls for the


50 Walter Steward to Ebenezer Hancock, April 26, 1777, roll 53, Historical Collections.

American army. Unlike William Predergast's 1766 rebels, they did not issue a manifesto against their landlords and the land system they represented, not even for the purpose of garnering support from fellow tenants elsewhere. To judge from the vengeance with which the Yankees (the people from Egremont) attacked and plundered the Taconic Tories—their former allies—in May 1777, the Yankees apparently did not believe that the manor tenants were continuing the socioeconomic struggle they had started and directed before the Revolution. However, there was definitely no love lost between the Livingstons and the Yankees who still coveted the manor's Taconic land.

Nowhere in the voluminous testimonies, depositions, and confessions by the manor Tories, Tory soldiers, and witnesses for or against them was a single reference to a lease system or tenant-landlord relations in Livingston Manor and Rensselaerswyck made in explaining the origin of tenant toryism. If hatred of their landlords and the lease system had been the main cause of their pro-British conversion, it would have been a travesty of their alleged "socioeconomic radicalism" to fly, soon after their cause was aborted, to their landlord family for favors and protection from the fury of committee men and to ask for an assurance against eviction from their leases.

The political choices the New York tenants made during the Revolution were at once more simple, more mundane, and more subtle than many scholars have suggested. The least important was the role of republican or Tory ideas and radical class interest. The tenants' leanings in 1775 were determined by their traditional apathy, by their preference for noninvolvement in public affairs, and, above all, by their respect for their landlord. When their landlord was firm and forcible, and remained as a primary influence in their lives, they generally followed his direction as they had done in the prerevolutionary period. In the war years, when the British threatened to invade New York, many tenants, especially those on the Whig-owned estates, defected from the Whig cause. At first, their disaffection took the form of draft resistance, and it gave way to toryism as the British and Indian conquest of the state seemed to be imminent. To these tenants, conversion to toryism appeared to be the best means of survival.

In January 1778, the Albany County Committee of Safety observed that "many Persons" under its jurisdiction "went over to the Enemy and took an Active part in their favour some thro' Fear, some thro' the persuasions of artful and designing Persons, others thro' the Allurements of Gain and the prospect of seeing their oppressed Country in the Hands of its base Invaders." This official version seems well supported by available evidence. The reason that tenant Tories most frequently gave was, not their love of the British, but their concern for self-preservation. They sought protection of their families and estates from the possible violence of the British army and their Indian allies,

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52 Smith, Historical Memoirs, II, 129, 131. Many testimonies given very freely by the former Tory soldiers before the Parliamentary Commission on the Loyalist claims were similar to those given before the American courts.
53 Lynd, "Tenant Rising," 177.
who they believed would easily conquer New York if not America. The paramount importance of the British-Indian factor is clearly underscored by the fact that the ebb and flow of Tory strength and activities in the manors, as well as in other areas, between the fall of 1776 and the spring and summer of 1777 exactly coincided with the ebb of the British-Indian invasion threat and the flow of the perceived American military strength. Apart from the cause of self-preservation, the wish to be on the winning side and to be compensated generously in money and land for their service was probably an attraction that some tenants could not resist.

All in all, too much has been read into the toryism of the Livingston Manor tenantry in efforts to generalize about the nature of the Revolution in New York. There was no internal socioeconomic conflict going on there or in Rensselaerswyck, although toryism as a political issue affected both places. On the estates of the Tory landlords, none of the aspects of conflict was ever present throughout the war, although the lease system there was almost the same as on the Whig-owned estates. Therefore, from the broad perspective of both Tory and Whig landed estates, one can argue that the political dissension on the northern manors was an aberration rather than a norm in the overall experience of New York agrarian society during the American Revolution and that the New York lease system under Whigs' control was still strong and mutually beneficial for landlord and tenant. Consequently, the system was capable of withstanding the convulsions of the revolutionary era. The Tory estates were confiscated not because they represented a socioeconomic injustice but because their owners were on the losing side. As for the tenantry, they generally proved to be neither Emelyan Ivanovich Pugachevs nor Mariano Azuelas, but petit bourgeois conservatives.

54 Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, I, 901–02; Journal of the Provincial Congress, I, 1010, 1006, 1019, II, 507, 518; Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, II, 190–91, 204–06, 229–31.