

LETTER TO THE ENGLISH

General Benedict Arnold to Lord Germain

7 October 1780

Conscious of the rectitude of my intentions (whatever constructions may have been put on my conduct) and convinced of the benevolence and goodness of your lordship, I am emboldened to request your interest and intercession that I may be restored to the favour of my most gracious sovereign. In the fullest confidence of his clemency, I most cheerfully cast myself at his feet, imploring his royal grace and protection.

I have that confidence in the goodness of Sir Henry Clinton that His Majesty will not remain long uninformed that some considerable time has elapsed since I resolved to devote my life and fortune to His Majesty's service, and that I was intent to have demonstrated my zeal by an act, which had it succeeded as intended, must have immediately terminated the unnatural convulsions that have so long distracted the empire.

Your lordship will perceive by the enclosed address to the public by what principles I have been and am now actuated, to which I shall at present only add my most sacred assurance that no endeavours of mine shall be wanting to confirm the profession I make of an unalterable attachment to the person, family, and interests of my sovereign, and the glory of his reign....

I have the honour to be with the greatest respect, my lord, your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant.

The Present State of the American Rebel Army, Navy, and Finances, with some Remarks

...All of these troops are illy clad, badly fed, and worse paid, having in general two or three years of pay due to them. Many of the best officers of the army have resigned, and others are daily following their example through disgust, necessity, and a conviction that the provinces will not be able to establish their independence.

There has long subsisted a jealousy between Congress and the army. The former have been jealous of the power of the latter, and the latter have thought themselves neglected and ill treated by the former, who have excluded the army from every appointment of honour or profit in the civil line. The common soldiers are exceedingly disgusted with the service, and every effort to recruit the army (except by temporary drafts of militia) has hitherto proved ineffectual.... The body of the people heartily tired of the war refused to enlist voluntarily, and not more than one-third of the men ordered to be drafted appeared in the field. The distress and discontents of the people are daily increasing, and the difficulty of recruiting the army another year will undoubtedly be greater than ever.

The navy is reduced to three frigates and a few small vessels, which are generally in port for want of hands to man them....

As the result of their distresses the eyes of the people are in general opened, they feel their error and look back with remorse to their once happy condition, and most ardently wish for a reconciliation on terms safe and honourable to both countries. Many would return to it with implicit confidence....

But should the artful and designing who have assumed the reins of government continue to have sufficient influence to mislead the minds of the people and continue the opposition to government, I am clearly of opinion that an additional ten thousand troops to the [British] army (including those who may be on their way to America) will be a sufficient force under the direction of an officer of the experience and abilities of Sir Henry Clinton to put a period to the contest in the course of the next campaign.

I have forgot to mention that the want of provisions in the army is not owing to the scarcity of provision in the country, but to the weakness of the usurpation in every colony; without money or credit supplies must be collected by force and terror; wherever the army is they take without opposition. But this force acts against itself by creating internal enemies, and by making friends to Great Britain. It is one of the principal saps hourly undermining the strength of the rebellion....