

L. Gen.
Jas.
Robert
son.
Etc.

3182

Memorandums relative to the mode of making War in America.

From my own knowledge, I aver, that the papers you showed me, contain many useful informations, the assertion that a majority of the people in America wish to be subjects of the king, and are averse to the government they are now under is well founded, and it is on this foundation, we should build our hopes of renewing all the advantages this nation can derive from its colonies - The authors of the rebellion were aware of this, and in order to seduce the people, artfully took the advantage of incidents, which I need not mention in detail, as they cant have escaped your observation, to induce a general belief, that no alternative was left the inhabitants, but taking arms, or submitting to slavery - when this was effected, they next persuaded the people, that the step they had taken would expose them to a resentment which they could no way avoid but by a successful rebellion. I have proofs in my hands from some of the best informid of the rebel councils, and of the state of the peoples minds, dated two years ago - that if these two foundations on which the rebellion stood, were taken away, by an explicit declaration on our part, that the right of taxation by us, would be given up - and a general pardon granted, that the Congress would not be able to raise a thousand men - Circumstances are now much altered, the address and management necessary now to bring the people back to their duty to convert our enemys and call out the exertions of our friends, must now be much greater - what was before easy, now requires talents resembling those the Duke of Parma possess, indeed they need not be equal to his, for his difficulties were much greater than ours, he had the hard task of making people who had suffered by oppression, friends, and of inducing them to aid his arms in favor of a tyrannical government, it is easier to reconcile people who have never been oppressd, and to engage them to support a government, formid now to their wish - The ambition of half the leaders has been disappointed, their rivals have got the offices they hoped for, no very profound management or refined policy is necessary to induce them to prefer consequence under us, to the mortification of being subject to their rivals.

But some Address and knowledge of the State of every province and the interest and resentments of all the leading men is necessary - we can only succeed in our wishes, by making a proper use of the people in America, and this depends now upon the managers we employ.

The rebels now endeavor to create a belief, that we are about to abandon our friends and that the country is to be given up to them. The first step we should take is to destroy this belief, by a declaration from Government, that we will not abandon our friends, or quit the country, this should be sent immediately, and it must not be esteem'd policy to keep the King's good intentions secret, pains should be taken to communicate them to the people at large - this will cure the despair that is now driving our best friends to make up matters with the rebels, and sets all the motives arising from hope & despair to operate to the advantage of the rebel Cause.

A project for the Campaign can only be form'd by the Commander in Chief in America - from circumstances we cant know here - I think the following hints may be useful.

N. York can be assail'd, cannonaded, or have its communication with the sea cutt off, or the ships in its harbour destroy'd from so many places, that only a force able to fight Washington can keep it - indeed I would think the best way of defending the place was to fight Washington whenever he approach'd. I think an Army of 12.000 British and Hessians and two thousand provincials equal to this service.

The Country of the most importance for us to possess is the borders of the North River, if a great part of the reinforcements meant to be sent from hence arrives in May, I think on their arrival the posts the rebels have now in the highlands should be attack'd, were we masters of this river, the communication between the northern & southern provinces would be cut off, which would greatly distress almost starve them - and if this province was in our hands, and the people who love us, at liberty to act & secure of protection, I'll venture to say that 6000 men would arm and be ready to defend their possessions - I do not mean that they would enlist as Soldiers, the gros of the respectable inhabitants of a country
are

are not to be expected to do this - but they would like the Companies of inhabitants raised last winter, arm, find themselves cloaths, watch, patrol, and be ready to defend the town when the garrison was wanted for other service, and all this without putting government to any expence for pay or provisions - This country and the environs of Jersey in our possession, we could derive great supplies of provisions, fewel forrage &c. and reduce great part of the expence and difficultys of the war - for this purpose the most considerable part of the supplies should be sent off in february or very early in march - what is not then ready should sail early in april, if these last amount to 2000 men, they should go a northern passage, and fall in upon the coast of New England, they should burn Newbury, Salem, and give the alarm all along the coast, this would not only destroy almost all the privateers but would call home all the N. England forces, and give the Commander in Chief an easy opportunity of possessing the posts in the highlands and getting all the banks of the North river - The Army should not wander to places that cant be supported nor should we call people into Arms who cant be sustained, their defeat gives consequence to the rebels. The Idea of scattering our troops into bodies of a thousand to defend these, would be ruinous if pursued, and the hope of forcing Washington over the Susquehana is too sanguine - The people that might arm and be within reach of our protection, which by means of a water carriage we could afford in less time than the rebels could send a body in force to attack them, should be put under a civil government the offices should be fill'd by the most respectable of the inhabitants, every privilege and advantage even in trade should be given, their State should be made the envy of the neighbours, this would bring numbers under our protection, The government of N. York would soon be able to support itself, this example, our negociations, and the progress of our Arms would get the other provinces, and the rebels being disappointed in their Idea that we were quitting the country - and on the contrary being subject to very frequent invasions from Halifax, Florida,

Florida and N. York, would regret their Condition, and wish for
our protection - The possession of the N. River would open our
communication with the Indians, who then might act in concert
and attack such places and at such times as we might direct

But as the whole hope of success depends on the address
and abilities of the Commander in Chief, he should be vested
with every power and at liberty to form and execute his own
plans.

Memorandum
on the mode of making
War in America
By M. J. Robertson
Jan. 4. 1779.