

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVES OF THE BRITISH
PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS, EDMUND BURKE,
ISAAC BARRÉ, AND CHARLES JAMES FOX, WHO
SUPPORTED THE AMERICAN COLONISTS DURING
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

When most people think of the American Revolution, they think of the rebellion by the American colonies to break away from the Parliamentary tyranny happening in the British Government through the taxation policies enforced without the colonists' representation in Parliament. Many people do not realize that across the sea where the tyranny was coming from, there were also members in Parliament fighting against the taxation policies. These members, called the "Americanists," were mostly members of the House of Commons. Among their most eminent members were Edmund Burke, Isaac Barré, and Charles James Fox. This thesis analyzed Burke, Barré, and Fox's motivations and role in Parliament using a variety of both primary and secondary sources including Parliamentary debates, letters, and research by other scholars. The main finding was that each member focused on the principle of the tax and the illegal actions Parliament was taking against the colonies. Each member wanted to bring peace between the Empire and colonies again, restoring the balance that revolved around trade and economic purposes. Parliament was warned by these members that the colonies would keep rebelling and eventually try to break away from the Empire, something the Empire could not afford to lose. Overall, The Americanists, not widely recognized, were essentially proponents of the American Revolution across the sea where the tyranny was coming from, contributing to the overall fight for American liberties and freedom.

Thesis

The American Revolution was caused by the conflict between the English government and the American colonists over political and economic issues. One of the main causes was the financial solution the British Empire created after being in debt at the end of the French and Indian War by taxing the colonies to raise revenue for the Empire. To the colonists, the principle and authority on which they were taxed caused rebellion and revolt in the colonies. The lack of colonial representation in Parliament inspired the catch phrase, “no taxation without representation” because of the colonist’s frustration at the influx of taxes Parliament forced on the colonies without the colonists being able to have a political say. The colonists’ only voices in government were some members of the British Parliament who recognized the injustice the colonies were receiving from their government. These members, called the “Americanists,” were mostly members of the House of Commons. Among their most eminent members were Edmund Burke, Isaac Barré, and Charles James Fox who argued against the American taxation by reprimanding Parliament for its ill-advised policies. Burke, Barré, and Fox’s motivations and role in Parliament will be analyzed by using a variety of both primary and secondary sources including debates, letters, and research by other scholars. The Americanists, not widely recognized, were essentially proponents of the American Revolution across the sea where the tyranny was coming from, contributing to the overall fight for American liberties and freedom.

The political and financial issues between the American colonies and the British Parliament were the catalysts for the American Revolution. For many years, the American colonies were a financial support for the English Empire through the efforts of

trading raw material and goods across the Atlantic Ocean. They had been self-governing; the only tie with the Empire was through trade.¹ The colonies were left to salutary neglect with their only job being to provide necessary goods for the trade.² However, the financial dependence of the English Empire after the French and Indian War (1754-1763) was crucial. Wartime sent Britain into an economic crisis, causing the government to have to look at new ways to increase taxes and revenue without upsetting the British public. Parliament had problems in trying to decide who to tax because they knew that they could not or would not tax specific groups in Britain for the fear that there would be more revolt in the country.³

However, at this point, the problem not only lay with the tax itself but also lay with the lack of representation in Parliament. Parliament deliberately taxed the colonies while knowing there was no colonial representation to oppose the acts. Parliament's assumption that the colonies should have the same authority as if they were citizens of Scotland and Wales led to miscommunication and tension between Parliament and the colonies. Parliament connected the colonies by nationality, meaning that because the colonists were British, they were automatically subject to the rule of the British Empire and Parliament's laws. They believed that the colonists were British citizens so they should be treated like every other British citizen.⁴ Under this notion, Parliament passed a series of regulatory acts that led to the colonial rebellions including the Revenue Act of

¹Allen S. Johnson, "The Passage of the Sugar Act," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 16 (1959): 507, Accessed October 4, 2016. doi: 10.2307/1920217.

² Jesse Norman, *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 48.

³ Johnson, "The Passage of the Sugar Act," 507-508.

⁴ Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 119-120.

1764 (also known as the Sugar Act), Stamp Act (1765), Townshend Acts (1767), Tea Act (1770), and Intolerable Acts (1774).

In the British American colonies, the fight was always about liberty and equal representation, not about money or the question of Parliament's authority.⁵ The aftermath of the French and Indian War left the colonists in confusion as to why Parliament was interfering in the colonies' political system after the Empire just fought a war on American soil with the colonists' contributes to the military and war effort. While Parliament believed that the colonies existed for the Empire, the colonists developed a different view of government authority over the years. Edmund and Hellen Morgan stated in *The Stamp Act Crisis* that the colonists believed that the power to make laws was in the authority of Parliament but the taxation power lied in the hands of the local governments with a representative committee in the colonies.⁶ This confusion over Parliamentary authority was a major problem not only between the colonists but between the Americanists and the rest of the Parliament members.

Not only was the perception of Parliamentary "tyranny" a cause of the conflict but so was the ideological belief of freedom and liberty that both the colonists and Americanists believed the colonies had a right to. The liberties and freedoms that the colonies had for so long were being taken away, something the Americanists recognized and fought against. Edmund Burke, Isaac Barré, and Charles James Fox were some of the well-known members of the House of Commons who took the side of America. Through the debates that ensued about the arising problems on American affairs, these members'

⁵ Gould, *Persistence*, 123.

⁶ Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 283.

positions on Parliamentary proceedings were made clear. Burke, Barré, and Fox focused their efforts on either repealing the acts already passed or not passing more acts that would cause the colonies harm, which would harm England as a result. They were politically revolutionary in their thoughts, ideologies, and actions towards liberty in the American colonies by fighting against the authority Parliament tried to reestablish and insert over the colonies. Each of these Americanists' personal and political histories determined their ideological beliefs and values. Each had similar views and motivations for wanting to support the American colonies. The Americanists gave the Americans hope and reassurance that there were some members of Parliament fighting for them across the sea where their voices were trying to be heard. With the passing of many acts, some including the Stamp Act, Townsend Acts, Tea Act, and Intolerable Acts (including the Boston Port Bill and the Massachusetts Government Act), their views can be easily seen in the Parliamentary proceedings as each act encouraged the Americans to continue to revolt.

The most prominent Americanist, Edmund Burke, spent his life advocating for justice in government. Originally from Ireland, Burke became a Member of the House of Commons in 1765. Burke's philosophies on liberty and freedom did not begin or stop with the American Revolution but he also advocated for rights and liberties regarding affairs in Ireland and the French in the French Revolution. Many prominent speeches made in Parliament created a lasting impression on other members and the American colonists. Burke's focus was not only about constitutional rights but preserving peace between Parliament and the colonies.⁷ Burke did not think that Parliamentary superiority

⁷ Carl B Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics: The Age of the American Revolution* (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1957), xiii-xv.

and authority was the issue but the balance and distinction between the legislative authority and the taxation right of Parliament.

According to Burke, Parliament should have authority over everything but taxation.⁸ Burke even proposed that Parliament give the right to tax to the Americans themselves, Parliament only getting involved if it involved regulating trade and revenue.⁹ One of the first acts that Burke attacked was the Stamp Act, which in fact was the first speech that Burke made in Parliament on January 17, 1766.¹⁰ Burke's use of the merchant's reasons for repealing the Stamp Act was an essential proponent of the opposition of the act.¹¹ The legitimacy of Parliament's ability to tax the colonies was also a prominent factor in the outcome. However, the underlying issue was that Parliament believed that they had the right to both tax and make legislation involving colonial affairs for the Stamp Act.¹² This was just the beginning of Burke's prominent role in Parliament.

However, Burke's most famous speech in Parliament was made on April 19, 1774, called "Speech on American Taxation," to repeal the Tea Act. This speech makes Burke's motivations for being an Americanist clear. In this speech, Burke moved to have the Tea Act repealed while blaming Parliament for the conflict in America, warning Parliament that they needed to be more understanding about the colonists' reactions to the acts.¹³ Three of the main reasons that Burke attacked the Tea Act was because: 1) the principal of the tax; 2) Parliament's authority to tax the colonies; and 3) the economic burden the tax would cause the Empire. Burke ended by warning the Members of

⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 287-288.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹² *Ibid.*, 88.

¹³ Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 69-70.

Parliament that Americans would break away from the Empire if they did not heed the warning signs.¹⁴

In this speech, Burke attacked the principle of the tea tax on the grounds that one of the most important items in England and the colonies was tea. Burke correctly noted that the three-pence tax itself was minimal and was not a financial burden on the colonies. It consequently did not constitute the fact that Parliament taxed the tea, which meant the most to the colonies. Burke knew that the tea was not taxed for commercial principles but rather to show Parliament's authority over the colonies. The three-pence tax on tea was not the issue, it was the fact that it was tea that was being taxed. Burke said that

If commercial principles had been the true motives to the Repeal, or had they been at all attended to, Tea would have been the last article we should have left taxed for a subject of controversy...by such management by the irresistible operation of feeble counsels, so paltry a sum as Three-pence in the eyes of a financier, so insignificant an article as Tea in the eyes of the philosopher, have shaken the pillars of a Commercial Empire that circled the whole globe.¹⁵

Burke said that it was not the price of the tax but the improper use of Parliamentary authority that the colonists were protesting.¹⁶ Parliament was purposely taxing the colonists to put the colonies in their place, making sure they knew that Britain was the ultimate authority figure. Burke was motivated by the lack of respect Parliament showed the colonies and the principle on which Parliament was attacking the colonies.

One of the main points that Burke consistently referred to in the speech is the Preamble of the act. The Preamble stated that a tax passed by Parliament was allowed to

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents and the Two Speeches on America*, ed. E. J. Payne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1990), Library of Economics and Liberty. <http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Burke/brkSWv1c2.html>; Accessed September 21, 2016.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

raise money for the government in either carrying out the functions of the government or for defending and protecting the Empire and the Empire's colonies. The Preamble acknowledged that the taxes were for "administration of justice and support of civil government" and "defending, protecting, and securing the said Dominions."¹⁷ Knowing that Parliament was taxing the colonies for none of these reasons, Burke spoke in Parliament against this unfair treatment. Burke could not believe that this treatment was given to the colonists who were British citizens because they deserved the same treatment that other British citizens had.¹⁸ Parliament was abusing their power to show authority in the colonies.

Not only did Burke feel that Parliament's motives for taxing were wrong, but that Parliament knew that they did not have the right to tax the colonies without a representative assembly in Parliament. Burke stated, "Indeed Mr. Grenville well knew, that the Colony agents could have no general powers to consent to it; and they had no time to consult their assemblies for particular powers before he passed his first Revenue Act."¹⁹ The colonists never questioned the authority or governance of Parliament in passing the act, rather, it was the lack of representation that Parliament knew the colonies did not have, that made the colonists angry. Towards the end of the speech, Burke referenced letters to Governor Bernard of Massachusetts from the colonists, proving that the colonists were grateful to the Empire for repealing the previous Stamp Act. This was to prove to Parliament that the colonies were quiet and that the rebellions stopped when the act was repealed but then started again when the Tea Act was passed. Burke accused Parliament of purposely trying to insult the colonists by taxing tea with the clear

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

motivations of not following the act's preamble.²⁰ Burke knew that the colonists were aware that they were being denied their rights, something Burke could not contribute to in Parliament. The colonists were British citizens and deserved the rights that they were promised as citizens and Parliament had to give the colonists that respect. Parliament was merely insulting the colonies as punishment for their rebellion.

To Burke, the Tea Act was more than being just about liberty and the unjust treatment the colonies were receiving, but about economy as well. Burke notes that the Tea Act not only harmed the colonies, but the British Empire as well because of the relationship with the English East India Company around the world.²¹ The East India Company had huge stock in the American market with tea being one of the biggest commodities. Burke warned the government that a fight with the colonies would not only hurt economy with America, but it would also harm the company. This should be important to the king considering the tension started because of the financial crisis Britain was in after the war. Addressing the financial crisis that Britain was in at this time, Burke said, "America would have furnished that vent, which no other part of the world can furnish but America; where tea is next to a necessity of life; and where the demand grows upon the supply.... It is through the American trade of Tea that your East India conquests are to be prevented from crushing you with their burthen."²² The English economy, especially the revenue in America, was based on trade, one of the main items being tea. If America was not buying tea, then the English economy was in danger and had the risk of

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Edmund Burke, *The History Of American Taxation, From The Year 1763, To The End Of Last Session*, 3rd edition, (London: 1775). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mli_n_n_state&tabID=T001&docId=CW3304792385&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE. Accessed October 18, 2016, 18-19.

²² *Ibid.*, 18-19.

collapsing. Burke attacked both the economic burden the tax would cause the Empire along with the lack of colonial representation.²³ Burke used the economy as a way to make Parliament understand the crisis they were in with the conflict in the American colonies.

Jesse Norman notes in *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative*, that despite Burke's argument of commercial interest, the spirit of America was what Burke sought to free in his "Moving Resolutions for Conciliation Speech." Burke's motivation for his speeches was to bring peace back to the Empire and to restore balance. He acknowledged the American spirit, which was created by the idea of liberty the colonists established when they first came to America. Through looking at commercial aspects, the fact that the colonists were still British subjects, and America's free spirit, Burke made compelling arguments in Parliament for the sake of the Americans.²⁴ Burke noted in this speech, "I do not chose to consume its strength...because in all parts it is the British strength that I consume...I do not choose wholly to break the American spirit; because it is the spirit that has made the country. And finally in logic, the British Empire has been founded, and made rich on a policy of benign neglect to which the use of force is the direct antithesis."²⁵ According to Burke, the American spirit was created through three things. The use of slaves in the colonies made it so the colonists understood freedom and did not want to be treated like slaves themselves. The second was that the colonists were educated on the English Common Laws so they knew if the government was treating them unfairly. Finally, Burke said it was impossible to rule with a tight rein on a colony that far away. The American spirit was also the spirit of the British which Parliament

²³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁴ Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 79-80.

²⁵ Cited in Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 79.

seemed to forget because they were taxing their own, treating them like they were not even part of the Empire or British citizens themselves.²⁶ Burke knew that the American colonists knew what their freedoms and liberties were and was something that they were going to keep fighting for.

In Burke's "Address to the American Colonists," he spoke on behalf of the British Empire to tell the colonists that it hurts them that the hostilities grew worse between the nations. Burke claimed that the divide between the two was painful to watch, considering the colonists were still British despite living across the sea. Burke noted that the separation of the colonies from the Empire would be detrimental, "yet we had much rather see you totally independent of this Crown and Kingdom, than joined or it by so unnatural a conjunction, as that of Freedom of servitude:- a conjunction, which, if it were at all practicable, could not fail in the end, of being more mischievous to the peace, prosperity, greatness, and power of this Nation, than beneficial, by any enlargement of the bounds of nominal empire."²⁷ In this address, Burke acknowledged that the government purposely acted on bad intentions and that Burke understood why the colonies were acting the way they were.²⁸ Burke said that the colonies could be prosperous in the economic bind between the Empire and the colonies.²⁹ Overall, Burke was trying to amend relations between the Empire and the colonies so there would be no war.³⁰

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁷ Edmund Burke, "Address to the American Colonists," *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, Vol. 9 (London: Luke Handsard & Sons, 1818), 202-203.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 199-215.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 199-215.

Burke felt strongly about the unity of the colonists and the Empire. While Burke was not saying that the Americans should be free, their spirit could not and should not be broken by the government because they were all British. Burke hated how the Americans were being treated and “the moral rights of Americans to decent treatment” must be heard.³¹ Burke wanted Parliament to go back to when the colonists were left to salutary neglect, enjoying their freedom from the British government.³² By analyzing the speeches made about the American affairs, Burke had multiple reasons for supporting the American colonies. Burke’s overall motivation for being an Americanist was so that the colonies received the fair treatment that they deserved as English citizens by getting respect and constitutional rights, America would not lose its spirit, and so that the Empire would not make the economic and political mistake of hurting the English economy by losing the colonies.

Isaac Barré was also originally from Ireland but later served in the English military, eventually being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. Barré later became a Member of the House of Commons in 1761 after being injured in battle. Barré’s political career was influenced by serving in the military and fighting overseas in North America during the French and Indian War. He had similar motivations as Burke for being an Americanist. He warned Parliament that the more the government pressed the colonies, the more the colonies were going to fight. Barré knew that the colonies deserved to be left alone like they had been for so many years. Barré’s fight for the American spirit was shown through his time in Parliament. Barré even created the Sons of Liberty name for the American rebels. He fought against many of the acts passed by Parliament including

³¹ Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics*, 259.

³² *Ibid.*, 261.

the Stamp Act, Tea Act, Townsend Acts, and the Boston Port Act.³³ Barré's political influence was a benefit to the American colonies.

Barré's motivation mainly focused around liberty. He believed that the government was acting in a tyrannical way with how they were treating the colonies. Barré knew that Parliament was unfairly treating the colonies, therefore, considering the Americans rightfully angry. He said,

They planted by your care? No! Your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country ³/₄ where they exposed themselves to all the hardships to which human nature is liable, and among others to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle and I take upon me to say the most formidable of any people upon the face of God's Earth. And yet, actuated by the principles of true English liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends.³⁴

Barré understood the fight and endurance the colonists established in the New World facing challenges in a land never before inhabited by Englishmen. He emphasized that the colonists left the country to be able to live freely and away from the English government, something that they achieved up until this point. Their English spirit allowed them to thrive in the New World. One of Barré's motives was acknowledging that the colonies deserved to be left alone by Parliament, not only because the colonists earned it but because Parliament was abusing the colonies and the colonists had a right to be mad.

A common analogy that Parliament used was comparing the American colonies to being their children. Barré's disbelief at this statement caused more tension considering, as Barré acknowledged, that they were the ones who caused the colonies to be in

³³ Bob Ruppert, "Isaac Barré: Advocate for Americans in the House of Commons," *Journal of the American Revolution* (2015), <https://allthingsliberty.com/2015/08/isaac-barre-advocate-for-americans-in-the-house-of-commons/>, Accessed September 10, 2016.

³⁴ Cited in Ruppert, "Isaac Barré."

rebellion in the first place. To this, Barré said, “they protected by your arms? They have nobly taken up arms in your defense, have exerted a valour amidst their constant and laborious industry for the defense of a country, whose frontier, while drenched in blood, its interior parts have yielded all its little savings to your emolument.”³⁵ Barré’s arguments always focus on the idea of liberty and freedom that the Americans have established and fought for. He told Parliament that the Americans have a fight for liberty so strong that if they are threatened to be taken away, they will fight for them and will not back down. One important argument to note is that Barré never doubted the colonists’ loyalty to the king; he just knows that their spirit will convince them to fight for their liberties that they obtained over the years.³⁶

The speeches Barré made in reaction to the acts Parliament passed clearly displayed Barré’s views. The Stamp Act is one that caused Barré to justify his claims. Barré accused Parliament for abusing their power and trying to take away the liberty of the people. Barré said that Parliament abused both their power and rights and because the colonists were mistreated and denied their representative rights, they felt like slaves. Barré cautioned Parliament to be the “Mother country” that they are and not get the “stepmother” nickname.³⁷ In the debates and proceedings of Parliament involving the Revenue Acts in North America, Barré makes the point of saying that they should be repealed because Parliament even admitted that they created the act in order to teach the colonies a lesson, rather than for commerce.³⁸

³⁵ Cited in Ruppert, “Isaac Barré.”

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *The Debates and Proceedings of the British House of Commons from 1768 to 1770*, Vol. I (London:1766), Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlin_n_stat

Another act that Barré spoke about was the Tea Act. Barré was sarcastic in his reply saying, “this tax has been said to be not a fruitful one; I think it a very fruitful one, for it has produced riots and disturbances; it has been resisted, it has done its duty, let us dismiss it.”³⁹ Acknowledging the chaos taking place in the colonies, Barré urged Parliament to repeal the act before any further damage was done. Yet again, Barré acknowledged that the repeal of the Tea Act was crucial in order to stop the rebellion in the colonies because it was useless anyway.

Barré’s main point about the Townsend Act was similar to his feelings about the other acts. The Townsend Act was responsible for more royal control over actions in America. Also disapproving this act, Barré thought that the colonies were at their best and most prosperous when they were living in their liberties and freedoms. Barré addressed Parliament saying,

For my part, the America I wish to see is America increasing and prosperous, raising her head in graceful dignity, with freedom and firmness asserting her rights at your bar, vindicating her liberties, pleading her services, and conscious of her merit. This is the America that will have courage to fight your battles, to sustain you when hard pushed by some prevailing force and by her industry will be able to consume your manufactures, support your trade, and pour wealth and splendor in your towns and cities. If we do not change our conduct towards her, America will be torn from our side. I repeat it, unless you repeal this law, you run the risk of losing America.⁴⁰

Barré, like Burke, believed that Parliament faced the risk of losing the colonies if they continued to attack their liberty. Barré chastised Parliament for their treatment of the colonies after the colonies not only helped them in the war but provided financial stability

[e&tabID=T001&docId=CB3329948649&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](https://www.17thcentury.com/essay/Isaac-Barr%C3%A9-174-175), 174-175.

³⁹ *American Archives*. Fourth Series, Vol 1, (Washington: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837). from <https://archive.org/stream/AmericanArchives-FourthSeriesVolume1-ContainingADocumentaryHistory/AaSeries4VolumeI#page/n0/mode/2up> 166.

⁴⁰ Cited in Ruppert, “Isaac Barré.”

with trade. America was valuable to the Empire and losing it would be profoundly damaging to Britain. Barré warned Parliament that they would lose America if they did not treat the colonists with the respect they deserved. Barré tried to make Parliament see that America was prosperous for the Empire and that losing the colonies would be a fatal mistake and that if Parliament wanted to continue getting economic benefit from the colonies, then they had to treat the colonies better.

Barré cared about the American colonies for many reasons. Barré believed that the colonies deserved liberty and justice because of their hardship and endurance in the New World and this required Parliament to show the colonies respect and make considerable laws that did not violate Parliamentary power. In Barré's Stamp Act speech, he called the American rebels, "The Sons of Liberty," the name which will go down in history to describe the American rebels. Even while Barré, in the Boston Port Act speech, believed that the colonies should be punished because they acted wrongly, he still noted that the taxation was still wrong. Barré said that the bill was not a fine on the colonies, but still a tax and Barré could not justify another tax on the colonies. Barré thought that taxation only made matters worse in the colonies, causing more conflict. He realized that each tax caused more and more conflict so he warned Parliament that America was valuable to the Empire through economic reasons so Britain was in trouble if America continued to rebel. Barré's hatred towards taxation drove him to make many of his speeches.⁴¹

Barré's fight in Parliament was more about liberty and freedom than the constitutional, political, and economic authority as Burke constantly pointed out. Acknowledgement of the forceful action Parliament took against the Americans only

⁴¹ American Archives, 46.

forced Barré to have a stronger stance against taxation. However, like Burke, Barré never questioned Parliamentary authority, just the ability to tax the colonies and the way Parliament was taxing them. However, according to Morgan and Morgan, Barré did little to change Parliament's mind because Parliament persisted in showing their authority to the colonies.⁴² Barré, like Burke, believed that Parliament could not legally tax the colonies so Parliament was wrong trying to tax the colonies.⁴³

Overall, Barré had similar motivations to Burke, but both emphasized different points. Like Burke, Barré never challenged the legislative authority that Parliament had over the colonies. Also like Burke, Barré did not believe that the colonies should break away from the Empire, both members warned Parliament that a result of their actions might be the Americans breaking away, which would be bad for the Empire. The colonies were essential in the Empire's identity. The financial relationship between the colonies and England was an essential part of England's success, so losing the colonies would be detrimental to the Empire. However, Barré's motivations focused more around the colonists themselves, focusing on the mistreatment that they were given in England, causing them to leave for the New World in the first place, and the continual mistreatment from Parliament. Barré acknowledged the American spirit and liberty more than Burke does but both agree that Parliament's authority to tax the colonies was not viable and that Parliament's main goal was to prove its ultimate authority over the colonies. Barré knew that the lack of representation in Parliament was illegal and the colonies were justified in their rebellion. Again, it is important to note that the legislative

⁴² Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 70.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 290.

authority wasn't questioned; it was the principle on which Parliament was treating the colonists that drove Barré to support the Americans in their beliefs of liberty.

Charles James Fox was another Americanist who made many speeches in Parliament about the American colonies. Burke was a mentor and good friend to Fox. "Fox had entered Parliament in 1768 at the age of just nineteen and quickly established himself as a formidable orator."⁴⁴ Fox was a prominent and outspoken Americanist, to the fact in which he even wore the colors of Washington's Army to a Parliamentary meeting.⁴⁵ Fox, like both Burke and Barré, was motivated by the principle behind Parliament's actions and wrongdoings with the colonies.⁴⁶ With Edmund Burke as a mentor to Fox and his likeable personality, Fox's prominence and productivity in Parliament was inevitable. Fox's father was also a long serving member of the House of Commons that had a huge impact on Fox's own political career. Fox spoke out against all acts that he believed to be a mistake and that threatened liberty in the world.⁴⁷

Charles James Fox, like Burke and Barré, also cared about warning Parliament against taxing the colonies too, fearing the Americans would break away from the Empire. Fox warned that the colonies would only continue to fight until they obtained their freedom. "It is only done with a view to irritate and declare war against the Americans, which, if you persist in, I am clearly of opinion you will effect, or force them

⁴⁴ Norman, *Edmund Burke*, 83.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁶ Charles James Fox, *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox in the House of Commons*. Edited by J. Wright, (London: 1815): 34, <https://archive.org/stream/speechesrightho05foxgoog#page/n6/mode/2up>; accessed October 3, 2016.

⁴⁷ D.T Johnson, "Charles James Fox: From Government to Opposition, 1771-1774," *The English Historical Review* 89, No. 353 (1974): 750-753, accessed November 10, 2016.

into open rebellion.”⁴⁸ One of the acts that Fox fought against was the Tea Act. He knew that the Americans had riots for all the acts that Parliament gave them. Fox advised Parliament that Parliament should be using the energy the colonists were using for rebellion for the benefit of the Empire instead of for more rebellions. Fox stated that each new act riled the colonists again to cause more riots. Rather than the taxes quieting the colonies like they were supposed to, the colonies instead reacted violently. Each tax was supposed to punish the colonies and prove the authority Parliament had. Fox acknowledged that Parliament’s blindness to the rebellion just led to more.⁴⁹

Fox also cared that the colonies were not represented in Parliament. He stated, “here is the absolute dereliction of the authority of this country. It has been said, that America is not represented in this House, but the Americans are full as virtually taxed, as virtually represented.”⁵⁰ Fox attacked Parliament for taxing the colonies as if they had representation when clearly knowing that they did not. Fox also felt that the colonies were being mistreated in being given a tax, in this case the Tea Act, because “a tax can only be laid for three purposes; the first for a commercial regulation, the second for revenue, and the third for asserting your right. As for the first two, it had clearly been denied that it is for either; as to the latter, it is only done with a view to irritate and declare war against the Americans, which, if you persist in, I am clearly of opinion you will effect, or force them into open rebellion.”⁵¹ Again, Fox took notice that Parliament was abusing their political authority to tax the colonies in order to irritate the Americans, not with the intention of commerce. Parliament’s abuse of authority by taxing the

⁴⁸ Fox, *The Speeches*, 28.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

colonies for authoritarian reasons, while knowing that the colonies lacked the representation they were supposed to have, caused Fox to become an Americanist. Fox believed that the colonies should have consent on whether or not to be taxed.⁵² The principle of the taxing is again one of the reasons that the Americanists joined forces. Fox's attitude towards how Parliament governed the colonies had also to do with the right that Parliament did not have to tax the colonies without representation.

It is important to note that Fox also had given speeches about the Bill for the Better Regulating the Government of Massachusetts Bay. This bill would take away the authority of the colonies to choose their own governors and would make the crown have authority. While Fox did not like the principle or authority on which the colonies were being taxed, Fox did believe that the colonies should respect the legislative branch of the British government. Like Burke and Barré, Fox believed the Americans should not rebel against the government itself but the principle on which they were attacked. With the passing of this bill, Fox knew that this bill would not solve anything; it would just make matters worse between the colonies and Britain.⁵³

However, even though Fox believed that the Americans were just in their rebellion because Parliament was disobeying the law, Fox thought that Parliament could do what they wanted with the colonies as long as it was in their legal right to do so. For the Government of Massachusetts Bay Bill, Fox encouraged Parliament to consider whether or not they wanted "to govern by military force, or by management."⁵⁴ While Fox believed that the legislative authority of Parliament should still be enforced in the colonies, the incapability of Parliament to peacefully resolve issues encouraged more

⁵² *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

colonial rebellion. Fox believed that while Parliament has authority over the colonies, the illegal action of taxing the colonies without representation had the colonies rightfully rebelling. Fox told Parliament to change the laws they had to or take away the colonies' charter but deliberately disobeying the law caused just reason for the colonies to rebel. Fox stated that "I cannot conceive that any law whatever, while their charter continues, will make them think that you have a right to tax them."⁵⁵ Fox blamed Lord North for everything happening in the colonies, saying that he was negligent and ignorant to the proceedings in America.⁵⁶ Horrified at the deterioration of the situation in America, Fox attacked North for being unfit to lead because North's policies and solutions only made the colonies angrier.⁵⁷ In response to the Bill for Restraining the Commerce of the New England Colonies, Fox said that Parliament was doing more to unite the colonies rather than divide them like they meant to. In Fox's view, Parliament was basically saying that there were two sides, Parliament versus the colonies. Therefore, the colonies were going to unite together. "I thought your measures were intended to divide the people. But when you mean to destroy, you unite all, because you wish to destroy all."⁵⁸

In a letter from Lord Erskine to the editor, J. Wright, of *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox in the House of Commons*, he describes Fox as a man who sought to fight for liberty and peace to end violence in nations.⁵⁹ This accurately describes Fox's motivations regarding the American colonies. Fox was discontent at how clumsily Parliament was dealing with America, not realizing that the acts and decisions they made did more to upset the colonies than appease them. While Fox believed that

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xxv- xxvii.

Parliament should be the authority figure regarding America, he could not acknowledge Parliament's actions that clearly went against the English constitution with regards to taxing America with no representation in Parliament. As Loren Reid notes in *Charles James Fox*, "he was, moreover, attracted to Burke's thought that if there were a solution, it lay on the side of conciliation rather than force."⁶⁰ Based on Fox's speeches, Fox's issues mostly had to do with management and how Parliament chose to treat the colonies. The actions Parliament took only led to more revolt. Parliament's knowledge of the lack of representation in Parliament made the proceedings illegal. Fox did not like that Parliament passed each act only to assert more authority and to punish the colonies for their actions.

The three Americanists in the House of Commons had similar motivations. Each member focused on the principle of the tax and the illegal actions Parliament was taking against the colonies. Each member wanted to bring peace between the Empire and colonies again, restoring the balance that revolved around trade and economic purposes. Burke, Barré, and Fox all felt that Parliament was purposely abusing their power to punish the colonies, which the three noticed only did more to push the colonies away than teaching them a lesson. The three understood the colonists' meaning behind rebellion because they knew Parliament was not acting properly. Parliament was warned by all the Americanists that the colonies would keep rebelling and eventually try to break away from the Empire, something the Empire could not afford to lose. The liberty and spirit of America was recognized and celebrated by the Americanists and because they cared about liberty, did not want it to be taken away. Neither Burke, Barré, or Fox believed that

⁶⁰ Loren Reid, *Charles James Fox*, (London: Longmans, 1996), 51.

the colonies should rebel against the legislative or authoritative power of Parliament, it was the unfair and tyrannical treatment the colonies were receiving that concerned the members.

While Burke also acknowledged the economic affect the revolt would have on the Empire, most of the speeches focused on both the principle in which Parliament was taxing the colonies in order to assert authority and the illegal actions of taxing the colonies with no representative assembly. Barré emphasized that the colonists left England and fought for their own freedom already in the New World and created their liberties that could not be taken away now. Barré acknowledged that the Americans were right in fighting for their liberties that they previously had and earned in the dangerous New World. Fox knew that the illegal proceedings Parliament took towards the colonies due to the lack of Parliamentary representation was an insult to the colonies. Fox knew that Parliament simply had to change the laws in order to tax the colonies, but was something Parliament would not do because of the principle of the matter where Parliament wanted to assert authority. Each member believed in peace and the renewal of good relations between the Parliament and the colonies, not wanting the colonies to break away from the Empire. Overall, while none of the members wanted to see the colonies separated from the Empire, each member knew that Parliament had to change their actions for the sake of both the British Americans and the British Empire.

In America, the efforts of the Americanists were recognized by the colonists. In the *Essex Gazette*, printed on April 18, 1775, Charles James Fox was acknowledged for opposing a bill attacking Parliament's inconsistency in regulations.⁶¹ As for Isaac Barré, the colonists named Barre, Massachusetts after him to acknowledge their appreciation for

⁶¹ *Essex Gazette*, April, 18, 1775.

his help in Parliament.⁶² Overall, the Americanists provided support for the American colonies in Parliament because of their idea of liberty and a government that respected all British citizens. Most studies focus on the demanding Parliament where “unanimous” decisions about passing the acts caused the conflict in the American colonies, with little or no acknowledgement of the Americanists in Parliament who gave the colonists the voice in government that they were refused. Parliament’s refusal to listen to the colonists eventually led to the American Revolution but the Americans never forgot the support they received from Edmund Burke, Isaac Barré, and Charles James Fox in Parliament.

⁶² Ruppert, “Isaac Barre.”

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