



# The Revolutionary War

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Sons of the American Revolution

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## Committees of Correspondence Article 1 of 1

As a direct result of Parliament's enactment of the *Intolerable Acts*, the American colonies began quietly and clandestinely organizing a shadow government in each colony. They were known as *The Committees of Correspondence*. The formation of these committees was nothing new to the colonials as they had performed this act on several occasions to meet Native American threats and incursions by Canadian French. All of the colonies had militia units formed under their committees of correspondence and with the blessing and cooperation of England.

By 1773, however, things were very different in the American colonies, and the committees of correspondence in each colony were clandestine, subversive, engaged in espionage, disloyal to the Crown, stockpiling war materials and making preparations for war. While each colony's committee was independent, there was a profound movement underway for the formation of a unified colonial enterprise. The committees emerged as real governmental authorities, suspending the royalist legislatures and certainly compromising royal officials. These secretive, all influential committees rallied opposition to Britain, disseminated propaganda supporting colonial causes, and rendered their own interpretation concerning British actions. They carried on brisk

correspondence with foreign governments. Approximately 8,000 Patriots comprised the membership of these committees, serving at every level in the existing colonial government—Loyalists were emphatically excluded from membership.

When Congress decided to boycott British products, it was the committees of correspondence in each colony that took charge, checking on merchants, and publishing the names of those who attempted to defy the boycott. The committees extended their power into American colonial life, identifying disloyal elements, displacing royal officials, and in the end toppling the royal system in each colony. Most important was the fact that the committees perfected a system of communication throughout the colonies whereby information was disseminated within cities and spread about the rural countryside. A news system was established, such that hand-written letters and printed pamphlets could be spread by organized couriers on foot and horseback.

The committees for correspondence for colonial America was actually the real functional government, but in hiding. The hiding would not last for long as the committees were organizing for a grand gathering of all the colonies—a congress, if you will.