

DOCUMENT 2: Proclamation by the King for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition (August 23, 1775)

King George III received two petitions sent to him in July by the Continental Congress: (1) the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, and (2) the so-called "Olive Branch Petition," which professed American loyalty to the king and hopes for peaceful settlement of all issues that divided Americans from the British. King George was the British sovereign, but his power, limited by law, was shared with the Parliament. The king and his ministers, however, tended to agree with the Parliament's policy of forcefully suppressing American resistance to British authority. So, the king refused to recognize the petitions for peace from America and declared the colonies in rebellion, which he vowed to crush.

News of the king's response to their petitions did not reach the colonies until the end of October 1776. It had a chilling effect on the American seekers of reconciliation with Britain and strengthened the forces for separation, who saw no recourse other than to settle the conflict by force of arms.

The king emphatically stated his position on the American challenges to British authority. He charged the leaders with treason and promised to capture and punish them. What are the main arguments of his Proclamation? What are his justifications for these arguments?

Whereas many of our subjects in divers parts of our Colonies and Plantations in *North America*, misled by dangerous and ill designing men, and forgetting the allegiance which they owe to the power that has protected and supported them; after various disorderly acts committed in disturbance of the publick peace, to the obstruction of lawful commerce, and to the oppression of our loyal subjects carrying on the same; have at length proceeded to open and avowed rebellion, by arraying themselves in a hostile manner, to withstand the execution of the law, and traitorously preparing, ordering and levying war against us: And whereas, there is reason to apprehend that such rebellion hath been much promoted and encouraged by the traitorous correspondence, counsels and comfort of divers wicked and desperate persons within this realm: To the end therefore, that none of our subjects may neglect or violate their duty through ignorance thereof, or through any doubt of the protection which the law will afford to their loyalty and zeal, we have thought fit, by and with the advice of our Privy Council, to issue

our Royal Proclamation, hereby declaring, that not only all our Officers, civil and military, are obliged to exert their utmost endeavours to suppress such rebellion, and to bring the traitors to justice, but that all our subjects of this Realm, and the dominions thereunto belonging, are bound by law to be aiding and assisting in the suppression of such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all traitorous conspiracies and attempts against us, our crown and dignity; and we do accordingly strictly charge and command all our Officers, as well civil as military, and all others our obedient and loyal subjects, to use their utmost endeavours to withstand and suppress such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which they shall know to be against us, our crown and dignity; and for that purpose, that they transmit to one of our principal Secretaries of State, or other proper officer, due and full information of all persons who shall be found carrying on correspondence with, or in any manner or degree aiding or abetting the persons now in open arms and rebellion against our Government, within any of our Colonies and Plantations in *North America*, in order to bring to condign punishment the authors, prepetrators, and abettors of such traitorous designs.

Given at our Court at *St. James's* the twenty-third day of *August*, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, in the fifteenth year of our reign.

GOD save the KING.

Source: Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, Fourth Series, Vol. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1837-), p. 240.

See also
"William Pym"