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A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution

Johann Conrad Dhla

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This unique diary, written by one of the thirty thousand Hessian troops whose services were sold to George III to suppress the American Revolution, is the most complete and informative primary account of the Revolution from the common soldier's point of view. Johann Conrad Dhla describes not just military activities but also events leading up to the Revolution, American customs, the cities and regions that he visited, and incidents in other parts of the world that affected the war. He also evaluates the important military commanders, giving readers an insight into how the enlisted men felt about their leaders and opponents. Private Dhla crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1777 as a private in the Ansbach-Bayreuth contingent of Hessian mercenaries. His American sojourn began in June 1777 in New York. Then, after several months on Staten Island and Manhattan, the Ansbach-Bayreuth regiments traveled to the thriving seaport of Newport, Rhode Island, where they spent more than a year before the British forces evacuated the area. The Ansbach-Bayreuth regiments returned briefly to the New York New Jersey area before they were sent to reinforce the English command in Virginia. Eventually Dhla participated in the battle of Yorktown of which he provides a vivid description before enduring two years as a prisoner of war after Cornwallis's surrender. Bruce E. Burgoyne has provided an accurate translation, helpful notes for scholars and general readers, and an introduction on the Ansbach-Bayreuth regiments and the history of Johann Conrad Dhla and his diary. This first edition of the diary in English will delight all who are interested in the American Revolution and the thirteen original colonies.