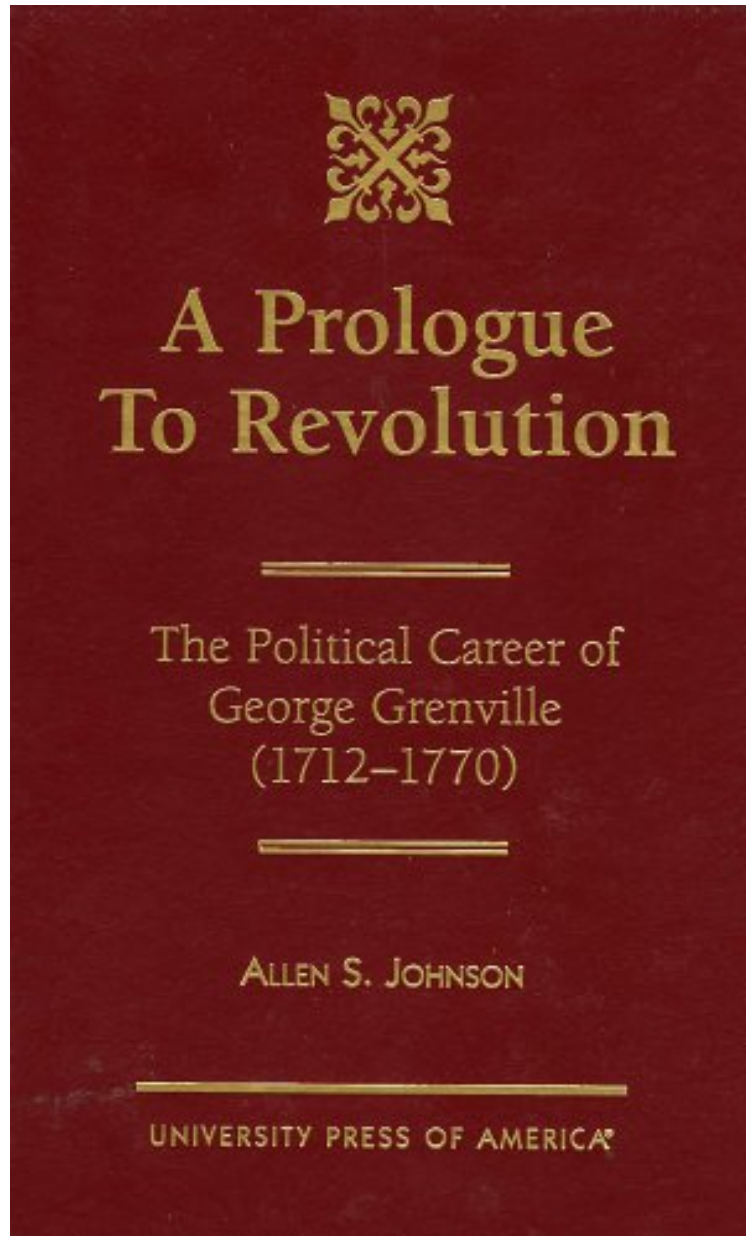


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A Prologue to Revolution: The political career of George Grenville (1712-1770)

Allen S. Johnson

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The political career of George Grenville (1712-1770):

George Grenville was King George III's First Minister from 1763 to 1765. The central issue of Grenville's administration was to deal with the aftermath of the Seven Year's War, particularly with the sharply increased national debt and the cost of continued protection of the American colonies. In seeking to balance the national budget, he blundered into levying taxes on the Americans. The Sugar Act of 1764 aroused very little opposition or even discussion. But it was an entering wedge. The ease with which it sailed through Parliament led Grenville to propose another American tax, the Stamp Act. This aroused vigorous, even violent opposition, both in America and among the business community in Great Britain. Grenville's career also saw the development of numerous techniques for shaping and manipulating public opinion, and he was intimately involved in using them, particularly the newspaper and pamphlet press. He was one of those principally involved in attempting to suppress John Wilkes and the North Briton No. 45, an episode in the evolution of freedom of the press in Great Britain. Grenville was dismissed from office by the King because of issues that had nothing to do with American taxation. The years between 1765 and 1770, between his dismissal and his death, show a mellowing as well as maturing of his political wisdom. Increasingly he played the role of elder statesmen, advising the House of Commons on important questions concerning not only American taxation but freedom of the press and freedom of elections.

...a sound and informed account, in sixteen chronological chapters, of a man underrated by contemporaries as well as historians. (Peter D. G. Thomas Choice). . . Allen S. Johnson reminds us that high politics in general, and Grenville's career in particular, are worth studying. (The Historian)The only modern life of Grenville, an unquestionably important figure, both to the American Revolution and to British politics of the Augustan era. (Choice)...a sound and informed account, in sixteen chronological chapters, of a man underrated by contemporaries as well as historians. (Peter D. G. Thomas Choice)About the AuthorAllen S. Johnson is Professor of History and Geography at N.C. Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.