Chapter 5

America's Struggle for Independence

Following the Paris Peace settlement of 1763, it would have seemed that real peace could now settle down over America. But this was not to be. Peace was short-lived.

When the Treaty of Paris was signed, the Thirteen Colonies were thriving. The population had risen to two and a half million — two million whites and a half million blacks.

Prosperity in the Colonies was the rule — not the exception. In fact the colonists were generally far more prosperous than the average Briton. The land on which they lived was virgin soil, rich and productive. The colonists were, in the main, an energetic able group — determined to get ahead!

Trade and commerce flourished — especially between the colonists and England. Taxes were ridiculously low in the colonies. They had not had the burden of heavy defense costs. The Mother Country had been willing to shoulder that responsibility.

In fact, during the Anglo-French war of 1756-63, the colonists had continued prospering, partly as a result of the war. Some had profited by providing supplies for the British; other colonials had even supplied the French forces — for a profit, of course.

When Britain and France signed the Treaty of Paris in 1763, by which France relinquished her claims to Canada and the Mississippi Valley, it looked as though the American colonies would no longer need English troops on their soil. Previously, Americans had welcomed English soldiers, and had even fought beside them. They knew British troops were there to protect the colonies from French and Indian attacks.

After the Treaty of Paris, England woke up to the realization of just how much the war had cost her. British merchants grumbled because they were asked to pay for this costly war. Taxes were now running at four shillings in the pound. And interest on the national debt was five million pounds a year — a very high sum, indeed, at the time. Running an Empire was proving a very costly undertaking!

Englishmen began realizing that Americans, who in some ways had actually benefitted from the war, were paying little or no taxes! Why shouldn't they also help shoulder this tax burden?

After all, prosperity was soaring in the Thirteen Colonies. One fifth of all Britain's subjects now lived in America. And the Americans were actually enjoying a considerably higher living standard than were their English cousins. Americans had huge tracts of land, lived in large, comfortable homes and enjoyed some of the highest-priced goods from Britain and Europe.

At the time, England's public debt averaged eighteen pounds per person, whereas the public debt of the colonies was only one-twentieth of this (18 shillings per person). The average American taxpayer was paying only sixpence a year, but his English cousins were paying about fifty times that amount in taxes.

Furthermore, England believed she should leave a number of troops in America — to protect her subjects from Indian attacks, or from a possible renewal of French aggression. The Americans, however, just didn't see any need for Britain to station soldiers in the colonies now that France had ceded virtually all of North America to Britain. It appeared to the Americans as if the French had bowed out of North America.

But regardless of stiffening complaints and resistances, after France ceded Britain the land east of the Mississippi, England forbad the colonists further expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains. This nettled the Americans. They fully intended to settle the lands west of those mountains.

When England began increasing the tax rate, and garrisoning redcoats throughout the colonies, it was the last straw.

It was an increasing *tax burden*, saddled on American colonists by England, which irritated and infuriated the Americans more than anything else. They would tolerate a certain amount of British interference in their trade, but woe to the English politicians in London if they tried to coerce independent-minded Americans to pay more taxes!

John Locke's (1632-1704) influential book, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), contended that since all government derived from the people, they had the right to overthrow any government which denied them their fundamental rights. *People should not be taxed without their consent!* The colonists took this Englishman's words to mean that they, too, had certain natural rights which the British Parliament couldn't violate. And they firmly believed that Parliament could not (or should not!) *tax* them without their express consent.

Leaders of the Revolution

At this point in colonial history, a number of fiery men began to arise. The spirited Patrick Henry aroused public sentiment in popular harangues against the British.

Patrick Henry was considered by some to be ambitious and also vainglorious, but he possessed an ability to move people to action. He had been admitted to the bar after reading law for only six weeks. And he was not timid (or even respectful) when it came to derogatory references to King George III, King of England.

Patrick Henry began to say that the King had "degenerated into a tyrant." This was heady, strong, even treasonable, language! But it seemed to suit the mood of many of the colonials.

Another fiery leader (some referred to him as a rabble-rouser) who continued to stir up the colonials was Samuel Adams. He had quite a following among the common people in Boston. At his beck and call, hundreds of Boston bully-boys would go into action against the British. Many looked on Sam Adams as the "Father of the Revolution."

Later, the popularity-seeking lawyer, Patrick Henry, arrived in Virginia and orated before the Virginia House of Burgesses. He was so abusive of the King, that the speaker of the House accused him of treason. Patrick Henry apologized — then spoke more treason! Moved, the House resolved that Virginians could not be taxed except by their own assembly, and that anyone who said otherwise "shall be deemed an enemy of His Majesty's colony."

The Right to Tax?

What would Britain do? Did she really have the legal right to tax the colonists?

England stedfastly maintained that she not only had the right to tax the colonists — but to do so even *without* their consent. Furthermore, she could regulate trade, wage war and conduct her Imperial business without seeking advice or counsel from the upstart colonials.

England then unwisely passed a number of acts and laws which proved both unpopular and utterly unenforceable.

The *Molasses Act* of 1743 placed a duty of sixpence a gallon (a very high duty) on molasses imported from the *French* West Indies. This act aimed at forcing the colonists to buy from the *British* West Indies.

The *Iron Act* of 1750 attempted to limit the manufacture of hardware in the colonies. Numerous other restrictions were placed on various colonial industries.

In 1651, Britain passed the *Navigation Acts* — directed primarily against the Dutch. This Act made it mandatory that all goods shipped to or from the colonies be carried in English or colonial ships, and the majority of the hands on those ships had to be English or colonial born.

Furthermore, certain kinds of produce ("enumerated articles" — furs, ships' masts, tar, pitch, turpentine, tobacco etc.) could be sent to

Europe only *via* England. And goods from Europe to the colonies must also go *via* England.

What was the colonialists' reaction to all these restrictions? They either ignored, or openly flouted British rules and regulations. England, realizing the utter impossibility of enforcing them on so vast a territory, was halfhearted in her attempt.

The colonists' usual response was wide-scale *smuggling!* In fact, many a wealthy colonial merchant (e.g. John Hancock — signer of the Declaration of Independence) obtained much of his wealth by the shady business of smuggling. Bribes and corruption were rampant! Many British officials could be paid to turn a blind eye to any smuggling which they might be privy to.

The molasses-rum business was the prime concern of the smugglers. This was a very lucrative trade at that time. Molasses from the West Indies was sold to the colonists. They made it into rum, and then used the rum and their rum-money to buy more slaves from Africa, who were in turn sold in the West Indies to help produce more molasses. This wretched triangular business thrived for many years.

The overall effect of the passage of some of these unenforceable laws was to encourage general *lawlessness* — much like what later happened in the U.S. during Prohibition.

Many of the early colonists had left England in the first place because they wanted more political and religious *freedom*. Liberty and independence flowed strongly in their blood. Rebellion seemed to be second nature to these self-willed pioneers. They demonstrated quite early that they had no intention of keeping laws — especially English laws!

When George Grenville became Prime Minister in 1763, he decided it was past time to begin tightening the controls on American trade. Grenville immediately ordered a crackdown on all smugglers and contraband. And by the use of "writs of assistance," he empowered British agents with the legal means of searching houses suspected of having contraband.

In 1764 the *Sugar Act* was passed, repealing the unenforceable *Molasses Act* of 1733. This later Act placed a duty of threepence a gallon on all imported molasses. This was only half what it had been before. But the colonists still weren't satisfied.

The Hated Stamp Act

What really stirred up a storm of protest was Grenville's passage of the *Stamp Act* in 1765. Though the amount of taxes to be raised by this Act was *minimal*, colonial hostility and resultant outcries against it were *maximal*.

By this Stamp Act all legal documents, licences, newspapers, university degrees, commercial contracts, wills had to have a legal stamp (a form of a tax) paid on them. This practice had been common in England for some time, but the rebellious-minded colonists weren't about to submit to this form of taxation.

The "Sons of Liberty" and the "Daughters of Liberty" were growing in strength. They protested against and stoutly resisted all British Acts by which additional taxes were laid on their shoulders.

The hostility and heated agitation against the Stamp Act was an ominous portent for the future of British rule in the Thirteen Colonies. Henceforth, their battlecry — "No Taxation without Representation!" — would serve as a serious challenge to British rule. They hotly argued that the English Parliament had no right to tax them unless the colonies had representatives seated in Parliament. Since 3,000 miles separated the colonies from London, they concluded that only their own assemblies could tax them.

When the colonists refused to pay duty on molasses and boycotted English goods in a solid show of defiance, there was little that England could do but relent.

When the colonies decided not to pay stamp taxes on legal papers, there was no way Britain could force them to comply.

Time and again, English governing authorities gave in to the demands of the colonists. Repeatedly, when the colonies refused to pay imposed duties, they were repealed by Parliament.

A Taste of Freedom

But once the colonists got a taste of freedom — once they had rebelled against the Mother Country, and gotten away with it — their confidence and independence grew even greater.

King George III was determined to make the colonists submit, as were several English prime ministers. But a few leaders like Edmund Burke and William Pitt reasoned that even if Britain had the *legal* "right" to tax the colonists, it was, nonetheless, highly *unwise* to do so.

When Britain repealed the Stamp Act, the news caused boisterous enthusiasm in the colonies. For some time afterward anti-British agitation ceased. It appeared that the Anglo-American wound had closed, and might soon heal.

But old festering wounds of animosity were reopened with a vengeance in 1767. England's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, convinced Parliament that the American colonies would be willing to pay customs duties though they had rebelled at paying the stamp duty.

At his instigation, Parliament passed customs duties on paper,

paints, glass, lead and *tea!* The Prime Minister had been assured (on unsound advice!) that this *external* taxation would be acceptable to the colonies. They only resented *internal* taxation. But, how wrong he proved to be!

Dumping British Tea

It so happened that the East India Company had accumulated a vast amount of tea which they were unable to sell. Many of the colonists were purchasing cheap Dutch tea, and were therefore not willing to pay the higher price for English tea. The colonists were great tea drinkers — drinking about two million cups a day.

England decided to dump this surplus tea on the American colonies, selling it cheaper than the Dutch tea. England thought this tea would be so cheap that the colonists would be happy to buy it — even if they had to pay a small tax on it.

But a number of Americans decided to stand firm on *principle.* If they bought this cheap tea and paid the tax Britain demanded, were they not then acquiescing to the principle that England had the *right to tax* them without representation?

And this they were not willing to do!

In the autumn of 1773, a tea-laden flotilla of seven English ships were on the high seas, destined to unload their politically explosive cargo at American ports.

But even while the ships were en route, many merchants cancelled their orders for English tea. In numerous American ports, the city officials refused to let the tea be unloaded.

Three of these vessels carrying about 90,000 pounds of East India tea sailed into Boston harbor in November 1773.

Sam Adams and his crowd of rowdies demanded that they put back to sea immediately. After much harassment, the shipowners agreed to leave, but the English Governor, Thomas Hutchinson, refused to let the ships go until the tea duty was paid. According to law, said Hutchinson, the tea was liable to *tax* once it entered the harbor — whether it was purchased or not!

A mob of about 5,000 Bostonians gathered at the Old South meeting house on December 16. They dressed up as Indians, blackened their faces and with a frollicking good war-whoop, they cheerily threw the tea into the harbor — all 90,000 pounds of it!

Some very highly placed citizens took part in this Indian "tea party." John Hancock (one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence) reportedly threw some tea overboard. During the fracas, a friend, recognizing Hancock, grunted to him: "Ugh, me know you!"

Meanwhile, an East India cargo was burned in Greenwich, New

Jersey, and in Annapolis, Maryland, the "Indians" burned both the tea and the ship. Several other "tea parties" were held.

What would the British do? Did they dare ignore this insolence and rebellion?

England decided, after the Boston Tea Party, to close the harbor of Boston until the city paid for all the tea thrown into the harbor. George III himself said: "We must master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens."

The "Boston Massacre"

By 1768 rebellious disturbances in the colonies had reached such a fever pitch that the English government thought it time to show "those braggarts their insignificancy in the scale of Empire."

In 1770 Lord North, an easy-going man, became Prime Minister. In that same year the so-called "Boston Massacre" took place.

For some time Bostonians had shown disrespect toward English governing officials. British soldiers in Boston suffered many insults. Tempers flared. Ugly incidents became more frequent.

In March 1770, a brawl started outside the customs-house in Boston. Civilians marched forward, insulting and taunting the British soldiers. They advanced menacingly, and began striking the soldier's rifles aside. A British soldier was knocked to the ground.

Then apparently panic broke out. Nobody really knows exactly what happened. Some said the British officer in charge ordered his men to fire, but he stoutly denied this. When the smoke and confusion cleared away, five Bostonians were dead or dying.

Many reasonable men felt the subsequent trial proved that the Patriots were to blame for the shooting. Thirty-eight witnesses testified that there was a carefully laid plot for a civilian attack on the troops. Many distressed Americans concluded it was high time for the rowdy mobs to quit their provocative acts.

But the cat had already been let out of the bag. Violence flared, and tempers soared as men acted in passion. In the eyes of many colonists, the British were simply unreasonable, oppressive, cruel!

The British, however, felt the colonists were totally to blame. They simply needed to be taught a few sharp lessons.

Britain was particularly annoyed at the city of Boston. That proud city would have to be subdued; and, if necessary, be reduced to a "smuggling village." The British Army would have to be sent to America to restore order, and impose the Imperial will of Britain on these rebels. England's Prime Minister, Lord North, incensed by the rebels, "cursed from morn to noon, and from noon to morn."

Meanwhile Americans continued boycotting British goods. Tarring

and feathering of English officials occurred. Also, any Americans who became informers were tarred and feathered.

The leaven of bitterness grew. Insults were hurled back and forth across the Atlantic as a verbal battle raged between the colonists and the Mother Country.

Serious conflict was not far away!

In September, 1774, some of the "ablest and wealthiest men in America" met in Philadelphia — the City of Brotherly Love — to plan their strategy in handling the ugly situation which was developing in the colonies.

(This first Continental Congress was to be described by William Pitt, a future British Prime Minister, as "the most honourable Assembly of Statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans.")

In early 1776, Thomas Paine who had arrived in America in 1771, published a highly provocative book entitled *Common Sense,* in which he urged the colonists to throw off the Imperial British yoke and declare themselves a sovereign nation.

His book was an instant success. Hundreds of thousands were sold. Nearly everyone who was literate read it and was impressed by its logic. Why should the peoples of the Thirteen Colonies continue to hang on to England's apron strings? Why should they let a government 3,000 miles away dictate their economic and political policies?

Weren't they able to stand up as men for freedom — to oppose the *tyrants* of Europe (King George III included), and if need be *fight* for their freedom? Was not independence worth fighting for?

Most of the colonists weren't yet fully persuaded that America should seek independence. Even when the war finally broke out, perhaps one third of the colonists were still convinced they should remain loyal to the English Crown. Another third were equally persuaded that the time had come when the colonies should cut all ties with the Mother Country. And about one third didn't care much either way. They just wanted to be able to live in peace and prosperity without interference from Parliament or anyone else.

When bitterness finally boiled over into armed conflict in 1775, nobody thought it would last long. The British certainly believed the colonials would not be able to hold out very long against the English regulars.

Americans — "A Race of Convicts"

The British still clung to the false hope that the colonials would quickly surrender — once they saw a sufficient show of strength. The average Englishman didn't have a very high regard for colonial soldiers. Many looked upon the colonists as the "sweepings of English prisons."

Colonials were regarded as people so lacking in spirit that they had sold themselves into indentured bondage. Some arrogantly looked upon the colonists as mere criminal riff-raff. Samuel Johnson, when speaking of the Americans, once said: "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be content with anything we allow them short of hanging."

Many insulting jibes and disparaging innuendoes were hurled toward the colonials. "These rebels will run at first sight." One British general remarked: "The American is an effeminate thing, very unfit for and very impatient for war." Another general insultingly boasted that with only a few English regulars, he would be able to "geld [castrate] all the American males, some by force and the rest with a little coaxing."

Shortly after the actual fighting began at Lexington and Concord, even King George III said: "When once these rebels have felt a smart blow, they will submit!" The King of England certainly did not intend to allow the British Empire to be dismantled by these insolent rebels.

American newspapers were whipping up anti-British feelings. The British army was manned by *sex fiends*, claimed newspaper editorials. If British occupation of American soil didn't end, "neither our wives, daughters, nor even grandmothers would be safe," the colonial papers screamed.

Rumor, half-truths and outright fabrications were fed to the British and the colonials. Emotionalism carried many along the path toward war. Reason dragged itself along slowly in the rear. War was now imminent!

One of History's Most Impassioned Speeches

One of the most impassioned and eloquent speeches ever given by mortal man was that of Patrick Henry's, given at the second patriotic convention of Virginia (March, 1775). Those who heard it were left stunned!

Following is a reconstruction of portions of that speech from actual witnesses who heard it!

> Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of *hope*. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth — and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous *struggle for liberty?* Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so dearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it. . . .
>
> I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array (of British forces), if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motives for it? Has Great Britain any enemy

in this quarter of the world, to call for this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. *They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. . . .*

Sir, we have done everything that could be done to *avert the storm* which is now coming on. We have *petitioned* — we have *remonstrated* — we have *supplicated* we have *prostrated* ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned with contempt from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of *peace* and *reconciliation.*

"We Must Fight!"

There is no longer any room for hope; if we wish to be free — if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending — if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained — *we must fight!* — I repeat it, sir, *we must fight; an appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!*

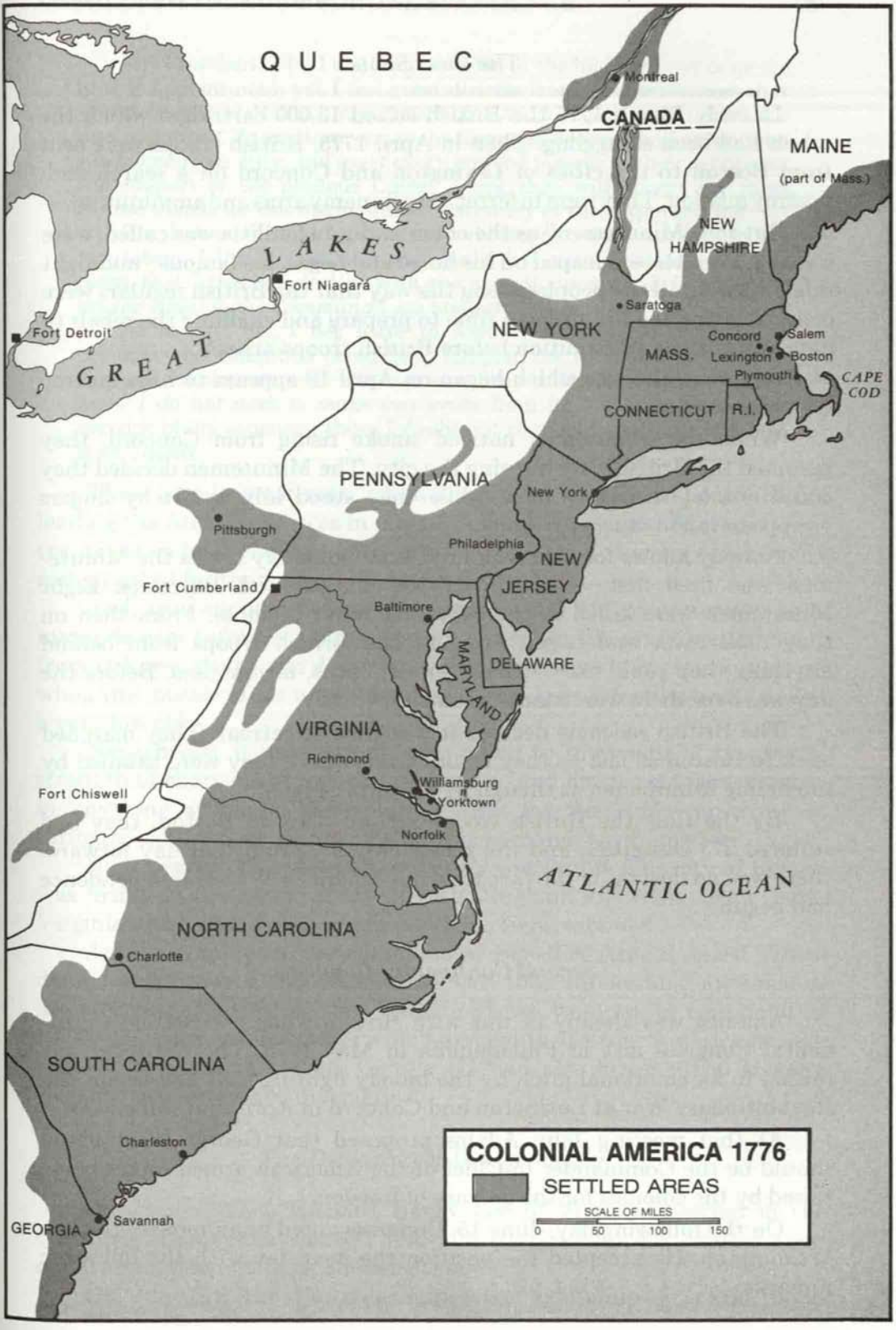
They tell us, sir, that we are weak, unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? *Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope,* until our enemy shall have bound us hand and foot?

Sir, *we are not weak,* if we make a proper use of those forces which the *God of nature* hath placed in our power. . . .

Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. *There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations,* and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, *it is now* too late to retire from the contest. There is *no retreat but in submission and slavery!* Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable — and let it come! I repeat, sir, let it come!

"Liberty or . . .Death!"

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace, but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? *Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"*


QUEBEC
Montreal
CANADA
MAINE
(part of Mass.)
NEW HAMPSHIRE
LAKES
Fort Niagara
Saratoga
NEW YORK
Fort Detroit
GREAT
Concord
Salem
MASS.
Lexington
Boston
Plymouth
CAPE COD
CONNECTICUT
R.I.
PENNSYLVANIA
New York
Pittsburgh
Philadelphia
NEW JERSEY
Fort Cumberland
Baltimore
MARYLAND
DELAWARE
VIRGINIA
Richmond
Williamsburg
Yorktown
Fort Chiswell
Norfolk
ATLANTIC OCEAN
NORTH CAROLINA
Charlotte
SOUTH CAROLINA
Charleston
GEORGIA
Savannah
COLONIAL AMERICA 1776
SETTLED AREAS
SCALE OF MILES
0
50
100
150

The First Shots

In early March 1775 the British seized 13,000 cartridges which the rebels had been smuggling. Then in April 1775, British troops were sent from Boston to the cities of Lexington and Concord on a search-and-destroy mission. They were to ferret out all enemy arms and ammunition.

But the "Minutemen" as the colonial rag-tag militia was called, were waiting. Paul Revere leaped on his horse and began his famous "midnight ride" warning all the peoples along the way that the British regulars were coming, giving the Minutemen time to prepare and enabling the rebels to hide any guns or ammunition before British troops arrived.

In a way, the war which began on April 19 appears to have started quite by accident.

When the Minutemen noticed smoke rising from Concord, they assumed the British were burning the city. The Minutemen decided they could not let their city burn while they stood idly by. Itchy fingers wrapped around musket triggers.

Nobody knows for sure who fired first. Some say it was the Minutemen who fired first — as the British charged with bayonets. Eight Minutemen were killed in the very first burst of shots. From then on they took cover and began firing at the British troops from behind anything they could use — trees, fences, barns, farmhouses. Before the day was over there were many casualties.

The British redcoats decided it was time to retreat. They marched back to Boston as fast as they could. Everywhere they were assailed by the hiding Minutemen as though by a swarm of bees.

By the time the British troops arrived back in Boston, they had suffered 273 casualties, and the rebels only 93. From that day forward, there was no mistaking the fact that the American War of Independence had begun.

Second Continental Congress

America was already at war with Britain when the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in May 1775. The Congress was roused to an emotional pitch by the bloody fighting that had begun the Revolutionary War at Lexington and Concord in April that same year.

At that meeting John Adams proposed that George Washington should be the Commander-in-Chief of the American armed forces being raised by the colonies for the defense of freedom.

On the following day, June 15, Congress voted unanimously to elect Washington. He accepted the position the next day with the following remarks:

Mr. President: Tho I am truly sensible of the high Honour done me in this Appointment, yet I feel great distress from a consciousness that *my abilities and Military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust:* However, as the Congress desires I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service for the support of the glorious Cause: I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their Approbation.

But lest some unlucky event should happen unfavourable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every Gentleman in the room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, *I do not think my self equal to the Command* I am honoured with.

> As to pay, Sir, I beg leave to Assure the Congress that as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to have accepted this Arduous employment (at the expense of my domestic ease and happiness) *I do not wish to make any profit* from it: I will keep an exact account of my expenses; those I doubt not they will discharge and that is all I desire.

Thus, a truly great man, when given the awesome responsibility of leading the American forces in mortal combat against the Mother Country, revealed his humility by his humble confession that he didn't really feel qualified for the job.

And, true enough, George Washington and his army were to have many defeats before achieving victory. At times his army melted away from sickness, death and desertions; and there were numerous occasions when the morale of his unprofessional, ill-equipped, motley army was at a very low ebb.

Nonetheless, it was undoubtedly much to the credit of this man's strength of character, his devotion to duty, and his dogged perseverance in anything which he undertook — that led the American army to ultimate victory over an enemy that was in many ways superior.

But in early 1775, the road to victory was far off. The city of Boston was firmly in the hands of the British. England knew that New York, Virginia and Philadelphia would also have to be subdued.

American troops under command of Benedict Arnold seized Ticonderoga and Crown Point that same year, thus threatening an advance into Canada. Meanwhile, Sir William Howe was put in command of 10,000 British reinforcements which arrived in Boston. Americans were angered to learn that King George III had also hired 20,000 Hessian German troops to serve in America.

The Declaring of Independence

On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia asserted in the Continental Congress that "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

On June 11, the Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin, John

Adams, Robert Livingston, and Thomas Jefferson to draft a declaration supporting Lee's resolution. It was decided that the task could best be done by Thomas Jefferson, since he was known to have a "happy felicity for composition." Jefferson eagerly went to work on the declaration and after many hours of work presented his document to the Continental Congress. On July 2, 1776 — not July 4 — the Continental Congress adopted Lee's resolution in which the colonies declared their total independence from Britain, and severed all political ties with Britain.

John Adams (later to become the second President of the U.S.) was so pleased and excited that he wrote his wife expressing the view that Americans ought to commemorate this memorable event. His letter stated: "The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of *devotion to God Almighty*. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward, forevermore."

Congress Debates Final Wording

After the Continental Congress approved and voted for American independence on the second of July, the rest of the day and the following two days were devoted to a close scrutinity of Jefferson's draft of a more detailed "declaration" of American independence. The Congress made a number of minor changes plus one or two important deletions. Jefferson had, in his original draft, mentioned that King George of Britain was using "Scotch and foreign mercenaries." But there were a number of notable "Scots" in the Second Continental Congress. Those offensive words were therefore stricken from Jefferson's first drafted copy. Also, Jefferson had included a denunciation of the African slave trade. This derogatory statement was highly offensive to some of the slave-owning delegates from the southern colonies.

After these alterations, the Continental Congress finally approved Jefferson's Declaration of Independence on the evening of July 4! That's why Americans celebrate their independence on July 4, not on July 2.

Signing With a Flourish

After Congress finally approved the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock, the president of the Congress, signed it with an unusually large signature. He later explained that the reason for this was that he wanted to make sure King George saw it. Hancock's signature was so

large and bold that his name has become synonymous with signing one's name. "Put your John Hancock on the document" simply means "sign the document."

The king's governor of the colony of Massachusetts had previously been instructed to arrest John Hancock and Samuel Adams but they escaped after being warned by Paul Revere. Later, the British colonial government was authorized by Britain to pardon all rebel patriots who laid down their weapons — *except* Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

Britain's governor of Massachusetts offered the pardon in the following proclamation: "In this exigency of complicated calamities, I avail myself of the last efforts within the bounds of my duty to spare the further effusion of blood, to offer, and I do hereby in his majesty's name offer and promise, his most gracious pardon to all persons who shall forthwith lay down their arms, and return to the duties of peaceable subjects, excepting only from the benefit of such pardon, *Samuel Adams* and *John Hancock,* whose offences are of too flagitious a nature to admit of any consideration than that of condign punishment."

The Continental Congress had the declaration printed, and it was read to the public in Philadelphia for the first time on July 8. George Washington, who was in New York City with his army at the time, assembled his troops so they could have the Declaration of Independence read to them on July 9.

Later the Continental Congress ordered a parchment copy of the Declaration of Independence, and the signatures of the delegates were added to this parchment at various later dates. Eventually, fifty-six men signed it.

The Colonies Go To War

During 1776, General Howe evacuated Boston, but quickly defeated Washington and the Continental Army at Long Island, and occupied New York. There, instead of capitalizing on his advantage, since he was now in a position to destroy his enemy's much weakened army, he unwisely decided to settle down for the winter.

At the time, Washington only had about 9,500 men. General Howe had 25,000 at his command — the largest army ever seen in America.

But Howe was too reticent, too hesitant! Three times he had the opportunity to deal Washington's army a crushing defeat. Thrice his enemy escaped. General Washington sailed from Long Island and crossed into Delaware.

Then Washington moved spectacularly and decisively. He knew the British army would not be very alert on Christmas night — after feasting and drinking.

With this in mind, Washington boldly recrossed the Delaware River

in a blinding snowstorm on Christmas night and easily captured a thousand Hessians at Trenton. A few days later he won another battle at Princeton, thus restoring badly needed morale to his army.

The British then conceived a brilliant strategy, which if executed, might have won them the war. In 1777, General Burgoyne took command of a British force of 8,000 troops and planned to work down the Hudson Valley to New York from Lake Champlain. General Howe promised to send 10,000 men up the Hudson to meet Burgoyne. London approved the concept.

Then General Howe changed his mind, and determined to send only 3,000 men to meet the British army from Canada. Eventually he decided not to send any troops north, but to merely hold a force ready to assist General Burgoyne — if he really needed help.

Burgoyne was already meeting heavy rebel resistance in New York before he learned that General Howe was sending no troops to his assistance. His army of about 7,000 at this time captured Ticonderoga, and then marched on to Fort Edward. Here he had to wait for supplies to come from Canada. In the meantime, rebel forces swarmed like hornets all about him.

Eventually the American forces cut his line of communications and mauled his battle-weary army.

He had foolishly overburdened his men with baggage. Thirty wagons were required to transport Burgoyne's own equipment, including supplies of champagne and silver plate.

General Burgoyne was by now surrounded and outnumbered, and had little real hope of escape. His Indian allies had abandoned him. Surrender seemed his only choice. On October 13, 1777, he surrendered his army near Saratoga.

Nathan Hale — "I Only Regret . . ."

Every great struggle produces its heroes, and the Revolutionary War was no exception. In an age of waning patriotism, it is well for Americans to reflect on the exemplary patriotism and the supreme sacrifice of one of its heroes during the American War of Independence.

Nathan Hale (1755-1776) was born into a large family of twelve children. As a young lad, he had a good mind, a strong, athletic body, and a rather calm, pious temperament. He took an active part in sports and showed great enthusiasm while engaging in all sporting events.

But he did not neglect the development of his mind. Hale entered Yale College in 1769, and distinguished himself by his keen interest in reading and his physical skills. After graduating from Yale, he taught school for a year at East Haddam, Connecticut. (He was born in Coventry, Conn.)

When the American Revolution broke out, Nathan Hale became excited about the issues involved. He, therefore, decided to join a Connecticut regiment, and even though he was a highly successful teacher, he joined the struggle against Britain. Hale received a lieutenant's commission in July, 1775, and fought in the siege of Boston. Before long he became a captain. Under his resourceful and daring leadership, he and his small band of troops captured a provision sloop from under the very guns of a British man-of-war. This brave act of heroism won him an honored place in a small fighting group called the Rangers. This daring group of men were highly respected for their fighting qualities and for their performance during dangerous missions.

One of the most dramatic moments of the Revolutionary War was just about to be enacted. General George Washington badly needed information concerning the British lines, and asked the Rangers' commander to select a man to pass through the enemy's lines to obtain information on British positions. The Rangers' commander asked for a volunteer. No one responded. But on the second call, Nathan Hale agreed to undertake the dangerous mission.

Hanged for His Patriotism

Hale slipped into British-held Long Island in the natural diguise of a Dutch schoolmaster. Though he succeeded in crossing the British lines, and obtained the information which Washington requested, as he returned to the American lines on September 21, 1776, he was captured by British troops. Some believe that a cousin, an ardent British loyalist, was the one who betrayed Hale. Nathan Hale was hanged without trial the following day, according to British military law.

Before he was hanged, he is said to have requested a Bible and the services of a minister, but was refused by his captors. General William Howe was the British commander who condemned him to death.

Many American patriots gave their lives for the Revolutionary cause during the bitter struggle between America and the Mother Country. But the most glorified martyr during that war was Nathan Hale. What caused him to be so highly honored? Why has his memory been remembered so long and so persistently?

Before his execution by hanging, he displayed such calmness of mind that his heroic resignation provoked the admiration of all who witnessed his death. Just before he was hanged, he made a speech and, while condemned on the gallows, concluded that memorable address with words which have inspired Americans ever since: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Having said this, one of America's great patriots of the Revolutionary War made the supreme sacrifice! His exemplary death for his country has given an immortal

ring to his name, and has caused him to be placed among America's honored heroes in the hall of fame.

As the U.S. celebrated her Bicentennial, some Americans had come to look upon patriotism as a dirty word. How many Americans today would be willing to die for their country? How many would have the courage and the fortitude of a Nathan Hale?

France Joins America

With the American victory at Saratoga, France became convinced of Britain's vulnerability. In February 1778, France decided to throw her lot in with the rebels. Soon she would send her navy, and some of her best troops to fight alongside the American forces to help deal the British the final *coup de grace*. France hoped to regain some of her lost North American Empire.

After her defeat and humiliation by Britain in India and also in North America, her entry on America's side gave her a golden opportunity to strike a stinging blow at her old enemy.

Ordeal at Valley Forge

In his state of the union address to the nation in January, 1976, President Ford spoke of "George Washington kneeling in prayer at Valley Forge."

Valley Forge proved to be a "forge of affliction" which tested George Washington and his army more than any other place or event during the War of Independence.

Valley Forge is about forty-five miles west of Philadelphia. It was there that General George Washington and his men camped during the terrible winter of 1777 and 1778. Those were long, cold, dreary, discouraging months for Washington and his men and for the American cause. But Washington and his motley army proved they could endure long months of bitter suffering and emerge a much better army.

George Washington led his battered army of about 11,000 men to Valley Forge after being defeated at Philadelphia and Germantown, Pennsylvania. During those cold winter months, living in crude log huts they had built themselves, his troops had little food, and precious little clothing to protect themselves from the bitter cold. Furthermore, the Continental Congress couldn't provide additional supplies to fill the men's needs.

Even though there were supplies to be had in the area, George Washington refused to allow his troops to seize the food, grain, and animals which they could have taken by force. He wanted to keep the integrity and reputation of his Continental Army high. So he and his

men had to tough it out during the biting cold days of late 1777 and early 1778.

Their intense sufferings at Valley Forge from cold, starvation and sickness forever hallowed that historic site for Americans. The following account was written by George Washington on December 23, 1777: "We have this day no less than 2,873 men in camp unfit for duty because they are barefooted and otherwise naked. . . . Numbers are still obliged to sit all night by fires."

During that terrible winter, a dreaded smallpox epidemic struck Washington's army. Over 3,000 soldiers died. Many others were too weak or too sick to fight. Yet at the same time, the people living in the area were enjoying all the comforts of a rich countryside. And British troops were living a gay life in Philadelphia. But the American soldiers were toughened and sifted by Valley Forge. Those who came through the winter would be hardened, battle-ready men.

"Summer Soldiers"

During the trying times of the Revolutionary War, Thomas Paine wrote: "These are the times that try men's souls. The *summer soldier* and the *sunshine patriot* will in this crisis shrink from the service of his country. . . ."

During that terrible winter of 1777 and 1778 there were many desertions and occasionally mutiny reared its ugly head.

What kind of men made up Washington's army? He described his troops as "raw militia, badly officered, and with no government." In actuality, there were two kinds of soldiers in his army:

1) troops of the Continental Army, organized by Congress, and,

2) militia, organized by the States.

Poor provisions and equipment, great hardships and many early defeats continued to demoralize Washington's army. As a result, he had great trouble keeping soldiers in the Continental Army. At the beginning of the war, the Congress permitted soldiers to enlist for only two months. Near the end of the war, however, Washington convinced Congress that enlistments had to be longer. When his time of enlistment was up, a soldier of the Continental Army simply went home. On more than one occasion, a thousand men marched off at once.

Furthermore, Washington had to plan battles for certain dates, because if he waited too long, some of the soldiers' enlistments would expire. Washington's attack against the Hessian (German) troops at Trenton, New Jersey, on the day after Christmas in 1776 was for this reason. By Christmas, his army had shrunk to only about 5,000 men and the enlistments of the majority of his soldiers would be up by the end of December. The brilliant victory at Trenton inspired many of his soldiers to re-enlist.

The states' militia included storekeepers, farmers, businessmen, traders, and other private citizens. They were poorly trained and grumbled a lot because they didn't like being called from their homes to fight. In fact, the militia complained so much that troops of the Continental Army called them "long faces."

Several of Washington's defeats were the direct result of lack of heart and outright cowardice of many of the troops in the militia. On numerous occasions, they simply turned and ran when they saw the redcoated British soldiers.

Another big problem was that of desertion. Many soldiers enlisted in order to collect bonuses offered by Congress. At times the daily desertions equalled the number who enlisted. Harsh punishment was meted out to those who deserted. Washington even had some hanged.

During 1780 Washington wrote:

> We are, during the winter, dreaming of independence and peace, without using the means to become so. In the spring, when our recruits are with the Army in training, we have just discovered the necessity of calling for them, and by the fall, after a distressed and inglorious campaign for want of them, we begin to get a few men, which come in just in time enough to eat our provisions. . . .

In addition to all of these troubles, Washington had few capable generals to assist him. Unfortunately, Congress appointed the generals (often as political favors) without even asking Washington's advice. Generals such as Charles Lee and Horatio Gates both sincerely believed they should have been appointed as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. These disgruntled generals sometimes deliberately disobeyed Washington's orders in order to make him appear as a poor general. Thomas Conway, a foreign-born general, even organized a conspiracy (the *Conway cabal*) to make Major General Horatio Gates Commander in Chief.

Furthermore, Washington sometimes hesitated about giving orders to generals who were older than himself. How could he get his generals to work with him — instead of against him? He employed the method of calling a council of his generals when planning a battle or campaign, and he accepted the opinion of the majority.

"Barefoot in the Snow"

Throughout the entire war, Washington's troops lacked food, clothing, ammunition and other supplies. If the British army had attacked the Americans encamped around Boston in 1775, Washington could have issued only enough gunpowder for nine shots to each soldier. His army often ran out of meat and bread. Sometimes literally hundreds of

his troops had to march barefoot in the snow because they had no shoes.

While Washington and his men were encamped at Valley Forge, he wrote: "The want of clothing, added to the misery of the season has occasioned (the troops) to suffer such hardships as will not be credited by those who have been spectators."

Here is how Major General Nathanael Green described Washington's army which had encamped at Morristown, New Jersey during the winter of 1779-1780: "Poor fellows! They exhibit a picture truly distressing — more than half naked and two thirds starved. A country overflowing with plenty are now suffering an Army, employed for the defense of everything that is dear and valuable, to perish for want of food."

Did the iron-willed Washington ever become discouraged during the long struggle between the Thirteen Colonies and the Mother Country? Yes, he, too, sometimes became despondent in spite of receiving much praise for his part in the conduct of the war. During 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette wrote to Washington: "... if you were lost for America, there is nobody who could keep the Army and Revolution for six months." And the *Pennsylvania Journal* also wrote the following during that same year: "Washington retreats like a general and acts like a hero. Had he lived in the days of idolatry, he had been worshipped as a god."

But in spite of praise, because of the dire lack of weapons, equipment, food and other badly needed war materiel, Washington's discouragement inevitably showed through at times. During 1776 he commented: "Such is my situation that if I were to wish the bitterest curse to an enemy on this side of the grave, I should put him in my stead with my feelings...." Three years later he wrote: "... there is every appearance that the Army will infallibly disband in a fortnight." And in 1781 he said: "... it is vain to think that an Army can be kept together much longer, under such a variety of sufferings as ours has experienced."

It was during the terrible winter encampment at Valley Forge in early 1778 that Washington appointed Baron Frederick von Steuben to reorganize the Continental Army. This competent Prussian general drilled the soldiers in a system of field formations. When spring arrived, Washington had a disciplined, well-trained army ready to renew the fight against the British.

The news of the alliance between France and the United States reached Washington and his men at Valley Forge on May 6, 1778. This good news cheered both Washington and his troops.

George Washington knew right from the beginning of the war that the powerful British navy gave his enemy a great advantage. British ships could land their army anywhere along the American coast, and Washington realized that he and his tiny, ragged army couldn't possibly defend every American port.

But Washington was an expert general. He quickly proved that he could stay one jump ahead of the slow-moving British army by executing quick retreats. In the meantime, he waited and *prayed* for the French to send a large fleet of warships to America. He hoped that the French navy would prevent the British escaping by sea, while he and his troops prevented their escape by land.

Praying at Valley Forge

And Washington's prayers were soon to be answered.

Many Americans are familiar with the incident of Washington praying at Valley Forge as mentioned by President Ford in his '76 state of the union message.

George Washington came from a very religious home. His father and mother were both members of the Church of England. When Washington was 21 years old, he was commissioned by the governor of Virginia to carry dispatches to the French commander in western Pennsylvania. After he had explained the dangerous nature of his mission to his mother, she counselled him: "My son, neglect not the duty of secret prayer."

According to contemporary reports, Washington had public prayers with his troops while they were encamped at different sites during the Revolutionary War.

Here is a contemporary description of Washington during the difficult winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge: "He regularly attends divine service in his tent every morning and evening, and seems very fervent in his prayers."

It is said that Washington stayed with a Quaker minister, Isaac Potts, while encamped with his men at Valley Forge. Since there was not mucy privacy in the minister's home, Washington is reported to have gone to a nearby grove for his private prayer. On one such occasion, the Quaker minister reported that one day he "strolled up the creek, where he heard a solemn voice. He walked quietly in the direction of it, and saw Washington's horse tied to a sapling. In a thicket nearby was the beloved chief upon his knees in prayer, his cheeks suffused with tears."

Mr. Potts later remarked:

> I always thought that the sword and the gospel were utterly inconsistent; and that no man could be a soldier and a Christian at the same time. But George Washington has this day convinced me of my mistake.
>
> If George Washington be not a man of God, I am greatly deceived — and still more shall I be deceived, if God does not, through him, work out a great salvation for America.

And Washington's prayers were heard. America was given the victory over a much stronger enemy — when all indications were that Britain should have won that war!

Shortly after the British surrender at Yorktown, George Washington's mother wrote him:

> Truly does this event proclaim that the Great Sovereign of heaven and earth governs the world. There are no accidents of fortune. Things are not left to the wills of men, to blind chance, to their own contingency, but are all inspired, guided, and ordered by Him. He is still the same and will order all things well. No snares, intrigues, or difficulties puzzle or prevent the ways and purposes of God.

A Mother's Counsel

Washington's mother wrote him the following letter of encouragement when the outcome of the war still hung in the balance:

> It is not abundance men need, but satisfied minds. For wealth, none are nearer happiness nor further from the grave. In the twinkling of an eye all are turned out of the world, as naked as they came into it. A few fleeting moments make but a little difference. God is too just to do us wrong, too good to do us hurt, and too wise not to know what will do us good or hurt.

It is certainly clear from Washington's letters and Presidential proclamations that he had a deep and abiding belief in the overlordship of the Great Sovereign of the Universe.

Many Americans are persuaded that it was Washington's firm belief in the rightness of the American cause, and in the overruling Providential blessing and guidance of the Creator for his fledgling country that inspired Washington and his men to carry on during the dark moments of the war when it looked like all was lost.

In 1780 the tide of war turned. The British began to win a number of victories in the south. They overran all of South Carolina.

About this same time the Americans suffered a crushing blow. General Benedict Arnold smarting under wounded pride, and dissatisfied with the way the war was being run, plotted to betray to the British the important post of West Point where he was in command. A British officer implicated in this plot was captured and hanged. But traitor Arnold escaped and was eventually commissioned a brigadier-general in the British army.

Decisive British Defeat at Yorktown

At long last, a silver lining began to appear in the war clouds over the American colonies.

General Cornwallis led his British army of about 7,000 from North

Carolina to Yorktown in Virginia where he built a base capable of defending the city. General Washington, sensing Cornwallis's blunder, swiftly marched to Yorktown and surrounded the city — after first joining with the Comte de Rochambeau's French forces.

At the same time, a powerful French fleet under Admiral de Grasse sailed into Chesapeake from the West Indies. The French fleet drove off the British ships and De Grasse gained complete command of the sea near Yorktown. This prevented General Cornwallis's escape, and at the same time barred any reinforcements arriving to replenish his beleaguered army.

Cornwallis's army was now besieged in Yorktown by Washington's combined forces of about 16,000. With the French Admiral firmly in command of a naval blockade, Cornwallis could do nothing but wait for the inevitable, agonizing end.

After several days of merciless pounding by Washington's heavy guns, Cornwallis was unable to hold out any longer.

On October 19, 8,000 British troops marched out of Yorktown through a mile-long corridor of American and French soldiers. The victors were quiet and restrained. The vanquished were dignified, though humiliated by this crucial defeat of Britain in North America. An eyewitness reported that the defeated troops behaved "like boys who had been whipped at school. Some bit their lips; some pouted; others cried."

As the British troops surrendered laying down their arms, their band played, very appropriately, *The World Turned Upside Down!* The war was now as good as over. Britain had been humbled by one of the most appalling military defeats in her history.

"Oh God, It Is All Over!"

What were some of the reasons for the British defeat by the American colonies in the War of Independence (1776-83)?

The territory for which the war was fought was so vast (several times the size of England) that it was utterly impossible for the British to conquer and hold all of it.

Furthermore, America had able political and military leaders (especially George Washington) to guide them during their struggle for independence.

Unfortunately, the English lacked competent leaders at that critical time in history. King George III was undoubtedly very conscientious in what he did, and he tried his best. But he was not the greatest monarch England ever had. With all his problems, perhaps it is not surprising that he had suffered an attack of mental illness when he was only twenty-seven years old — only a few years after becoming king. Though he had a strong sense of duty, and was determined to be a good king, the many troubles and pressures were undoubtedly just too much for him.

King George III needed strong, able ministers, but didn't find *one* all during his struggle with the American colonies. Finally, in 1783, the very year Britain granted America her independence, he found an able Prime Minister in William Pitt (the Younger). But the war had already been lost.

During his reign Britain waged a constant struggle with France. All of these problems took their toll. In 1811 — nine years before his death — this pathetic old king went permanently mad. During his last years, the old king, now both blind and deaf, wandered around the beautiful rooms of his palace in a purple dressing gown, pathetically talking to the furniture and bowing to the chairs and table.

Although Pitt was the man who had called America's colonial leaders "the most honourable Assembly of Statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans," no one has ever been inclined to pay such a tribute to the British leaders during this epoch-making struggle.

During part of this colonial conflict, the Hon. Charles Townshend, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1766, virtually ran the government instead of the Prime Minister, William Pitt (the Elder). Pitt was so bothered by his gout that he couldn't carry out his duties effectively.

But although it was said of Chancellor Townshend that he could deliver brilliant speeches even when he was drunk, he was not an able minister. According to Earl Russell, Townshend was "a man utterly without principle, whose brilliant talents only made more prominent his want of truth, honour and consistency."

Lord North, Prime Minister from 1770 to 1782, also was mediocre at best. He vacillated, and often accepted bad advice — especially regarding the unwise taxation of the colonies. North once said: "Upon military matters, I speak ignorantly and therefore without effect." He talked incessantly of resigning. But King George, despairing of finding anyone better, admonished him to "cast off his indecision and bear up."

Prime Minister North, when he heard of Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown, staggered as if struck by lightning as he murmured: "Oh God, it is all over!"

Britain's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord George Germain, was responsible for the conduct of the army in the field during this Anglo-American struggle. He had once been courtmartialled for cowardice in 1760. Found guilty of the charge, Lord Germain was declared "unfit to serve His Majesty in any military capacity whatsoever." How incredible that such a man should have had charge of the conduct of the British army in the field (including North America) at this very juncture in history!

It might truly be said that America didn't win the war so much as the British lost it. Her ham-fisted, incompetent, bungling ministers and

military men did all of the wrong things to insure that under no circumstances could Britain win!

"The Patronage of Heaven"

After leading the American army to final victory, Washington surrendered his commission as Commander-in-Chief to the President of Congress on December 23, 1783. (This was after Britain had formally ended the war and granted America her independence.)

Mr. Washington gave a moving farewell address:

> Mr. President: The great events on which my resignation depended having at length taken place, I have now the honor of offering my sincere congratulations to Congress, and of presenting myself before them, to surrender into their hands the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country.
>
> Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task; which however was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power of the Union, and the *patronage of Heaven.*
>
> The successful termination of the war has verified the most sanguine expectations; and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my countrymen, increases with every review of the momentous contest.
>
> While I repeat my obligations to the army in general, I should do injustice to my own feelings not to acknowledge, in this place, the peculiar services and distinguished merits of the gentlemen who have been attached to my person during the war. It was impossible the choice of confidential officers to compose my family should have been more fortunate. Permit me, sir, to recommend, in particular, those who have continued in the service to the present moment, as worthy of the favorable notice and patronage of Congress.
>
> I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last act of my official life by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of *Almighty God,* and those who have the superintendence of them to *his holy keeping.*
>
> Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theater of action, and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employment of public life.

"The Spectators All Wept"

A member of Congress who witnessed this speech said: "It was a solemn and affecting spectacle; such an one as history does not present. The spectators all wept, and there was hardly a member of Congress who

did not drop tears. The General's hand which held the address shook as he read it.

"When he spoke of the officers who had composed his family, and recommended those who had continued in it to the present moment to the favorable notice of Congress, he was obliged to support the paper with both hands. But when he commended the interest of his dearest country to Almighty God, and those who had the superintendence of them to his holy keeping, his voice faltered and sunk, and the whole house felt his agitations. After the pause which was necessary for him to recover himself, he proceeded. . . ."

General Washington didn't take the credit for the victory. He expressed "gratitude for the interposition of Providence." Furthermore, he felt it necessary to commend that new-born nation to the safe-keeping and "protection of Almighty God."

Can there be any doubt that the "Father of Our Country" looked to Divine Providence to guide America's destiny?

Treaty of Paris — 1783

The bitter antagonisms between the U.S. and Britain began to subside after the Revolutionary War. After all, the Mother Country had nurtured and protected Thirteen Colonies, but now, showing great magnanimity, she handed over to them all the territory in America east of the Mississippi River, south of Canada and north of the Florida territory. England kept Canada for herself, and she ceded Florida to Spain. (In 1769 Spain had joined with America in the Revolutionary War of Independence.)

Why did Britain give America all the land east of the Mississippi River? Land that had been ceded to Britain by France in the Treaty of Paris in 1763? Well, land-hungry Americans were now spilling westward across the Appalachians and into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, and Britain knew she would not more be able to contain these restless Americans than she could stop the tides. Perhaps if she gave them the land between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, she thought this would give them sufficient room for westward expansion.

But if England didn't give them this land, who could say but what they might vent their aggressive, pent-up energy by *northern* expansion into Canada. And Britain didn't want to lose Canada. She had already lost prize colonies. Now she must do everything within her power to maintain her Canadian territory as an outlet for future British expansion in North America.