**Chapter Three**

**America in the British Empire**

Because the colonies were founded piecemeal by 10 persons with varying motives and backgrounds, common traditions and loyalties developed slowly. For the same reason, the British government was slow to think of its American possessions as a unit or to deal with them in any centralized way. The particular circumstances that led to its founding determined the specific form of each colony's government and the degree of local independence permitted to it.

**The British Colonial System**

There was a pattern basic to all colonial governments and a general framework to the system of imperial control for all the king's overseas plantations. In the earliest days of any settlement, the need to rely on home authorities was so obvious that few questioned England's sovereignty. Thereafter, as the fledglings grew strong enough to think of using their own wings, distance and British political inefficiency combined to allow them a great deal of freedom. Although royal representatives in America tried to direct policy, the Crown generally yielded the initiative in local matters to the colonies, while reserving the right to veto actions it deemed to be against the national interest. External affairs were controlled entirely in London.

Each colony had a governor. By the eighteenth century he was an appointed official, except in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Governors were chosen by the king in the case of the royal colonies and by the proprietors of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Their powers were much like those of the king in Great Britain. They possessed the right to veto colonial laws, but in most colonies, again like the king, they were financially dependent on their "subjects."

Each colony also had a legislature. Except in Pennsylvania, these assemblies consisted of two houses. The lower house, chosen by qualified voters, had general legislative powers, including control of the purse. In all the royal colonies members of the upper house, or council, were appointed by the king, except in Massachusetts, where they were elected by the General Court.

The lower houses of the legislatures tended to dominate the government in nearly every colony. Financial power, including the right to set the governor's salary, gave them some importance, and the fact that the assemblies usually had the backing of public opinion was significant. They extended their influence by slow accretion. Governors came and went, but the lawmakers remained, accumulating experience, building on precedent, widening their control over colonial affairs decade by decade.

At times the British authorities, uneasy about their lack of control over the colonies, attempted to create a more effective system. Whenever possible, the original, broadly worded charters were revoked. In 1696 officials in London attempted more direct control over colonial affairs. A Board of Trade nominated colonial governors and other high officials. It reviewed all the laws passed by the colonial legislatures, recommending the disallowance of those that seemed to conflict with imperial policy.

Colonists naturally disliked having their laws disallowed, but London exercised this power with considerable restraint; only about 5 percent of the laws reviewed were rejected. Furthermore, the board served as an important intermediary for colonists seeking to influence the king and Parliament. All the colonies in the eighteenth century maintained agents in London to present the colonial point of view. The most famous colonial agent was Benjamin Franklin, who represented Pennsylvania, Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts at various times during his long career. However, agents seldom had much influence on British policy.

The British never developed an effective, centralized government for the American colonies. By and large, their American "subjects" ran their own affairs. This fact more than any other explains our present federal system and the wide areas in which the state governments are sovereign and independent.

**Mercantilism**

According to prevailing European opinion, colonies were important chiefly for economic reasons. The seventeenth century was a period of hard times. Many people were unemployed. Therefore some authorities saw the colonies as excellent dumping grounds for surplus people. If only two idlers in each parish were shipped overseas, one clergyman calculated in 1624, England would be rid of 16,000 undesirables.

Most seventeenth-century theorists, however, envisaged colonies as potential sources of raw materials. To obtain these, they developed a system that later economists called mercantilism. The most important raw materials in the eyes of mercantilists were gold and silver, which, being universally valued, could be exchanged at any time for anything the owner desired. How much gold and silver ("treasure" according to mercantilists) a nation possessed was considered the best barometer of its prosperity and power. Because there were no significant deposits of gold or silver in western Europe, every early colonist dreamed of finding El Dorado. The Spanish were the winners in this search; from the mines of Mexico and South America a rich treasure in gold and silver poured into the Iberian Peninsula. Failing to control the precious metals at the source, the other powers tried to obtain them by guile and warfare (witness the exploits of Francis Drake).

In the mid-seventeenth century another method, less hazardous and in the long run far more profitable, called itself to the attention of the statesmen of western Europe. If a country could make itself as nearly self-sufficient as possible and at the same time keep all its citizens busy producing items marketable in other lands, it could sell more abroad than it imported. This state of affairs was known as "having a favorable balance of trade." The term is misleading; in reality, trade, which means exchange, always balances unless one party simply gives its goods away, an uncommon practice among traders. A country with a favorable balance in effect made up the difference by "importing" money in the form of gold and silver. Nevertheless, mercantilism came to mean concentrating on producing for export and limiting imports of ordinary goods and services in every way possible. Colonies that did not have deposits of precious metals were well worth having if they supplied raw materials that would otherwise have to be purchased from foreign sources, or if their people bought substantial amounts of the manufactured goods produced in the mother country.

If the possession of gold and silver signified wealth, trade was the route that led to riches, with merchants as pilots to steer the ship of state to prosperity. "Trade is the Wealth of the World," Daniel Defoe wrote in 1728. One must, of course, have something to sell, so internal production must be stimulated.

**The Navigation Acts**

The nurture of commerce was fundamental. Toward this end Parliament enacted the Navigation Acts. These laws, put into effect over a period of half a century and more, were designed to bring money into the treasury, to develop the imperial merchant fleet, to channel the flow of colonial raw materials into England, and to keep foreign goods and vessels out of colonial ports (because the employment of foreign ships in the carrying trade was as much an import as the consumption of foreign wheat or wool).

The system originated in the 1650s in response to the stiff commercial competition offered by the Dutch, whose ships had carried much of the trade between Europe and the colonies.

The Navigation Act of 1660 reserved the entire trade of the colonies to English ships and required that the captain and three-quarters of his crew be English. (Colonists, of course, were English, and their ships were treated on the same terms as those sailing out of London or Liverpool.) The act also provided that certain colonial "enumerated articles"-sugar, tobacco, cotton, ginger, and dye like indigo could not be "shipped, carried, conveyed, or transported" outside the empire. Three years later Parliament required that with trifling exceptions all European products destined for the colonies be brought to England before being shipped across the Atlantic. Because trade between England and the colonies was reserved to English vessels, this meant that the goods would have to be unloaded and reloaded in England. Early in the eighteenth century the list of enumerated articles was expanded to include rice, molasses, naval stores, furs, and copper.

The English looked upon the empire broadly; they envisioned the colonies as part of an economic unit, not as servile dependencies to be exploited for England's selfish benefit. The growing of tobacco in England was prohibited, and valuable bounties were paid to colonial producers of indigo and naval stores. A planned economy, with England specializing in manufacturing and the colonies in the production of raw materials, was the grand design. By and large, the system suited the realities of life in an underdeveloped country rich in raw materials and suffering from a chronic labor shortage.

Much has been made by some historians of the restrictions that the British placed on colonial manufacturing. The Wool Act of 1699 prohibited the export (but not the manufacture for local sale) of colonial woolen cloth. A similar law regarding hats was passed in 1732, and in 1750 an Iron Act outlawed the construction of new rolling and slitting mills in America. No other restrictions on manufacturing were imposed. At most the Wool Act stifled a potential American industry; the law was directed chiefly at Irish woolens rather than American. The hat industry cannot be considered a major one. Iron, however, was important; by 1775 the industry was thriving in Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and America was turning out one-seventh of the world supply. Yet the Iron Act was designed to steer the American iron industry in a certain direction, not to destroy it. Eager for iron to feed English mills, Parliament eliminated all duties on colonial pig and bar iron entering England, a great stimulus to the basic industry.

**The Effects of Mercantilism**

All the legislation reflected, more than it molded, the imperial economy. It made England the colonies' main customer and chief supplier of manufactures, but this would have happened in any case. Furthermore, important colonial products for which no market existed in England, such as fish, wheat, and corn, were never enumerated and moved freely and directly to foreign ports. Most colonial manufacturing was untouched by English law. Shipbuilding benefited from the Navigation Acts, because many English merchants bought vessels built in the colonies. Between 1769 and 1771, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island shipyards constructed perhaps 250 ships of 100 to 400 tons for transatlantic commerce and twice that many sloops and schooners for fishermen and coastal traders. The manufacture of rum for local consumption and for the slave trade was significant; so were barrel making, flour milling, shoemaking, and dozens of other crafts that operated without restriction.

Two forces that worked in opposite directions must be considered before arriving at any judgment about English mercantilism. Although the theory presupposed a general imperial interest above that of both colony and mother country, when conflicts of interest arose, the latter nearly always predominated. The Hat Act, for example, may have been good mercantilism, but Parliament passed it because English feltmakers were concerned over the news that Massachusetts and New York were turning out 10,000 hats a year.

Mercantilistic policies hurt some colonists, such as the tobacco planters, who grew far more than British consumers could smoke. But the policies helped others, and most people proved adept at getting around those aspects of the system that threatened them. In any case, the colonies enjoyed almost continuous prosperity in the years between 1650 and the Revolution, as even so dedicated a foe of trade restrictions as Adam Smith admitted.

By the same token, England profited greatly from its overseas possessions. Despite all its inefficiencies, mercantilism worked. Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole's famous policy of "salutary neglect," which involved looking the other way when Americans violated the Navigation Acts, was partly a bowing to the inevitable and partly the result of complacency. English manufactures were better and cheaper than those of other nations. This fact, together with ties of language and a common heritage, predisposed Americans toward doing business in England. All else followed naturally; the mercantilistic laws merely steered the American economy in a direction it had already taken. They were not a cause of serious discontent until after the French and Indian War.

**The Great Awakening**

Although a majority of the settlers were of English, Scotch, or Scotch-Irish descent, and their interests generally coincided with those of their cousins in the mother country, people in the colonies were beginning to recognize their common interests and character. Their interests and loyalties were still predominantly local, but by 1750 the word American, used to describe something characteristic of all the British possessions in North America, had entered the language. Events in one part of America were beginning to have direct effects on other regions. One of the first of these developments was the so-called Great Awakening.

By the early eighteenth century, religious fervor had slackened in all the colonies. Prosperity turned many colonists away from their forebears' preoccupation with the rewards of the next world to the more tangible ones of this. John Winthrop invested his faith in God and his own efforts in the task of creating a spiritual community; his grandsons invested in Connecticut real estate.

The proliferation of religious denominations made it impracticable to enforce laws requiring regular religious observances. Even in South Carolina, the colony that came closest to having an "Anglican Establishment," only a minority of persons were churchgoers. Settlers in frontier districts lived beyond the reach of church or clergy. The result was a large and growing number of "persons careless of all religion."

This state of affairs came to an abrupt end with the Great Awakening of the 1740s. The Awakening began in the Middle Colonies as the result of religious developments that originated in Europe. In the late 1720s two newly arrived ministers, Theodore Frelinghuysen, a Calvinist from Westphalia, and William Terment, an Irishborn Presbyterian, sought to instill in their sleepy Pennsylvania and New Jersey congregations the evangelical zeal and spiritual enthusiasm they had witnessed among the pietists in Germany and the Methodist followers of John Wesley in England. Their example inspired other clergymen, including Terment's two sons.

A more significant surge of religious enthusiasm followed the arrival in 1738 in Georgia of the Reverend George Whitefield, a young Oxford-trained Anglican minister. Whitefield was a marvelous pulpit orator and no mean actor. He played on the feelings of his audience the way a conductor directs a symphony.

He undertook a series of fund-raising tours throughout the colonies. The most successful began in Philadelphia in 1739. Benjamin Franklin, not a very religious person and not easily moved by emotional appeals, heard one of these sermons. "I silently resolved he should get nothing from me," he later recalled.

I had in my Pocket a Handful of Copper Money, three or four silver Dollars, and five Pistoles in Gold. As be proceeded I began to soften and concluded to give the Coppers. Another Stroke of his Oratory ... determin'd me to give the Silver; and he finished so admirably that I empty'd my Pocket wholly into the Collector's Disb. Wherever Whitefield went, he filled the churches. If no local clergyman offered his pulpit, he attracted thousands to meetings out-of-doors. During a three-day visit to Boston, 19,000 people (more than the population of the town) thronged to hear him.

His oratorical brilliance aside, Whitefield succeeded in releasing a torrent of religious emotionalism because his message was so well suited to American ears. By preaching a theology that one critic said was "scaled down to the comprehension of twelve-year olds," he spared his audiences the rigors of hard thought. Though he usually began by chastising his listeners as sinners, "half animals and half devils," he invariably took care to leave them with the hope that eternal salvation could be theirs. Although not denying the doctrine of predestination, he preached a God responsive to good intentions. He disregarded sectarian differences and encouraged his listeners to do the same. "God help us to forget party names and become Christians in deed and truth," he prayed.

Whitefield attracted some supporters among ministers with established congregations, but many more from among younger "itinerants," as preachers who lacked permanent pulpits were called. A visit from him or one of his followers inevitably prompted comparisons between this new, emotionally charged style and the more restrained "plaine style" favored by the typical settled minister.

Of course not everyone found the Whitefield style edifying. When those who did not spoke up, churches sometimes split into factions.-Those who supported the incumbent minister were called, among Congregationalists, "Old Lights," and among Presbyterians, "Old Sides," whereas those who favored revivalism were known as "New Lights" and "New Sides." These splits often ran along class lines. The richer, better-educated, and more influential members of the church tended to stay with the traditional arrangements.

But the emotional upheaval that accompanied the Great Awakening transcended issues of class. Persons chafing under the restraints of Puritan authoritarianism and made guilt ridden by their rebellious feelings now found release. For some the release was more than spiritual; Timothy Cutler, a conservative Anglican clergyman, complained that as a result of the Awakening "our presses are forever teeming with books and our women with bastards." Whether or not Cutler was correct, the Great Awakening helped some people to rid themselves of the idea that disobedience to authority entailed damnation. Anything that God justified, human law could not condemn.

Other institutions besides the churches were affected by the Great Awakening. In 1741 the president of Yale College criticized the theology of itinerant ministers. One of these promptly retorted that a Yale faculty member had no more divine grace than a chair! Other revivalists called on the New Light churches of Connecticut to withdraw their support from Yale and to endow a college of their own. The result was the College of New Jersey (now Princeton), founded in 1746 by New Side Presbyterians. Three other educational by-products of the Great Awakening followed: the College of Rhode Island (Brown), founded by Baptists in 1765; Queen's College (Rutgers), founded by Dutch Reformers in 1766; and Dartmouth, founded by New Light Congregationalists in 1769. These institutions promptly set about to refute the charge that the evangelical temperament was hostile to learning. Jonathan Edwards, the most famous native-born revivalist of the Great Awakening, was living proof that it need not be.

**The Rise and Fall of Jonathan Edwards**

Jonathan Edwards, though deeply pious, was passionately devoted to intellectual pursuits. But in 1725, four years after graduating from Yale, he was offered the position of assistant at his grandfather Solomon Stoddard's church in Northampton, Massachusetts. He accepted, and when Stoddard died two years later, Edwards became pastor.

During his six decades in Northampton, Stoddard so dominated the ministers of the Connecticut Valley that some referred to him as "pope." His prominence came in part from the "open enrollment" admission policy he adopted for his own church. Evidence of saving grace was neither required nor expected of members; mere good behavior sufficed. As a result, the grandson inherited a congregation whose members were possessed of an "inordinate engagedness after this world." How ready they were to meet their Maker in the next was another question.

At Edward's rendering, the heat of Hell's consuming fires and the stench of brimstone became palpable. In his Most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," delivered at Enfield, Connecticut, in 1741, he pulled out all the stops, depicting a "dreadfully provoked" God holding the unconverted over the pit of Hell, "much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect." Later, on the off chance that his listeners did not recognize themselves among the "insects" in God's hand, he declared that "this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be." A great moaning reverberated through the church. People cried out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Unfortunately for some church members, Edwards's warnings about the state of their souls caused much anxiety. One disconsolate member, Joseph Hawley, slit his throat. Edwards took the suicide calmly. "Satan seems to be in a great rage," he declared. But for some of Edwards's most prominent parishioners, Hawley's death aroused doubts. They began to miss the easy, Arminian ways of Solomon Stoddard.

Rather than soften his message, Edwards persisted, and in 1749 his parishioners voted unanimously to dismiss him. He became a missionary to some Indians in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. In 1759 he was appointed president of Princeton, but he died of smallpox before he could take office.

By the early 1750s, a reaction had set in against religious "enthusiasm" in all its forms. Except in the religion-starved South, where traveling New Side Presbyterians and Baptists continued their evangelizing efforts, the Great Awakening had run its course. Whitefield's last tour of the colonies in 1754 attracted little notice.

Although it caused divisions, the Great Awakening also fostered religious toleration. If one group claimed the right to worship in its own way, how could it deny to other Protestant churches equal freedom? The Awakening was also the first truly national event in American history. It marks the time when the previously distinct histories of New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South began to intersect. Powerful links were being forged. As early as 1691 there was a rudimentary intercolonial postal system. In 1754, not long after the Awakening, the farsighted Benjamin Franklin advanced his Albany Plan for a colonial union to deal with common problems, such as defense against Indian attacks on the frontier. Thirteen once-isolated colonies, expanding to the north and south as well as westward, were merging.

**The Enlightenment in America**

The Great Awakening pointed ahead to an America marked by religious pluralism; by the 1740s many colonists were rejecting the stern Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards in favor of a far less forbidding theology, one more in keeping with the ideas of the European Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment had an enormous impact in America. The founders of the colonies were contemporaries of the astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the philosopher-mathematician Rene Descartes (1596-1650), and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the genius who revealed to the world the workings of gravity. American society developed amid the excitement generated by these great scientists. Their discoveries implied that impersonal, scientific laws governed the behavior of all matter, animate and inanimate. Earth and the heavens, human beings and the lower animals-all seemed parts of an immense, intricate machine. God had set it all in motion and remained the master technician (the divine watchmaker) overseeing it, but He took fewer and fewer occasions to interfere with its immutable operation. If human reasoning powers and direct observation of natural phenomena rather than God's revelations provided the key to knowledge, it followed that knowledge of the laws of nature, by enabling people to understand the workings of the universe, would enable them to control their earthly destinies and to have at least a voice in their eternal destinies.

Most creative thinkers of the European Enlightenment realized that human beings were not entirely rational and that a complete understanding of the physical world was beyond their grasp. They did, however, believe that human beings were becoming more rational and would be able, by using their rational powers, to discover the laws governing the physical world. Their faith in these ideas produced the so-called Age of Reason.

Many churchgoing colonists, especially better educated ones, accepted the assumptions of the Age of Reason wholeheartedly. Some repudiated the doctrine of original sin and asserted the benevolence of God. Others came to doubt the divinity of Christ and eventually declared themselves Unitarians. Still others, among them Benjamin Franklin, embraced Deism, a faith that revered God for the marvels of His universe rather than for His power over humankind.

The impact of Enlightenment ideas went far beyond religion. The writings of John Locke and other political theorists found a receptive audience. Ideas generated in Europe often reached America with startling speed, where they were quoted in newspapers from Massachusetts to Georgia. No colonial political controversy really heated up in America until all involved had published pamphlets citing half a dozen European authorities. Radical ideas that in Europe were discussed only by an intellectual elite became almost commonplace in the colonies.

As the topics of learned discourse expanded, ministers lost their monopoly on intellectual life. By the 1750s only a minority of Harvard and Yale graduates were becoming ministers. The College of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania), founded in 1751, and King's College (later Columbia), founded in New York in 1754, added two institutions to the growing ranks of American colleges that were not primarily training grounds for clergymen. Lawyers, who first appeared in any number in colonial towns in the 1740s, swiftly asserted their intellectual authority in public affairs. Physicians and the handful of professors of natural history declared themselves better able to make sense of the new scientific discoveries than clergymen. And self-educated amateurs could also make useful contributions.

The most famous instances of popular participation occurred in Philadelphia. It was there, in 1727, that 21-year-old Benjamin Franklin founded the junto, a club at which he and other young artisans gathered on Friday evenings to discuss "any point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy." In 1743 Franklin established an expanded version of the Junto, the American Philosophical Society, which he hoped would "cultivate the finer arts and improve the common stock of knowledge."

**Colonial Scientific Achievements**

America produced no Galileo or Newton, but colonists contributed significantly to the collection of scientific knowledge. The unexplored continent provided a laboratory for the study of natural phenomena. The Philadelphia Quaker John Bartram, a "down right plain Country Man," ranged from Florida to the Great Lakes during the middle years of the eighteenth century, gathering and classifying hundreds of plants. Bartram also studied Indians closely, speculating about their origins and collecting information about their culture. Astronomy was another science to which eighteenth -century Americans were able to contribute by virtue of their distance from Europe.

"No one of the present age," Thomas Jefferson said, had made "more important discoveries" than Benjamin Franklin. One of his biographers has called Franklin a "harmonious human multitude." His studies of electricity, which he capped in 1752 with his famous kite experiment, established him as a scientist of international stature. He also invented the lightning rod, the iron Franklin stove (a far more efficient way to heat a room than an open fireplace), bifocal spectacles, and several other ingenious devices. In addition he served 14 years (1751-1764) in the Pennsylvania assembly; he proposed using a lottery to raise funds. He founded a circulating library and helped to get the first hospital in Philadelphia built.

Franklin wrote so much about the virtues of hard work and thrift that some historians have described him as stuffy and straitlaced. Nothing could be further from the truth. He recognized the social value of conventional behavior, but he was no slave to convention. He wrote satirical essays on such subjects as the advantage of having affairs with older and plain-looking women (who were, he claimed, more likely to appreciate the attention),

Franklin's international fame notwithstanding, the theoretical contributions of American thinkers and scientists were modest. No colony produced a Voltaire, or Gibbon, or Rousseau. Most were practical rather than speculative types, tinkerers rather than constructors of grand designs. Thomas Jefferson, for example, made no theoretical discovery of importance, but his range was almost without limit: linguist, bibliophile, political scientist, architect, inventor, scientific farmer, and-above all apostle of reason. Involvement at even the most marginal level in the intellectual affairs of Europe gave influential New Englanders, Middle Colonists, and southerners a chance to get to know one another. Although their role in what Jefferson called "the Republic of Letters" was still minor, by midcentury their influence on the intellectual climate of the colonies was growing. That climate was one of eager curiosity, flexibility of outlook, and confidence.

**Repercussions of Distant Wars**

The British colonies were part of a great empire that was part of a still larger world. Seemingly isolated in their remote communities, scattered like a broken string of beads between the wide Atlantic and the trackless Appalachian forests, Americans were constantly affected by outside events both in the Old World and in the New. Under the spell of mercantilistic logic, the western European nations competed fiercely for markets and colonial raw materials. War-hot and cold, declared and undeclared-was almost a permanent condition of seventeenth- and eighteenth century life, and when the powers clashed, they fought wherever they could get at one another, in America, in Europe, and elsewhere.

Although the American colonies were minor pieces in the game and were sometimes casually exchanged or sacrificed by the masterminds in London, Paris, and Madrid in pursuit of some supposedly more important objective, the colonists quickly generated their own international animosities. North America, a huge and, compared to densely populated Europe, an almost empty stage, evidently did not provide enough room for French, Dutch, Spanish, and English companies to perform. Frenchmen and Spaniards clashed savagely in Florida as early as the sixteenth century. Before the landing of the Pilgrims, Samuel Argall of Virginia was sacking French settlements in Maine and carrying off Jesuit priests into captivity at Jamestown. Instead of fostering tranquility and generosity, the abundance of America seemed to make the settlers belligerent and greedy.

The North Atlantic fisheries quickly became a source of trouble between Canadian and New England colonists, despite the fact that the waters of the Grand Banks teemed with cod and other fish. To dry and salt their catch, the fishermen needed land bases, and French and English Americans struggled constantly to possess the harbors of Maine, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland.

Even more troublesome was the fur trade. The yield of the forest was easily exhausted by indiscriminate slaughter, and traders contended bitterly to control valuable hunting grounds. The French in Canada conducted their fur trading through tribes such as the Algonquins and the Hurons. This brought them into conflict with the Five Nations, the powerful Iroquois Confederation in central New York. As early as 1609, the Five Nations were at war with the French and their Indian allies. For decades this struggle flared sporadically, with the Iroquois more than holding their own both as fighters and as traders. They combined, according to one terrified Frenchman, the stealth and craftiness of the fox, the ferocity and courage of the lion, and the speed of a bird in flight. They brought quantities of beaver pelts to the Dutch at Albany, some obtained by their own trappers, others taken by ambushing the fur-laden canoes of their enemies. They preyed on and ultimately destroyed the Hurons in the land north of Lake Ontario and dickered with Indian trappers in far off Michigan. When the English took over the New Amsterdam colony, they eagerly adopted the Iroquois as allies, buying their furs and supplying them with trading goods and guns. In the final showdown for control of North America, the friendship of the Iroquois was vitally important to the English.

By the last decade of the seventeenth century, it had become clear that the Dutch lacked the strength to maintain a big empire and that Spain was fast declining. The future, especially in North America, belonged to England and France. In the wars of the next 125 years, European alliances shifted dramatically, yet the English and what Boston lawyer John Adams called "the turbulent Gallicks" were always on opposite sides.

These conflicts did not directly involve any considerable portion of the colonial populace, but they served to increase the bad feelings between settlers north and south of the St. Lawrence. Every Indian raid was attributed to French provocateurs, although more often than not the English colonists were responsible for the Indian troubles. Conflicting land claims further aggravated the situation. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia possessed overlapping claims to the Ohio Valley, and Pennsylvania and New York also had pretensions in the region. Yet the French, ranging broadly across the midcontinent, insisted that the Ohio country was exclusively theirs.

**The Great War for the Empire**

In this beautiful, almost untouched land, a handful of individuals determined the future of the continent. Over the years, the French had established a chain of forts and trading posts throughout the northwest. By the 1740s, however, Pennsylvania fur traders, led by George Croghan, a rugged Irishman, were setting up posts north of the Ohio River and dickering with Miami and Huron Indians who ordinarily sold their furs to ',the French. In 1748 Croghan built a fort at Pickawillany, deep in the Miami country, in what is now western Ohio. That same year agents for a group of Virginia land speculators, who had recently organized what they called the Ohio Company, reached this area.

With trifling exceptions, an insulating band of wilderness had always separated the French and English in America. Now the two powers came into contact. The immediate result was a showdown battle for control of North America, the "great war for the empire." Thoroughly alarmed by the presence of the English on land they had long considered their own, the French struck hard. Attacking suddenly in 1752, they wiped out Croghan's post at Pickawillany and drove his traders back into Pennsylvania. Then they built a string of barrier forts south from Lake Erie along the Pennsylvania line: Fort Presque Isle, Fort Le Boeuf, and Fort Venango. The Pennsylvania authorities chose to ignore this action, but Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia (who was an investor in the Ohio Company) dispatched a 2 1 -year old surveyor named George Washington to warn the French that they were trespassing on Virginia territory.

Washington, a gangling, inarticulate, and intensely ambitious young planter, made his way northwest in the fall of 1753 and delivered Dinwiddie's message to the commandant at Fort Le Boeuf. It made no impression. "[The French] told me," Washington reported, "That it was their absolute Design to take Possession of the Ohio, and by G\_\_\_\_they would do it." Governor Dinwiddie thereupon promoted Washington to lieutenant colonel and sent him back in the spring of 1754 with 150 men to seize a strategic junction south of the new French forts, where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers join to form the Ohio.

Eager but inexperienced in battle, young Washington botched his assignment. As his force labored painfully through the tangled mountain country southeast of the fork of the Ohio, he received word that the French had already occupied the position and were constructing a powerful post, Fort Duquesne. Outnumbered by perhaps four to one, Washington foolishly pushed on. He surprised and routed a French reconnaissance party, but this brought the main body of enemy troops upon him.

Hastily he threw up a defensive position, aptly named Fort Necessity, but the ground was ill chosen; the French easily surrounded the fort, and Washington had to surrender. After tricking the young officer, who could not read French, into signing an admission that he had "assassinated" the leader of the reconnaissance party, his captors, with the gateway to the Ohio country firmly in their hands, permitted him and his men to march off. Nevertheless, Washington returned to Virginia a hero, for although still undeclared, this was war, and he had struck the first blow against the hated French.

In the resulting conflict, which historians call the French and Indian War (the colonists simply "the French War"), the English outnumbered the French by about 1.5 million to 90,000. But the English were divided and disorganized, the French disciplined and united. The French controlled the disputed territory, and most of the Indians took their side. With an ignorance and arrogance typical of eighteenth-ccntury colonial administration, the British mismanaged the war and failed to make effective use of local resources. For several years they stumbled from one defeat to another.

General Edward Braddock, a competent but uninspired soldier, was dispatched to Virginia to take command. In June 1755 he marched against Fort Duquesne with 1,400 Redcoats and a smaller number of colonials, only to be decisively defeated by a much smaller force of French and Indians.

Elsewhere Anglo-American troops fared little better in the early years of the war. Expeditions against Fort Niagara, key to all French defenses in the west, and Crown Point, gateway to Montreal, bogged down. Meanwhile Indians armed by the French bathed the frontier in blood. Venting the frustrations caused by 150 years of white advance, they attacked defenseless outposts with unrestrained brutality. They poured molten lead into their victims' wounds, ripped off the fingernails of captives, and even drank the blood of those who endured their tortures stoically.

In 1756 the conflict spread to Europe to become the Seven Years' War. Prussia sided with Great Britain, Austria with the French. On the world stage too, things went badly for the British. Finally, in 1758, as defeat succeeded defeat, King George 11 was forced to allow William Pitt, whom he detested, to take over leadership of the war effort.

Pitt recognized, as few contemporaries did, the potential value of North America. Instead of relying on the tightfisted and shortsighted colonial assemblies for men and money, he poured regiment after regiment of British regulars and the full resources of the British Treasury into the contest, recklessly mortgaging the future to secure the prize. Grasping the importance of sea power in fighting a war on the other side of the Atlantic, he used the British navy to bottle up the enemy fleet and hamper French communications with Canada. He possessed a keen eye for military genius, and when he discovered it, he ignored seniority and the outraged feelings of mediocre generals to promote talented young officers to top commands. His greatest find was James Wolfe, whom he made a brigadier at age 31.

In the winter of 1758, as Pitt's grand strategy matured, Fort Duquesne fell. It was appropriately renamed Fort Pitt, the present Pittsburgh. The following summer Fort Niagara was overrun. General Jeffrey Amherst took Crown Point, and Wolfe sailed up the St. Lawrence to Quebec. There the French General, Louis Joseph de Montcalm, had prepared formidable defenses. But after months of probing and planning Wolfe found and exploited a chink in the city's armor and captured it. Both he and Montcalm died in the battle. In 1760 Montreal fell, and the French abandoned all Canada to the British. Spain attempted to stem the British advance, but failed utterly. A Far Eastern fleet captured Manila in 1762, and another British force took Cuba. The French sugar islands in the West Indies were also captured, while in India British troops reduced the French posts one by one.

**The Peace of Paris**

Peace was restored in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris. Its terms were moderate considering the extent of the British triumph. France abandoned all claim to North America except two small islands near Newfoundland; Great Britain took over Canada and the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley, Spain (in a separate treaty) the area west of the great river and New Orleans. Guadeloupe and Martinique, the French sugar islands, were returned by the British, as were some of the captured French bases in India and Africa. Spain got back both the Philippine Islands and Cuba; in exchange the Spanish ceded East and West Florida to Great Britain. France and Spain thus remained important colonial powers.

"Half the continent," the historian Francis Parkman wrote, "had changed hands at the scratch of a pen." From the point of view of the English colonists in America, the victory was overwhelming. All threat to their frontiers seemed to have been swept away. Surely, they believed in the first happy moments of victory, their peaceful and prosperous expansion was assured for countless generations.

No honest American could deny that the victory had been won chiefly by British troops and with British gold. Colonial militiamen fought well in defense of their homes or when some highly prized objective seemed ripe for the plucking. However, they lacked discipline and determination when required to fight far from home and under commanders they did not know. Little wonder that the great victory produced a burst of praise for king and mother country throughout America. Parades, cannonading, fireworks, banquets, the pealing of church bells-these were the order of the day in every colonial town. "Nothing," said Thomas Pownall, wartime governor of Massachusetts and a student of colonial administration, "can eradicate from [the colonists'] hearts their natural, almost mechanical affection to Great Britain." A young South Carolinian who had been educated in England claimed that the colonists were "more wrapped up in a king" than any people he had ever heard of.

**Putting the Empire Right**

In London peace proved a time for reassessment; that the empire of 1763 was not the same as the empire of 1754 was obvious. The new, far larger dominion would be much more expensive to maintain. Pitt had spent a huge sum winning and securing it, much of it borrowed money. Great Britain's national debt had doubled between 1754 and 1763. Now this debt had to be serviced and repaid, and the strain that this would place on the economy was clear to all. Furthermore, the day-to-day cost of administering an empire that extended from Hudson Bay to India was far larger than what the already burdened British taxpayer could be expected to bear. Before the great war for the empire, Britain's North American possessions were administered for about L70,000 a year; after 1763 the cost was five times as much.

The American empire had also grown far more complex. A system of administration that treated it as a string of separate plantations struggling to exist on the edge of the forest would no longer suffice. The war had been fought for control of the Ohio Valley. Now that the prize had been secured, ten thousand hands were eager to secure it. How best could their needs be satisfied now that peace had come? Colonial claims, based on charters drafted by men who thought the Pacific lay over the next hill, threatened to make the great valley a battleground once more. The Indians remained unpacified. Rival land companies contested for charters, and fur traders strove to hold back the wave of settlement that must inevitably destroy the world of the beaver and the deer. One Englishman who traveled through America at this time predicted that if the colonists were left to their own devices "there would soon be civil war from one end of the continent to the other."

Apparently only Great Britain could deal with these problems and rivalries, for when Franklin had proposed a rudimentary form of colonial union-the Albany Plan of 1754-it was rejected by almost everyone. Unfortunately, the British government did not rise to the challenge. Perhaps this was to be expected. A handful of aristocrats (fewer than 150 peers were active in government affairs) dominated British politics. Even the best-educated English leaders were nearly all monumentally ignorant of American conditions. Serene in their ignorance, most English leaders insisted that colonials were uncouth and generally inferior beings. During the French and Indian War, General Wolfe characterized colonial troops as "the dirtiest, most contemptible cowardly dogs you can conceive."

Many English people resented Americans simply because the colonies were rapidly becoming rich and powerful. They were growing at an extraordinary rate. Between 1750 and 1770 the population of British America increased from one million to more than two million. As early as 1751, Benjamin Franklin predicted that in a century "the greatest number of Englishmen will be on this Side of the Water." (His guess was nearly on the mark: in 1850 the population of Great Britain was 20.8 million, that of the United States 23.1 million, including some 4 million slaves and others who were not of British descent.) If the English did not say much about this possibility, they too considered it from time to time-without Franklin's complacency.

**Tightening Imperial Controls**

The British attempt to deal with the intricate colonial problems that resulted from the great war for the empire led to the American Revolution-a rebellion that was costly, but which produced excellent results for the colonists, for Great Britain, for the rest of the empire, and eventually for the entire world. Trouble began when the British decided after the war to intervene more actively in American affairs. Parliament had never attempted to raise revenue in America. "Compelling the colonies to pay money without their consent would be rather like raising contributions in an enemy's country than taxing Englishmen for their own benefit," Benjamin Franklin wrote. Nevertheless, the legality of parliamentary taxation, or of other parliamentary intervention in colonial affairs, had not been seriously contested.

In 1759 a general tightening of imperial regulations began. Royal control over colonial courts was strengthened. In Massachusetts the use of general search warrants (writs of assistance) was authorized in 1761. These writs authorized customs officers searching for smuggled goods to enter homes and warehouses without evidence or specific court orders. Nearly all Americans resented the invasions of privacy that the writs caused. A Boston lawyer, James Otis, argued in a case involving 63 merchants that the writs were "against the Constitution" and therefore "void." Otis lost the case, but by boldly suggesting that Parliament's authority over the colonies was not absolute, he became a colonial hero.

After the signing of the peace treaty in 1763, events pushed the British authorities to still more vigorous activity in America. Freed of the restraint imposed by French competition, Englishmen and colonists increased their pressure on the Indians. Fur traders now cheated them outrageously, while callous military men hoped to exterminate them like vermin. One British officer expressed the wish that they could be hunted down with dogs.

Led by an Ottawa chief named Pontiac, the tribes made one last effort to drive the whites back across the mountains. What the whites called Pontiac's Rebellion caused much havoc, but it failed. By 1764 most of the western tribes had accepted the peace terms offered by a royal commissioner, Sir William Johnson, one of the few whites who understood and sympathized with them. The British government then placed 15 regiments-some 6,000 soldiers-in posts along the frontier, as much to protect the Indians from the settlers as the settlers from the Indians. It proclaimed a new western policy: no settlers were to cross the Appalachian divide. Only licensed traders might do business with the Indians beyond that line. The purchase of Indian land was forbidden. In compensation, three new colonies-Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida-were created, but they were not permitted to set up local assemblies. This Proclamation of 1763 excited much indignation in America. The frustration of dozens of schemes for land development in the Ohio Valley angered many influential colonists.

**The Sugar Act**

Americans disliked the new western policy but realized that the problems were knotty and that no simple solution existed. Their protests were somewhat muted. Great Britain's effort to raise money in America to help support the increased cost of colonial administration caused far more vehement complaints. George Grenville, who became prime minister in 1763, was a fairly able man, although long-winded and rather narrow in outlook. His reputation as a financial expert was based chiefly on his eagerness to reduce government spending. Under his leadership Parliament passed, in April 1764, the so-called Sugar Act. This law placed tariffs on sugar, coffee, wines, and other things imported into America in substantial amounts. Taxes on European products imported by way of Great Britain were doubled, and the enumerated articles list was extended to include iron, raw silk, and potash.

At the same time, measures aimed at enforcing all the trade laws were put into effect. Those accused of violating the Sugar Act were to be tried before British naval officers in vice-admiralty courts. Grenville was determined to end smuggling, corruption, and inefficiency. Soon income from import duties soared.

Few Americans were willing to concede that Parliament had the right to tax them. As Englishmen, they believed that no one should be deprived arbitrarily of his property and that, as James Otis put it in his stirring pamphlet The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved (1764 ), I everyone should be "free from all taxes but what he consents to in person, or by his representative." The philosopher John

Locke had made clear in his Second Treatise of Government (1690) that property ought never be taken from people without their consent, not because material values transcend all others, but because human liberty can never be secure when arbitrary power of any kind exists. "If our Trade may be taxed why not our Lands?" the Boston town meeting asked when news of the Sugar Act reached America. "Why not the produce of our Lands and every Thing we possess or make use op.

**American Colonists Demand Rights**

To most people in Great Britain, the colonial protest against taxation without representation seemed a hypocritical quibble (and it is probably true that many protesters had not thought the argument through). The distinction between tax laws and other types of legislation was artificial, the British reasoned. Either Parliament was sovereign in America or it was not, and only a fool or a traitor would argue that it was not. If the colonists were loyal subjects of George 111, as they claimed, they should bear cheerfully their fair share of the cost of governing his widespread dominions. As to representation, the colonies were represented in Parliament; every member of that body stood for the interests of the entire empire. If Americans had no say in the election of members of Commons, neither did most Englishmen.

This concept of "virtual" representation accurately described the British system. It made no sense in America, where from the time of the first settlements members of the colonial assemblies had represented the people of the districts in which they stood for office. The confusion between virtual and geographically based representation revealed the extent to which colonial and British political practices had diverged over the years.

The British were correct in concluding that selfish motives influenced colonial objections to the Sugar Act. The colonists denounced taxation without representation, but they would have rejected the offer of a reasonable number of seats in Parliament if it had been made, and they would probably have complained about paying taxes to support imperial administration even if imposed by their own assemblies. American abundance and the simplicity of colonial life had enabled them to prosper without assuming any considerable tax burden. Now their maturing society was beginning to require communal rather than individual solutions to the problems of existence. Not many of them were prepared to face this hard truth.

Over the course of colonial history, Americans had taken a narrow view of imperial concerns. They had avoided complying with the Navigation Acts whenever they could profit by doing so. Colonial militiamen had compiled a sorry record when asked to fight for Britain or even for the inhabitants of colonies other than their own. True, most Americans professed loyalty to the Crown, but not many would voluntarily open their purses except to benefit themselves. In short, they were provincials, in attitude and in fact.

But the colonists were opposed in principle to taxation without representation. They failed, however, to agree on a common plan of resistance. Many of the assemblies drafted protests, but these varied in force as well as in form. Merchant groups that tried to organize boycotts of products subject to the new taxes met with indifferent success. In 1765, Parliament welded colonial opinion by passing the Stamp Act.

**The Stamp Act: The Pot Set to Boiling**

The Stamp Act placed stiff excise taxes on all kinds of printed matter-newspapers, legal documents, licenses, even playing cards. Stamp duties were intended to be relatively painless to pay and cheap to collect; in England similar taxes brought in about L100,000 annually. Grenville hoped the Stamp Act would produce L60,000 a year in America, and the law provided that all revenue should be applied to "defraying the necessary expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the ... colonies."

Hardly a farthing was collected. Virginia was first to act. In late May of 1765, Patrick Henry introduced resolutions asserting redundantly that the burgesses possessed "the only and sole and exclusive right and power to lay taxes" on Virginians and suggesting that Parliament had no legal authority to tax the colonies at all. The more extreme of his resolutions failed of enactment, but the debate they occasioned attracted wide and favorable attention. On June 6, 1765, the Massachusetts assembly proposed an intercolonial Stamp Act Congress, which, when it met in New York City in October, passed another series of resolutions of protest. The Stamp Act was "burthensome and grievous," the delegates declared. People should not be taxed without "their own consent."

During the summer irregular organizations known as Sons of Liberty began to agitate against the act. Far more than anyone realized, this marked the start of the revolution. For the first time extralegal organized resistance was taking place. Although led by men of character and position, the "Liberty Boys" frequently resorted to violence to achieve their aims. In Boston they looted the houses of the stamp master and his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson. In Connecticut, stamp master fared Ingersoll faced an angry mob demanding his resignation.

When threatened with death if he refused, he coolly replied that he was prepared to die "perhaps as well now as another Time." Probably his life was not really in danger, but the crowd convinced him that resistance was useless, and he capitulated.

The fate of most of the other stamp masters was little different. For a time no business requiring stamped paper was transacted; then, gradually, people began to defy the law by issuing and accepting unstamped documents. Threatened by mob action should they resist, British officials stood by helplessly. The law was a dead letter.

The looting associated with this crisis alarmed many colonists, including some prominent opponents of the Stamp Act. "When the pot is set to boil," the lawyer John Adams remarked, "the scum rises to the top." This does not mean that people like Adams disapproved of crowd protests or even the destruction of property. What Adams called "state-quakes" were similar in his opinion to earthquakes, a kind of natural violence.

**Rioters or Rebels?**

In many cases the rioting had a social as well as a political character. Times were hard and once roused, laborers and artisans may well have directed their energies toward righting what they considered local wrongs.

Yet the mass of the people were not social revolutionaries. They might envy and resent the wealthy landowners and merchants, but there is no evidence that they wished to overthrow the established order.

The British were not surprised that Americans disliked the Stamp Act. They had not, however, anticipated that they would react so violently and so unanimously. Americans did so for many reasons. Business continued to be poor in 1765. The taxes would also hurt the business of lawyers, merchants, newspaper editors, and tavern keepers. Even clergymen dealt with papers requiring stamps. The protests of such influential and articulate people had powerful impact on public opinion.

The greatest concern to the colonists was Great Britain's flat rejection of the principle of no taxation without representation. This alarmed them because as Americans they objected to being taxed by a legislative body they had not been involved in choosing. To buy a stamp was to surrender all claim to self-government. Furthermore, as British subjects they valued what they called "the rights of Englishmen." They saw the Stamp Act as only the worst in a series of arbitrary invasions of these rights.

Already Parliament had passed another measure, the Quartering Act, requiring local legislatures to house and feed new British troops sent to the colonies. Besides being a form of indirect taxation, a standing army seemed a threat to liberty. Why were Redcoats necessary in Boston and New York where there was no foreign enemy for miles around? In hard times, soldiers were particularly unwelcome because being miserably underpaid, they took any job they could get in their off hours, thus competing with unemployed colonists.

Reluctantly, many Americans were beginning to fear that the London authorities had organized a conspiracy to subvert the liberties of all British subjects.

**Taxation or Tyranny?**

There was no such conspiracy; yet to the question, were American rights actually in danger? no certain answer can be made. Grenville and his successors were English politicians, not tyrants. They looked down on bumptious colonials, but surely had no wish to destroy either them or their prosperity. The British attitude was like that of a parent making a recalcitrant youngster swallow a bitter medicine: Protests were understandable, but in the patient's own interest they must be ignored.

At the same time, British leaders felt challenged to assert royal authority and to centralize imperial power at the expense of colonial autonomy. The need to maintain a substantial British army in America to control the western Indians tempted the government to use some of the troops to "control" white Americans as well. This attitude flew in the face of the fact that the colonies were no longer entirely dependent on "the mother country." Indeed, many colonists believed that America would soon become what Franklin called "a great country, populous and mighty . . . able to shake off any shackles that may be imposed on her." This view of the future surely meant dealing with Great Britain on terms approaching equality. But psychologically, British leaders were not ready to deal with Americans as equals or to consider American interests on a par with their own. In the long run, American liberty would be destroyed if this attitude was not changed.

Besides refusing to use stamps, Americans responded to the Stamp Act by boycotting British goods. Nearly 1,000 merchants signed nonimportation agreements. These struck British merchants hard in their pocketbooks, and they in turn began to bring pressure on Parliament for repeal. After a hot debate, the hated law was repealed in March 1766. In America there was jubilation at the news. The ban on British goods was lifted, and the colonists congratulated themselves on having stood fast in defense of principle. But the great controversy over the constitutional relationship of colony to mother country was only beginning. The same day that it repealed the Stamp Act, Parliament passed a Declaratory Act stating that the colonies were "subordinate" and that Parliament could enact any law it wished "to bind the colonies and people of America."

To most Americans this bold statement of parliamentary authority seemed unconstitutional-a flagrant violation of their conception of how the British imperial system worked. Actually, the Declaratory Act highlighted the degree to which British and American views of the system had drifted apart.

**The Townshend Duties**

Despite the repeal of the Stamp Act, the British did not abandon the policy of taxing the colonies. If direct taxes were inexpedient, indirect ones like the Sugar Act certainly were not. The government was hard pressed for funds to cover an annual budget of over L8,500,000. Therefore, in June 1767, the chancellor of the exchequer, Charles Townshend, introduced a series of levies on glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea imported into the colonies. Townshend was a charming man experienced in colonial administration, but he was something of a playboy (his nickname was Champagne Charlie), and he lacked both integrity and common sense. He liked to think of Americans as ungrateful children; he once said he would rather see the colonies turned into "Primitive Desarts" than treat them as equals.

By this time the colonists were thoroughly on guard, and they responded quickly to the Townshend levies with a new boycott of British goods. In addition they made elaborate efforts to stimulate colonial manufacturing. By the end of 1769 imports from the mother country had been almost halved. Meanwhile, administrative measures enacted along with the Townshend duties were creating more ill will. A Board of Customs Commissioners, with headquarters in Boston, took charge of enforcing the trade laws, and new vice-admiralty courts were set up to handle violations. These courts operated without juries, and many colonists considered the new commissioners rapacious racketeers who systematically attempted to obtain judgments against honest merchants in order to collect the huge forfeitures-one-third of the value of ship and cargo-that were their share of all seizures.

The struggle forced Americans to do some deep thinking about both American and imperial political affairs. In 1765 the Stamp Act Congress (another extralegal organization) had brought the delegates of nine colonies to New York. Now, in 1768, the Massachusetts General Court took the next step. It sent the legislatures of the other colonies a "Circular Letter" expressing the "humble opinion" of the people that the Townshend Acts were "Infringements of their natural & constitutional Rights." The limit of British power in America was much debated, and this too was no doubt inevitable, again because of change and growth. As the colonies matured, the balance of Anglo-American power had to shift or the system would become tyrannical. Even in the late seventeenth century the assumptions that led Parliament to pass the Declaratory Act would have been unrealistic. In 1766 they were absurd.

After the passage of the Townshend Acts, John Dickinson, a Philadelphia lawyer, published Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies. Dickinson considered himself a loyal British subject. "Let us behave like dutiful children, who have received unmerited blows from a beloved parent," he wrote. Nevertheless, he insisted that although Parliament was sovereign and might collect incidental revenues in the process of regulating commerce, it had no right to tax the colonies. Another moderate Philadelphian, John Raynell, put it this way: "If the Americans are to be taxed by a Parliament where they are not ... Represented, they are no longer Englishmen but Slaves."

Some Americans were far more radical than Dickinson. Samuel Adams of Boston, a genuine revolutionary agitator, believed by 1768 that Parliament had no right at all to legislate for the colonies. If few were ready to go that far, fewer still accepted the reasoning behind the Declaratory Act.

The British ignored American thinking. When news of the Massachusetts Circular Letter reached England, the secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Wills Hillsborough, ordered the governor to dissolve the legislature. Two regiments of British troops were transferred from the frontier to Boston, part of a general plan to bring the army closer to the centers of colonial unrest.

**The Boston Massacre**

These acts convinced more Americans that the British were conspiring to destroy their liberties. Resentment was particularly strong in Boston, where the postwar depression had come on top of 20 years of economic stagnation. Crowding 4,000 British soldiers into a town of 16,000 people was a formula for trouble, and on March 5, 1770, trouble erupted. Late that afternoon a crowd of idlers began tossing snowballs at Redcoats guarding the Custom House. Some of these missiles had been carefully wrapped around suitably sized rocks. Gradually the crowd grew larger, its mood meaner. The soldiers panicked and began firing their muskets. When the smoke cleared, five Bostonians lay dead or dying on the bloody ground.

This so-called Boston Massacre played into the hands of radicals like Samuel Adams. But cooler heads again prevailed. Announcing that he was "defending the rights of man and unconquerable truth," John Adams volunteered his services to make sure the soldiers got a fair trial. Most were acquitted, the rest treated leniently by the standards of the day. In Great Britain, confrontation also gave way to adjustment. In April 1770 all the Townshend duties except the threepenny tax on tea were repealed. The tea tax was maintained as a matter of principle. "A peppercorn in acknowledgment of the right was of more value than millions without it," one British peer declared smugly-a glib fallacy. At this point the nonimportation movement collapsed; although the boycott on tea was continued, many merchants imported British tea and paid the tax too. During the next two years no serious crisis erupted. Imports of British goods were nearly 50 percent higher than before the nonimportation agreement.

**The Tea Act Crisis**

In the spring of 1773 an entirely unrelated event precipitated the final crisis. The British East India Company held a monopoly of all trade between India and the rest of the empire. This monopoly had yielded fabulous returns, but decades of corruption and inefficiency together with heavy military expenses in recent years had weakened the company until it was almost bankrupt.

Among the assets of this venerable institution were some 17 million pounds of tea stored in English warehouses. Normally, East India Company tea was sold to English wholesalers. They in turn sold it to American wholesalers, who distributed it to local merchants for sale to the consumer. A substantial British tax was levied on the tea as well as the threepenny Townshend duty. Now Lord Frederick North, the new prime minister, decided to remit the British tax and to allow the company to sell directly in America through its own agents. The savings would permit a sharp reduction of the retail price and at the same time yield a nice profit to the company. The Townshend tax was retained, however, to preserve (as Lord North said when the East India Company directors suggested its repeal) the principle of Parliament's right to tax the colonies.

The company then shipped 1,700 chests of tea to colonial ports. Though the idea of buying this high-quality tea at bargain prices was tempting, after a little thought nearly everyone in America appreciated the grave dangers involved in buying it. If Parliament could grant the East India Company a monopoly of the tea trade, it could parcel out all or any part of American commerce to whomever it pleased.

Public indignation was so great in New York and Philadelphia that when the tea ships arrived, the authorities ordered them back to England without attempting to unload. The situation in Boston was different. The tea ship Dartmouth arrived on November 27. The radicals, marshaled by Sam Adams, were determined to prevent it from landing its cargo; Governor Hutchinson was equally determined to collect the tax and enforce the law. For days the town seethed, while the Dartmouth and two later arrivals swung with the tides on their moorings. Then, on the night of December 16, a band of colonists disguised as Indians rowed out to the ships and dumped the hated tea chests in the harbor.

The destruction of the tea was a serious crime for which many persons, aside from the painted "Patriots" who jettisoned the chests, were responsible. The British burned with indignation when news of the "Tea Party" reached London. People talked (fortunately it was only talk) of flattening Boston with heavy artillery. Nearly everyone agreed that the colonists must be taught a lesson. George III himself said: "We must master them or totally leave them to themselves."

**From Resistance to Revolution**

Parliament responded in the spring of 1774 by passing the Coercive Acts. The Boston Port Act closed the harbor of Boston to all commerce until its citizens paid for the tea. The Administration of Justice Act provided for the transfer of cases to courts outside Massachusetts when the governor felt that an impartial trial could not be had within the colony. The Massachusetts Government Act revised the colony's charter drastically, strengthening the power of the governor, weakening that of the local town meetings, making the council appointive rather than elective, and changing the method by which juries were selected. These were unwise laws-they cost Great Britain an empire. All of them, and especially the Port Act, were unjust laws as well. Parliament was punishing the community for the crimes of individuals, abandoning persuasion and conciliation in favor of coercion and punishment.

The Americans named the Coercive Acts (together with a new Quartering Act and the Quebec Act, an unrelated measure that attached the area north of the Ohio River to Canada and gave the region an authoritarian, centralized government) the "Intolerable" Acts. That the British answer to the crisis was coercion the Americans found unendurable. The American Revolution had begun.

In the course of a decade the people of the colonies, loyal subjects of Great Britain, had been forced by new British policies to take power into their own hands and to unite in order to exercise that power effectively. Ordinary working people, not just merchants, lawyers, and other well-to-do people, played increasingly more prominent roles in public life as crisis after crisis roused their indignation. This did not yet mean that most Americans wanted to be free from British rule. Parliament, however-and in the last analysis George III and most Britons-insisted that their authority over the colonies was unlimited. Behind their stubbornness lay the arrogant psychology of the European: "Colonists are inferior.... We own you."

Lord North directed the Coercive Acts only at Massachusetts, but the colonies began at once to act in concert. In June 1774 Massachusetts called for a meeting of delegates from all the colonies to consider common action. This First Continental Congress met at Philadelphia in September; only Georgia failed to send delegates. Many points of view were represented, but even the so-called conservative proposal introduced by Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania called for a thorough overhaul of the empire. Galloway suggested an American government, consisting of a president general appointed by the king and a grand council chosen by the colonial assemblies that would manage intercolonial affairs and possess a veto over parliamentary acts affecting the colonies.

This was not what the majority wanted. If taxation without representation was tyranny, so was all legislation. Therefore Parliament had no right to legislate in any way for the colonies. John Adams, although prepared to allow Parliament to regulate colonial trade, now believed that Parliament had no inherent right to control it.

Propelled by the reasoning of Adams and others, the Congress passed a declaration of grievances and resolves that amounted to a complete condemnation of Britain's actions since 1763. A Massachusetts proposal that the people take up arms to defend their rights was endorsed. The delegates also organized a "Continental Association" to boycott British goods and to stop all exports to the empire. To enforce this boycott, committees were appointed locally "to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association" and to expose violators to public scorn.

If the Continental Congress reflected the views of the majority-there is no reason to suspect that it did not-it is clear that the Americans had decided that drastic changes must be made. It was not merely a question of mutual defense against the threat of British power, not only, in Franklin's aphorism, a matter of hanging together lest they hang separately. A nation was being born.

Looking back many years later, one of the delegates to the First Continental Congress made just these points. He was John Adams of Massachusetts, and he said: "The revolution was complete, in the minds of the people, and the Union of the colonies, before the war commenced."

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