**American Revolution and War for Independence**

**Introduction**

This paper is dedicated to the history of American Revolution and the War for Independence. The primary purpose of the survey given here is to carry out an analysis of the events of the late 18th century in the British colonies in North America on the basis of vast historical material published in the United States. The process that took place before and during the 1776-1783 period when 13 British colonies’ aspiration for independence broke out into the so-called War for Independence is very remarkable for it’s many unique features, on the one hand, and for many historical parallels that took place a century later when the world-wide spreaded colonial system began to collapse.

John Adams, second President of the United States, declared that the history of the American Revolution began as far back as 1620. "The Revolution," he said, "was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people." The principles and passions that led the Americans to rebel ought, he added, "to be traced back for two hundred years and sought in the history of the country from the first plantation in America."

As a practical matter, however, the overt parting of the ways between England and America began in 1763, more than a century and a half after the first permanent settlement had been founded at Jamestown, Virginia. The colonies had grown vastly in economic strength and cultural attainment, and virtually all had long years of self-government behind them. Their combined population now exceeded 1,500,000-a six-fold increase since 1700.

The implications of the physical growth of the colonies were far greater than mere numerical increase would indicate. The 18th century brought a steady expansion from the influx of immigrants from Europe, and since the best land near the seacoast had already been occupied, new settlers had to push inland beyond the fall line of the rivers. Traders explored the back country, brought back tales of rich valleys, and induced farmers to take their families into the wilderness. Although their hardships were enormous, restless settlers kept coming, and by the 1730s frontiersmen had already begun to pour into the Shenandoah Valley.

Down to 1763, Great Britain had formulated no consistent policy for her colonial possessions. The guiding principle was the confirmed mercantilist view that colonies should supply the mother country with raw materials and not compete in manufacturing. But policy was poorly enforced, and the colonies had never thought of themselves as subservient. Rather, they considered themselves chiefly as commonwealths or states, much like England herself, having only a loose association with authorities in London.

At infrequent intervals, sentiment in England was aroused and efforts were made by Parliament or the Crown to subordinate the economic activities and governments of the colonies to England's will and interest - efforts to which the majority of the colonists were opposed. The remoteness afforded by a vast ocean allayed fears of reprisal the colonies might otherwise have had.

Added to this remoteness was the character of life itself in early America. From countries limited in space and dotted with populous towns, the settlers had come to a land of seemingly unending reach. On such a continent natural conditions stressed the importance of the individual.

**1. Frontier situation**

The colonists-inheritors of the traditions of the Englishman's long struggle for political liberty-incorporated concepts of freedom into Virginia’s first charter. This provided that English colonists were to exercise all liberties, franchises, and immunities "as if they had been abiding and born within this our Realm of England." They were, then, to enjoy the benefits of the Magna Charta and the common law.

In the early days, the colonies were able to hold fast to their heritage of rights because of the King's arbitrary assumption that they were not subject to parliamentary control. In addition, for years afterward, the kings of England were too preoccupied with a great struggle in England itself - a struggle which culminated in the Puritan Revolution - to enforce their will. Before Parliament could bring its attention to the task of molding the American colonies to an imperial policy, they had grown strong and prosperous in their own right.

From the first year after they had set foot upon the new continent, the colonists had functioned according to the English law and constitution - with legislative assemblies, a representative system of government, and a recognition of the common-law guarantees of personal liberty. But increasingly legislation became American in point of view, and less and less attention was paid to English practices and precedents. Nevertheless, colonial freedom from effective English control was not achieved without conflict, and colonial history abounds in struggles between the assemblies elected by the people and the governors appointed by the King.

Still, the colonists were often able to render the royal governors powerless, for, as a rule, governors had “no subsistence but from the Assembly”. Governors were sometimes instructed to give profitable offices and land grants to influential colonists to secure their support for royal projects but, as often as not, the colonial officials, once they had secured these emoluments, espoused the popular cause as strongly as ever.

The recurring clashes between governor and assembly worked increasingly to awaken the colonists to the divergence between American and English interests. Gradually, the assemblies took over the functions of the governors and their councils, which were made up of colonists selected for their docile support of royal power, and the center of colonial administration shifted from London to the provincial capitals. Early in the 1770s, following the final expulsion of the French from the North American continent, an attempt was made to bring about a drastic change in the relationship between the colonies and the mother country.

**2. British and French conflict**

While the British had been filling the Atlantic coastal area with farms, plantations, and towns, the French had been planting a different kind of dominion in the St. Lawrence Valley in eastern Canada. Having sent over fewer settlers but more explorers, missionaries, and fur traders, France had taken possession of the Mississippi River and, by a line of forts and trading posts, marked out a great crescent-shaped empire stretching from Quebec in the northeast to New Orleans in the south. Thus they tended to pin the British to the narrow belt east of the Appalachian Mountains.

The British had long resisted what they considered "the encroachment of the French." As early as 1613, local clashes occurred between French and English colonists. Eventually, there was organized warfare, the American counterpart of the larger conflict between England and France. Thus, between 1689 and 1697, “King William’s War” was fought as the American phase of the European "War of the Palatinate." From 1702 to 1713, “Queen Anne’s War” corresponded to the "War of the Spanish Succession." And from 1744 to 1748, “King George’s War” paralleled the "War of the Austrian Succession." Though England secured certain advantages from these wars, the struggles were generally indecisive, and France remained in a strong position on the American continent.

In the 1750s, the conflict was brought to a final phase. The French, after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, tightened their hold on the Mississippi Valley. At the same time, the movement of English colonists across the Alleghenies increased in tempo, stimulating a race for physical possession of the same territory. An armed clash in 1754, involving Virginia militiamen under the command of 22-year old George Washington and a band of French regulars, ushered in the “French and Indian War” - with the English and their Indian allies fighting the French and their Indian allies. This was destined to determine once and for all French or English supremacy in North America.

Never had there been greater need for action and unity in the British colonies. The French threatened not only the British Empire but the American colonists themselves, for in holding the Mississippi Valley, France could check their westward expansion. The French government of Canada and Louisiana had not only increased in strength but had also in prestige with the Indians, even the Iroquois, the traditional allies of the British. With a new war, every British settler wise in Indian matters knew that drastic measures would be needed to ward off disaster.

**3. First stirrings of unity**

At this juncture, the British Board of Trade, hearing reports of deteriorating relations with the Indians, ordered the governor of New York and commissioners from the other colonies to call a meeting of the Iroquois chiefs to frame a joint treaty. In June 1754, representatives of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the New England colonies met with the Iroquois at Albany. The Indians aired their grievances, and the delegates recommended appropriate action.

The Albany Congress, however, transcended its original purpose of solving Indian problems. It declared a union of the American colonies "absolutely necessary for their preservation," and the colonial representatives present adopted the Albany Plan of Union. Drafted by Benjamin Franklin, the plan provided that a president appointed by the King act with a grand council of delegates chosen by the assemblies, each colony to be represented in proportion to its financial contributions to the general treasury. The government was to have charge of all British interests in the west - Indian treaties, trade, defense, and settlement. But none of the colonies accepted Franklin's plan, for none wished to surrender either the power of taxation or control over the development of the west.

The colonies offered little support for the war as a whole, all schemes failing to bring them "to a sense of their duty to the King."The colonists could see the war only as a struggle for empire on the part of England and France. They felt no compunction when the British government was obliged to send large numbers of regular troops to wage colonial battles. Nor did they regret that the "redcoats," rather than provincial troops, won the war. Nor did they see any reason for curtailing commerce that, in effect, constituted trade with the enemy.

In spite of this lack of wholehearted colonial support and in spite of several early military defeats, England's superior strategic position and her competent leadership ultimately brought complete victory. After eight years of conflict, Canada and the upper Mississippi Valley were finally conquered, and the dream of a French empire in North America faded.

Having triumphed over France, not only in America but in India and throughout the colonial world generally, Britain was compelled to face a problem that she had hitherto neglected - the governance of her empire. It was essential that she now organize her vast possessions to facilitate defense, reconcile the divergent interests of different areas and peoples, and distribute more evenly the cost of imperial administration.

In North America alone, British overseas territories had more than doubled. To the narrow strip along the Atlantic coast had been added the vast expanse of Canada and the territory between the Mississippi River and the Alleghenies, an empire in itself. A population that had been predominantly Protestant English and Anglicized continentals now included Catholic French and large numbers of partly Christianized Indians. Defense and administration of the new territories, as well as the old, would require huge sums of money and increased personnel. The "old colonial system" was obviously inadequate. Even during the exigencies of a war imperiling the very existence of the colonists themselves, the system had proved incapable of securing colonial cooperation or support. What then could be expected in time of peace when no external danger loomed?

**4. Colonial resistance**

Clear as was the British need for a new imperial design, the situation in America was anything but favorable to a change. Long accustomed to a large measure of independence, the colonies were demanding more, not less, freedom, particularly now that the French menace had been eliminated. To put a new system into effect, to tighten control, the statesmen of England had to contend with colonists trained to self-government and impatient of interference.

One of the first things attempted by the British was to organize the interior. The conquest of Canada and of the Ohio Valley necessitated policies that would not alienate the French and Indian inhabitants. But here the Crown came into conflict with the interests of the colonies, which, fast increasing in population, were bent upon exploiting the newly won territories themselves. Needing new land, various colonies claimed the right to extend their boundaries as far west as the Mississippi River.

The British government, fearing that farmers migrating into the new lands would provoke a series of Indian wars, believed that the restive Indians should be given time to settle down and that lands should be opened to colonists on a more gradual basis. In 1763, a royal proclamation reserved all the western territory between the Alleghenies, the Florida, the Mississippi, and Quebec for the use of the Indians. Thus the Crown attempted to sweep away every western land claim of the thirteen colonies and to stop westward expansion. Though never effectively enforced, this measure, in the eyes of the colonists, constituted a highhanded disregard of their most elementary right to occupy and utilize western lands as needed.

More serious in its repercussions was the new financial policy of the British government, which needed more money to support the growing empire. Unless the taxpayer in England was to supply it all, the colonies would have to contribute. But revenue could be extracted from the colonies only through a stronger central administration, at the expense of colonial self-government.

The first step in inaugurating the new system was the passage of the Sugar Act of 1764. This was designed to raise revenue without regulating trade. In fact, it replaced the Molasses Act of 1733, which had placed a prohibitive duty on the import of rum and molasses from non-English areas. The amended Sugar Act forbade the importation of foreign rum; put a modest duty on molasses from all sources; and levied duties on wines, silks, coffee, and a number of other luxury items. To enforce it, customs officials were ordered to show more energy and strictness. British warships in American waters were instructed to seize smugglers, and "writs of assistance" (blanket warrants) authorized the King's officers to search suspected premises.

**5. Tax dispute**

It was not so much the new duties that caused consternation among New England merchants. It was rather the fact that steps were being taken to enforce them effectively, an entirely new development. For over a generation, New Englanders had been accustomed to importing the larger part of the molasses for their rum distilleries from the French and Dutch West Indies without paying a duty. They now contended that payment of even the small duty imposed would be ruinous.

As it happened, the preamble to the Sugar Act gave the colonists an opportunity to rationalize their discontent on constitutional grounds. The power of Parliament to tax colonial commodities for the regulation of trade had long been accepted in theory though not always in practice, but the power to tax "for improving the revenue of this Kingdom," as stated in the Revenue Act of 1764, was new and hence debatable.

The constitutional issue became an entering wedge in the great dispute that was finally to wrest the American colonies from England. "One single act of Parliament," wrote James Otis, fiery orator from Massachusetts, "has set more people a-thinking in six months, more than they had done in their whole lives before." Merchants, legislatures, and town meetings protested against the expediency of the law, and colonial lawyers like Samuel Adams found in the preamble the first intimation of "taxation without representation," the catchword that was to draw many to the cause of the American patriots against the mother country.

Later in the same year, Parliament enacted a Currency Act "to prevent paper bills of credit hereafter issued in any of His Majesty's colonies from being made legal tender." Since the colonies were a deficit trade area and were constantly short of "hard money," this added a serious burden to the colonial economy. History of American Money equally objectionable from the colonial viewpoint was the Billeting Act, passed in 1765, which required colonies to provide quarters and supplies for royal troops.

Strong as was the opposition to these acts, it was the last of the measures inaugurating the new colonial system that sparked organized resistance. Known to history as the “Stamp Act”, it provided that revenue stamps be affixed to all newspapers, broadsides, pamphlets, licenses, leases, or other legal documents, the revenue (collected by American agents) to be used for "defending, protecting, and securing" the colonies. The burden seemed so evenly and lightly distributed that the measure passed Parliament with little debate.

The violence of the reaction in the thirteen colonies, however, astonished moderate men everywhere. The act aroused the hostility of the most powerful and articulate groups in the population, journalists, lawyers, clergymen, merchants, and businessmen, north and south, east and west, for it bore equally on all sections of the country. Soon leading merchants, whose every bill of lading would be taxed, organized for resistance and formed non-importation associations.

Trade with the mother country fell off sharply in the summer of 1765. Prominent men organized as "Sons of Liberty," and political opposition soon flared into rebellion. Inflamed crowds paraded the streets of Boston. From Massachusetts to South Carolina the act was nullified, and mobs, forcing luckless agents to resign their offices, destroyed the hated stamps.

Spurred by Patrick Henry, the Virginia Assembly passed a set of resolutions denouncing taxation without representation as a threat to colonial liberties. A few days later, the Massachusetts House invited all the colonies to appoint delegates to a Congress in New York to consider the Stamp Act menace. This Congress, held in October 1765, was the first inter-colonial meeting ever summoned on American initiative. Twenty-seven men from nine colonies seized the opportunity to mobilize colonial opinion against parliamentary interference in American affairs. After much debate, the Congress adopted a set of resolutions asserting that "no taxes ever have been or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective legislatures" and that the Stamp Act had a "manifest tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonists."

**6. Abatement of tax disputes**

The issue thus drawn centered on the question of representation. From the colonies' point of view, it was impossible to consider themselves represented in Parliament unless they actually elected members to the House of Commons. But this conflicted with the orthodox English principle of “virtual representation”, that is, representation by classes and interests rather than by locality.

Most British officials held that Parliament was an imperial body representing and exercising the same authority over the colonies as over the homeland: It could pass laws for Massachusetts as it could for Berkshire in England.

The American leaders argued that no "imperial" Parliament existed; their only legal relations were with the Crown. It was the King who had agreed to establish colonies beyond the sea and the King who provided them with governments. That the King was equally a King of England and a King of Massachusetts they agreed, but they also insisted that the English Parliament had no more right to pass laws for Massachusetts than the Massachusetts legislature had to pass laws for England.

The British Parliament was unwilling to accept the colonial contentions. British merchants, however, feeling the effects of the American boycott, threw their weight behind a repeal movement, and in 1766 Parliament yielded, repealing the Stamp Act and modifying the Sugar Act. The colonies rejoiced. Colonial merchants gave up the non-importation agreement, the Sons of Liberty subsided, trade resumed its course, peace seemed at hand.

But it was only a respite. The year 1767 brought another series of measures that stirred anew all the elements of discord. Charles Townshend, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, was called upon to draft a new fiscal program. Intent upon reducing British taxes by making more efficient the collection of duties levied on American trade, he tightened customs administration, at the same time sponsoring duties on paper, glass, lead, and tea exported from Britain to the colonies.

This was designed to raise revenue to be used in part to support colonial governors, judges, customs officers, and the British army in America. Another act suggested by Townshend authorized the superior courts of the colonies to issue writs of assistance, thus giving specific legal authority to the general search warrants already hateful to the colonists.

The [agitation](http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/jdickenson/johnd1.htm) following enactment of the Townshend duties was less violent than that stirred by the Stamp Act, but it was nevertheless strong. Merchants once again resorted to non-importation agreements. Men dressed in homespun clothing, women found substitutes for tea. Students used colonial-made paper. Houses went unpainted. In Boston where the mercantile interests here most sensitive to any interference, enforcement of the new regulations provoked violence. When customs officials sought to collect duties, they were set upon by the populace and roughly handled. For this, two regiments were dispatched to protect the customs commissioners.

The presence of British troops in Boston was a standing invitation to disorder. On March 5, 1770, after 18 months of resentment, antagonism between citizens and soldiery flared up. What began as a harmless snowballing of the redcoats degenerated into a mob attack. Someone gave the order to fire; three Bostonians lay dead in the snow; and colonial agitators had a valuable issue n their campaign to arouse hostility toward England. Dubbed the Boston Massacre, the incident was dramatically pictured as proof of British heartlessness and tyranny.

Faced with such opposition, Parliament in 1770 opted for a strategic retreat and repealed all the Townshend duties except that on tea. The tea tax was retained because, as George III said, there must always be one tax to keep up the right. To most colonists the action of Parliament constituted, in effect, a "redress of grievances," and the campaign against England was largely dropped. An embargo on "English tea" continued but was not too scrupulously observed.

Generally, the situation seemed auspicious for imperial relations. Prosperity was increasing and most colonial leaders were willing to let the future take care of itself. Inertia and neglect seemed to succeed where bolder policies had failed. The moderate element, everywhere predominant in the colonies, welcomed this peaceful interlude.

**7. The Boston "Tea Party"**

During a three-year interval of calm, a relatively small number of “patriots” or “radicals” strove energetically to keep the controversy alive. As long as the tea tax remained, they contended, the principle of Parliament's right over the colonies remained. And at any time in the future, the principle might be applied in full with devastating effect on colonial liberties.

Typical of the patriots was their most effective leader Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, who toiled tirelessly for a single end: independence. From the time he graduated from Harvard College, Adams was a public servant in some capacity-inspector of chimneys, tax-collector, moderator of town meetings. A consistent failure in business, he was shrewd and able in politics, with the New England town meeting the theater of his action.

Adam's tools were men: his goal was to win the confidence and support of ordinary people, to free them from awe of their social and political superiors, make them aware of their own importance, and arouse them to action. To do this, he published articles in newspapers and made speeches in town meetings, instigating resolutions appealing to the colonists' democratic impulses.

In 1772, he induced the Boston town meeting to select a "committee of correspondence" to state the rights and grievances of the colonists, to communicate with other towns on these matters, and to request them to draft replies. Quickly, the idea spread. Committees were set up in virtually all the colonies, and out of them soon grew a base of effective revolutionary organizations.

In 1773, Britain furnished Adams and his co-workers with a desired issue. The powerful East India Company, finding itself in critical financial straits, appealed to the British government and was granted a monopoly on all tea exported to the colonies. Because of the Townshend tea tax, the colonists had boycotted the company's tea and, after 1770, such a flourishing illegal trade existed that perhaps nine-tenths of the tea consumed in America was of foreign origin and imported duty-free.

The company decided to sell its tea through its own agents at a price well under the customary one, thus simultaneously making smuggling unprofitable and eliminating the independent colonial merchants. Aroused not only by the loss of the tea trade but also by the monopolistic practice involved, the colonial traders joined the patriots. In virtually all the colonies, steps were taken to prevent the East India Company from executing its design.

In ports other than Boston, agents of the company were "persuaded" to resign, and new shipments of tea were either returned to England or warehoused. In Boston, the agents refused to resign and, with the support of the royal governor, preparations were made to land incoming cargoes regardless of opposition. The answer of the patriots, led by Samuel Adams, was violence. On the night of December 16 1773 a band of men disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded three British ships lying at anchor and dumped their tea cargo into the Boston Harbor.

**8. The British repressions**

A crisis now confronted Britain. The East India Company had carried out a parliamentary statute, and if the destruction of the tea went unheeded, Parliament would admit to the world that it had no control over the colonies. Official opinion in Britain almost unanimously condemned the Boston “Tea Party” as an act of vandalism and advocated legal measures to bring the insurgent colonists into line.

Parliament responded with new laws-called by the colonists "Coercive Acts." The first one, the Boston Port Bill, which closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for, threatened the very life of the city, for to exclude Boston from the sea meant economic disaster. Other enactments prescribed appointment by the King of Massachusetts councilors, formerly elected by the colonists; and the summoning of jurors by sheriffs, who were agents of the governor. Hitherto jurors had been chosen in colonial town meetings. Also, the governor's permission would be required for holding town meetings, and the appointment and removal of judges and sheriffs would be in his hands. A Quartering Act required local authorities to find suitable quarters for British troops.

The Quebec Act, passed at nearly the same time, extended the boundaries of the province of Quebec and guaranteed the right of the French inhabitants to enjoy religious freedom and their own legal customs. The colonists opposed this act because, disregarding old charter claims to western lands, it threatened to interfere with the westward movement and seemed to hem them in to the north and northwest by a Roman Catholic dominated province. Though the Quebec Act had not been passed as a punitive measure, it was classed by the Americans with the Coercive Acts, and all became known as the "Five Intolerable Acts." These acts, instead of subduing Massachusetts, as they had been planned to do, rallied her sister colonies to her aid.

At the suggestion of the Virginia Burgesses, colonial representatives were summoned to meet in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, "to consult upon the present unhappy state of the Colonies." Delegates to this meeting, known as the first Continental Congress, were chosen by provincial congresses or popular conventions. Every colony except Georgia sent at least one delegate, and the total number of 55 was large enough for diversity of opinion but small enough for genuine debate and effective action.

The division of opinion in the colonies posed a genuine dilemma for the Congress: it must give an appearance of firm unanimity to induce the British government to make concessions and, at the same time, it must avoid any show of radicalism or "spirit of independence" that would alarm moderate Americans. A cautious keynote speech, followed by a "resolve" that no obedience was due the Coercive Acts, ended with a Declaration of Rights and Grievances addressed to the people of Great Britain.

The most important action taken by the Congress, however, was the formation of an "Association," which provided for the renewal of the trade boycott and for a system of committees to inspect customs entries, publish the names of merchants who violated the agreements, confiscate their imp0rtations, and encourage frugality, economy, and industry.

The Association everywhere assumed the leadership, spurring new local organizations to end what remained of royal authority. These intimidated the hesitant into joining the popular movement and punished the hostile. They began the collection of military supplies and the mobilization of troops. And they fanned public opinion into revolutionary ardor.

A breach that had been developing slowly among the people widened with the activities of the Association committees. Many Americans, opposed to British encroachment on American rights, favored discussion and compromise as the proper solution. This group included most of those of official rank (Crown-appointed officers), many Quakers and members of other religious sects opposed to the use of violence, many merchants, especially from the middle colonies, and some discontented farmers and frontiersmen from southern colonies. The patriots, on the other hand, drew their support not only from the less well-to-do but from many of the professional class, especially lawyers, most of the great planters of the south, and a number of merchants.

While the course of events after the passage of the Coercive Acts left the loyalists appalled and frightened, the King might well have effected an alliance with them and, by timely concessions, so strengthened their position that the patriots would have found it difficult to proceed with hostilities. But George III had no intention of making concessions. In September 1774, scorning a petition by Philadelphia Quakers, he wrote, "The die is now cast, the Colonies must either submit or triumph." This cut the ground from under the loyalists or "Tories," as they were coming to be called.

GeneralThomas Gage, an amiable English gentleman with an American-born wife, was in command of the garrison at Boston, where political activity had almost wholly replaced trade. A leading patriot of the town, Dr. Joseph Warren, wrote to an English friend on February 20 1775:

"It is not yet too late to accommodate the dispute amicably, but I am of the opinion that if once General Gage should lead his troops into the country with the design to enforce the late acts of Parliament, Great Britain may take her leave, at least of the New England colonies, and if I mistake not, of all America. If there is any wisdom in the nation, God grant it may be speedily called forth!"

General Gage's duty was to enforce the Coercive Acts. News reached him that the Massachusetts patriots were collecting powder and military stores at the interior town of Concord, 32 kilometers from Boston. On the night of April 18, 1775, he sent a strong detail of his garrison to confiscate these munitions and to seize Samuel Adams and John Hancock, both of whom had been ordered sent to England to stand trial for their lives. But the whole countryside had been alerted by Paul Revere and two other messengers.

When the British troops, after a night of marching, reached the village of Lexington, they saw through the early morning mist a grim band of 50 minutemen - armed colonists - lined up across the common. There was a moment of hesitation, cries and orders from both sides and, in the midst of the noise, a shot. Firing broke out along both lines, and the Americans dispersed, leaving eight of their dead upon the green. The first blood of the war for American independence had been shed.

The British pushed on to Concord, where the "embattled farmers" at North Bridge "fired the shot heard round the world." Their purpose partly accomplished, the British force began the return march. All along the road, behind stone walls, hillocks, and houses militiamen from village and farm made targets of the bright red coats of the British soldiers. By the time the weary column stumbled into Boston its losses totaled nearly three times those sustained by the colonists.

**9. The congress debates on independence**

The news of Lexington and Concord flew from one local community to another in the thirteen colonies. Within 20 days, it evoked a common spirit of American patriotism from Maine to Georgia.

While the alarms of Lexington and Concord were still re-sounding, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775. Its president was John Hancock, a wealthy Boston merchant. Benjamin Franklin, who had returned from London, where, as "agent" for several of the colonies, he had vainly sought conciliation. The Congress had barely organized before it was called upon to face the issue of open warfare. Although some opposition was present, the real temper of the Congress was revealed by a stirring declaration of the “Causes and necessity of taking up arms”, the joint product of John Dickinson and Jefferson:

"Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable.... The arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will... employ for the preservation of our liberties, being with one mind resolved to die free men rather than live slaves."

Even as the declaration was being debated, Congress took the militia into continental service and appointed Colonel George Washington commander in chief of the American forces. Yet in spite of the military involvement and the appointment of a commander in chief, the idea of complete separation from England was still repugnant to some members of the Congress and to a sizeable portion of the American people. It was obvious, however, that the colonies could not forever remain half in and half out of the British empire.

**10. The stiffening of resolution**

As the months wore on, the difficulties of prosecuting a war while still part of the British empire became more and more apparent. No compromise came from England, and, on August 23, 1775, King George issued a proclamation declaring the colonies to be in a state of rebellion.

Five months later, Thomas Paine published a 50-page pamphlet,Common Sense, driving home in vigorous style the necessity for independence. Paine, a political theorist who had come to America from England in 1774, even dared to attack the sacred person of the King, ridiculing the idea of hereditary monarchy and declaring that one honest man was worth more to society than "all the crowned ruffians that ever lived." Persuasively he presented the alternatives - continued submission to a tyrannical king and an outworn government or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic. Circulated throughout the colonies, the pamphlet helped to crystallize conviction and to rally the undecided to the cause of separation.

There still remained the task of gaining the approval of each colony to a formal declaration of separation. There was common agreement that the Continental Congress should take no such definitive step as independence without first receiving explicit instructions from the colonies. But the Congress daily heard of the establishment of other new extralegal colonial governments and of delegates being authorized to vote for independence. At the same time, the predominance of radicals in the Congress increased as they extended their correspondence, bolstered weak committees, and fired patriot minds with stirring resolutions.

Finally, on May 10, 1776, a resolution to "cut the Gordian knot" was adopted. Now only a formal declaration was needed. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution declaring in favor of independence, foreign alliances, and American federation. Immediately, a committee of five, headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, was appointed to prepare a formal declaration "setting forth the causes which impelled us to this mighty resolution."

**11. Declaration of Independence**

The Declaration of Independence, adopted July 4, 1776 - not only announced the birth of a new nation, it also set forth a philosophy of human freedom thenceforth to be a dynamic force in the entire western world. It rested, not upon particular grievances, but upon a broad base of individual liberty that could command general support throughout America. Its political philosophy is explicit:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed: that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

The Declaration of Independence served a purpose far beyond that of a public notice of separation. Its ideas inspired mass fervor for the American cause, for it instilled among ordinary folk a sense of their own importance, inspiring them to struggle for personal freedom, self-government, and a dignified place in society.

The Revolutionary War lasted more than six years, with fighting in every colony. Even before the Declaration of Independence, there were military operations that had an important influence on he outcome of the war - for instance, the crushing of the North Carolina loyalists in February of 1776, and in March the forced evacuation of British forces from Boston.

For many months after independence was declared, the Americans suffered severe setbacks. The first of these was in New York. In the battle of Long Island, Washington’s position became ununtenable, and he executed a masterly retreat in small boats from Brooklyn to the Manhattan shore. The wind held north and the British warships could not come up the East River. Thus British General William Howe lost a chance to deal the American cause a crushing blow, perhaps to end the war.

Washington, though constantly driven back, was able to keep his forces fairly intact until the end of the year. Important victories at Trenton and Princeton revived colonial hopes, then once more calamity struck. In September 1777, Howe captured Philadelphia, drove the Congress into flight, and left Washington to winter with his men at Valley Forge.

Nevertheless, 1777 also saw the greatest American victory of the war, the military turning point of the Revolution. British General John Burgoyne moved down from Canada with a force designed to gain control of the Lake Champlain-Hudson River line and thus isolate New England from the other colonies. Burgoyne reached the upper Hudson River but, before he could proceed southward, was compelled to wait for supplies until the middle of September.

Ignorance of American geography led him to suppose it would be easy for a raiding force to march across the Hampshire Grants (Vermont) down along the Connecticut River and back, collecting horses, cattle, and wagons along the way for the use of his army-all in a matter of two weeks. For this exploit he chose 375 dismounted Hessian dragoons and about 300 Canadians and Indians. They did not even reach the Vermont line. The Vermont militia met them near Bennington. Few of the Hessians ever returned.

The Battle of Bennington rallied New England militiamen, and Washington sent reinforcements from the lower Hudson. By the time Burgoyne again put his force in motion, the army of General Horatio Gates was waiting for him. Led by Benedict Arnold, the Americans twice repulsed the British. Burgoyne fell back to Saratoga, and on October 17, 1777, he surrendered. This decisive blow of the war brought France to the American side.

**Conclusion: the final victory of the colonies**

From the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, France had not been neutral. The government had been eager for reprisal against England ever since the defeat of France in 1763. Moreover, enthusiasm for the American cause was high: the French intellectual world was itself in revolt against feudalism and privilege. Still, though France had welcomed Benjamin Franklin to the French court and had given the United States aid in the form of munitions and supplies, it had been reluctant to risk direct intervention and open war with England.

After Burgoyne's surrender, however, Franklin was able to secure treaties of commerce and alliance. Even before this, many French volunteers had sailed to America. The most prominent among them was the Marquis de La Fayette, a young army officer, who, in the winter of 1779-80, went to Versailles and persuaded his government to make a real effort to bring the war to an end. Soon afterward, Louis XVI sent to America an expeditionary force of 6,000 men under the Comte de Rochambeau. In addition, the French fleet aggravated the difficulties the British were having in supplying and reinforcing their forces, and Frenchmen joined with American blockade runners in inflicting severe losses on British commerce.

In 1778, the British were forced to evacuate Philadelphia because of threatened action by the French fleet. During the same year, in the Ohio Valley, they suffered a series of setbacks which assured American domination of the northwest. Nevertheless, the British continued to press the war in the south. Early in 1780 they captured Charleston, the principal southern seaport, and overran the Carolina country. The following year they made an effort to conquer Virginia. But the French fleet, which temporarily gained control of American coastal waters that summer, ferried Washington's and Rochambeau's troops in boats down Chesapeake Bay. Their combined armies, totaling 15,000 men, penned in Lord Cornwallis’ army of 8,000 at Yorktown on the Virginia coast. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered.

When the news of the American victory at Yorktown reached Europe, the House of Commons voted to end the war. Peace negotiations began in April 1782 and continued through November, when preliminary treaties were signed. These were not to take effect until France concluded peace with Great Britain. In 1783, they were signed as final and definitive. The peace settlement acknowledged the independence, freedom, and sovereignty of the 13 states, to which it granted the much coveted territory west to the Mississippi, and set the northern boundary of the nation nearly as it runs now. The Congress was to recommend to the states that they restore the confiscated property of the loyalists.

**Список литературы**

1. Billias, George Athan, ed. The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It? New York: Holt Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1990.

2. Beard, Charles A. and Mary. Basic History of the United States. New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1944.

3. Eliot, George Fielding. American Revolution. Microsoft Encarta CD-ROM 1997 Hafstadter. The United States. 4th Ed. 74, 76-77, 80.

4. Brinton, Crane. The Anatomy of Revolution. Vintage Books: New York, 1965

5. Greene, Jack P. The American Revolution, Its Character and Limits. New York University Press: New York, 1987.

6. Miller, John C. Origins of the American Revolution. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1959.

7. Thomas, Peter D.G. Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution, 1773-1776. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991.

8. Olsen, Keith W., et al. An Outline of American History. As reprinted on the Internet http://www.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/.