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Chapter 07 - The Road to Revolution

I. The Deep Roots of Revolution

1. In a broad sense, the American Revolution began when the first colonists set foot on America.
2. The war may have lasted for eight years, but a sense of independence had already begun to develop because London was over 3,000 miles away.
 - Sailing across the Atlantic in a ship often took 6 to 8 weeks.
 - Survivors felt physically and spiritually separated from Europe.
 - Colonists in America, without influence from superiors, felt that they were fundamentally different from England, and more independent.
 - Many began to think of themselves as Americans, and that they were on the cutting edge of the British empire.

II. Mercantilism and Colonial Grievances

1. Of the 13 original colonies, only Georgia was formally planted by the British government. The rest were started by companies, religious groups, land speculators, etc...
2. The British embraced a theory that justified their control of the colonies called **mercantilism**:
 - A country's economic wealth could be measured by the amount of gold or silver in its treasury.
 - To amass gold and silver, a country had to export more than it imported (it had to obtain a favorable balance of trade).
 - Countries with colonies were at an advantage, because the colonies could supply the mother country with raw materials, wealth, supplies, a market for selling manufactured goods etc...
 - For America, that meant giving Britain all the ships, ships' stores, sailors, and trade that they needed and wanted.
 - Also, they had to grow tobacco and sugar for England that Brits would otherwise have to buy from other countries.
3. England's policy of mercantilism severely handcuffed American trade.
 - The Navigation Laws were the most infamous of the laws to enforce mercantilism.
 - The first of these was enacted in 1650, and was aimed at rival Dutch shippers who were elbowing their way into the American shipping.

- The **Navigation Laws** restricted commerce from the colonies to England (and back) to only English ships, and none other.
- Other laws stated that European goods consigned to America had to land first in England, where custom duties could be collected.
- Also, some products, “**enumerated goods**,” could only be shipped to England.
- Settlers were even restricted in what they could manufacture at home; they couldn’t make woolen cloth and beaver hats to export (though, they could make them for themselves).
- Americans had no currency, but they were constantly buying things from Britain, so that gold and silver was constantly draining out of America, forcing some to even trade and barter. Eventually, the colonists were forced to print paper money, which depreciated.
- Colonial laws could be voided by the **Privy Council**, though this privilege was used sparingly (469 times out of 8,563 laws). Still, colonists were infuriated by its use.

III. The Merits and Menace of Mercantilism

Merits of mercantilism:

1. The Navigation Laws were hated, but until 1763, they were not really enforced much, resulting in widespread smuggling. This lack of enforcement is called “**salutary neglect**.”
 - In fact, **John Hancock** amassed a fortune through smuggling.
2. Tobacco planters, though they couldn’t ship it to anywhere except Britain, still had a monopoly within the British market.
3. Americans had unusual opportunities for self-government.
4. Americans also had the mightiest army in the world in Britain, and didn’t have to pay for it.
 - After independence, the U.S. had to pay for a tiny army and navy.
5. Basically, the Americans had it made: even repressive laws weren’t enforced much, and the average American benefited much more than the average Englishman.
 - The mistakes that occurred didn’t occur out of malice, at least until the revolution.
 - Also, France and Spain embraced mercantilism, and enforced it heavily.

Menace of mercantilism:

1. After Britain began to enforce mercantilism in 1763, the fuse for the American Revolution was lit.
2. Disadvantages of mercantilism included:
 - Americans couldn’t buy, sell, ship, or manufacture under their most favorable conditions.
 - The South, which produced crops that weren’t grown in England, was preferred over the North.
 - Virginia, which grew just tobacco, was at the mercy of the British buyers, who often paid very poorly and were responsible for putting many planters into debt.
- Many colonists felt that Britain was just milking her colonies for all they were worth.
 - Theodore Roosevelt later said, “Revolution broke out because England failed to recognize an emerging nation when it saw one.”

IV. The Stamp Tax Uproar

1. After the Seven Years' War (French & Indian War), Britain had huge debt, and though it fairly had no intention of making the Americans pay off all of it for Britain, it did feel that Americans should pay off one-third of the cost, since Redcoats had been used for the protection of the Americans.
2. **Prime Minister George Grenville**, an honest and able financier but not noted for tact, ordered that the Navigation Laws be enforced, arousing resentment of settlers.
 - He also secured the **Sugar Act** of 1764, which increased duty on foreign sugar imported from the West Indies; after numerous protests from spoiled Americans, the duties were reduced.
3. The **Quartering Act** of 1765 required certain colonies to provide food and quarters for British troops.
4. In 1765, he also imposed a stamp tax to raise money for the new military force.
 - The **Stamp Act** mandated the use of stamped paper or the affixing of stamps, certifying payment of tax.
 - Stamps were required on bills of sale for about 50 trade items as well as on certain types of commercial and legal documents.
 - Both the Stamp Act and the Sugar Act provided for offenders to be tried in the admiralty courts, where defenders were guilty until proven innocent.
 - Grenville felt that these taxes were fair, as he was simply asking the colonists to pay their share of the deal; plus, Englishmen paid a much heavier stamp tax.
5. Americans felt that they were unfairly taxed for an unnecessary army (hadn't the French army and Pontiac's warriors been defeated?), and they lashed out violently, especially against the stamp tax.
 - Americans formed the battle cry, "No taxation without representation!"
 - Americans were angered, mostly, to the principle of the matter at hand.
 - Americans denied the right of Parliament to tax Americans, since no Americans were seated in Parliament.
6. Grenville replied that these statements were absurd, and pushed the idea of "**virtual representation**," in which every Parliament member represented all British subjects (so Americans were represented).
7. Americans rejected "virtual representation" as hogwash.

V. Forced Repeal the Stamp Act

1. In 1765, representatives from 9 of the 13 colonies met in New York City to discuss the Stamp Tax.
 - The **Stamp Act Congress** was largely ignored in Britain, but was a step toward inter-colonial unity (similar to the Albany Congress of French & Indian War days).
2. Some colonists agreed to boycott supplies, instead, making their own and refusing to buy British goods.
3. Sons and Daughters of Liberty took the law into their own hands,

tarring and feathering violators among people who had agreed to boycott the goods.

- They also stormed the houses of important officials and took their money.
- Stunned, demands appeared in Parliament for repeal of the stamp tax, though many wanted to know why 7.5 million Brits had to pay heavy taxes to protect the colonies, but 2 million colonials refused to pay only one-third of the cost of their own defense.
- In 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act but passed the **Declaratory Act**, proclaiming that Parliament had the right “to bind” the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.”

VI. The Townshend Tea Tax and the Boston “Massacre”

1. Charles “Champaign Charley” Townshend (a man who could deliver brilliant speeches in Parliament even while drunk) persuaded Parliament to pass the **Townshend Acts** in 1767.

They put light taxes on lead, paper, paint, and tea, which were later repealed, except tea.

1. In 1767, New York’s legislature was suspended for failure to comply with the **Quartering Act**.
2. Tea became smuggled, though, and to enforce the law, Brits had to send troops to America.
3. On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd of about 60 townspeople in Boston were harassing some ten Redcoats.
 - One fellow got hit in the head, another got hit by a club.
 - Without orders but heavily provoked, the troops opened fire, wounding or killing eleven “innocent” citizens, including **Crispus Attucks**, a black former-slave and the “leader” of the mob in the **Boston Massacre**. Attucks became a symbol of freedom (from slave, to freeman, to martyr who stood up to Britain for liberty).
 - Only two Redcoats were prosecuted.

VII. The Seditious Committees of Correspondence

1. King George III was 32 years old, a good person, but a poor ruler who surrounded himself with sycophants like **Lord North**.
2. The Townshend Taxes didn’t really do much, so they were repealed, except for the tea tax.
3. The colonies, in order to spread propaganda and keep the rebellious moods, set up **Committees of Correspondence** which was a network of letter-writers and forerunner of the Continental Congress; the first committee was started by **Samuel Adams**. They were key to keeping the revolution spirit rolling.

VIII. Tea Brewing in Boston

1. In 1773, the powerful **British East India Company**, overburdened with 17 million pounds of unsold tea, was facing bankruptcy.
2. The British decided to sell it to the Americans, who were suspicious and felt that it was a shabby attempt to trick the Americans with the bait of cheaper tea and paying tax.
3. On December 16, 1773, some Whites, led by patriot Samuel Adams, disguised themselves as Indians, opened 342 chests and dumped the tea into the ocean in this “**Boston Tea Party**.”

- People in Annapolis did the same and burnt the ships to water level.
- Reaction was varied, from approval to outrage to disapproval.
- Edmund Burke declared, "To tax and to please, no more than to love and be wise, is not given to men."

IX. Parliament Passes the "Intolerable Acts"

1. In 1774, by huge majorities, Parliament passed a series of "**Repressive Acts**" to punish the colonies, namely Massachusetts. These were called the Intolerable Acts by Americans.
 - The **Boston Port Act** closed the harbor in Boston.
 - Self-government was limited by forbidding town hall meetings without approval.
 - The charter to Massachusetts was revoked.
2. The **Quebec Act**
 - A good law in bad company, it guaranteed Catholicism to the French-Canadians, permitted them to retain their old customs, and extended the old boundaries of Quebec all the way to the Ohio River.
 - Americans saw their territory threatened and aroused anti-Catholics were shocked at the enlargement that would make a Catholic area as large as the original 13 colonies. Plus, Americans were banned from this region through the Proclamation Line of 1763.

X. Bloodshed

1. The First Continental Congress
 - In Philadelphia, from September 5th to October 26th, 1774, the **First Continental Congress** met to discuss problems.
 - While not wanting independence yet, it did come up with a list of grievances, which were ignored in Parliament.
 - 12 of the 13 colonies met, only Georgia didn't have a representative there.
 - Also, they came up with a **Declaration of Rights**.
2. They agreed to meet again in 1775 (the next year) if nothing happened.
3. The "Shot Heard 'Round the World"
 - In April 1775, the British commander in Boston sent a detachment of troops to nearby **Lexington** and **Concord** to seize supplies and to capture Sam Adams and John Hancock.
 - Minutemen, after having eight of their own killed at Lexington, fought back at Concord, pushing the Redcoats back, shooting them from behind rocks and trees, Indian style.

XI. Imperial Strength and Weaknesses

1. With war broken open, Britain had the heavy advantage: (1) 7.5 million people to America's 2 million, (2) superior naval power, (3) great wealth.
2. Some 30,000 **Hessians** (German mercenaries) were also hired by George III, in addition to a professional army of about 50,000 men, plus about 50,000 American loyalists and many Native Americans.
3. However, Britain still had Ireland (which required troops) and

France was just waiting to stab Britain in the back; plus, there was no William Pitt.

- Many Brits had no desire to kill their American cousins, as shown by William Pitt's withdrawal of his son from the army.
- English Whigs at first supported America, as opposed to **Lord North's** Tory Whigs, and they felt that if George III won, then his rule of England might become tyrannical.
- Britain's generals were second-rate, and its men were brutally treated.
- Provisions were often scarce, plus Britain was fighting a war some 3,000 miles away from home.
- America was also expansive, and there was no single capital to capture and therefore cripple the country.

XII. American Pluses and Minuses

Advantages

1. Americans had great leaders like George Washington (giant general), and Ben Franklin (smooth diplomat).
2. They also had French aid (indirect and secretly), as the French provided the Americans with guns, supplies, gunpowder, etc...
3. **Marquis de Lafayette**, at age 19, was made a major general in the colonial army and was a great asset.
4. The colonials were fighting in a defensive manner, and they were self-sustaining.
5. They were better marksmen. A competent American rifleman could hit a man's head at 200 yards.
6. The Americans enjoyed the moral advantage in fighting for a just cause, and the historical odds weren't unfavorable either.

Disadvantages

1. Americans were terribly lacking in unity, though.
2. Jealousy was prevalent, as colonies resented the Continental Congress' attempt at exercising power. Sectional jealousy boiled up over the appointment of military leaders; some New Englanders almost preferred British officers to Americans from other colonies.
3. Americans had little money. Inflation also hit families of soldiers hard, and made many people poor.
4. Americans had nothing of a navy.

XIII. A Thin Line of Heroes

1. The American army was desperately in need of clothing, wool, wagons to ship food, and other supplies.
2. Many soldiers had also only received rudimentary training.
3. German **Baron von Steuben**, who spoke no English, whipped the soldiers into shape.
4. African Americans also fought and died in service, though in the beginning, many colonies barred them from service.
 - By war's end, more than 5,000 blacks had enlisted in the American armed forces.
 - African-Americans also served on the British side.
 - In November 1775, Lord Dunmore, royal governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation declaring freedom for any enslaved black in Virginia who

joined the British Army.

- By war's end, at least 1,400 Blacks were evacuated to Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and England.
5. Many people also sold items to the British, because they paid in gold.
 6. Many people just didn't care about the revolution, and therefore, raising a large number of troops was difficult, if not impossible.
 7. Only because a select few threw themselves into the cause with passion, did the Americans win.

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