

A revolutionary matter

(July 2018)

In the mid-18th century, North America was settled by subjects of the Kings of Great Britain, France, and Spain, and by innumerable Native Nations, while Alaska was colonized by subjects of the Czar.

From 1754 until 1763, a Worldwide War pitted George III, King of Great Britain (*United Kingdom after 1760*) against Louis XV, King of France. Spain sided with the former, while some of the Native Nations sided with the latter. The commander of the British forces in the opening battle was then 21-year-old Major George Washington.

By 1763, France had been defeated. By the Treaty of Paris, France lost to the United Kingdom all her possessions east of the Mississippi River and ceded Louisiana to Spain.

In the course of the next few years, the following events developed:

1. King George III granted Catholic French Canadians freedom of worship;
2. The King gave guarantees to the Native Nations with respect to their uncontested sovereignty west of the Appalachian Mountains;
3. The United Kingdom, which was by now quite impoverished, proposed that the Colonies contribute some taxes to the Treasury for their own defense;
4. The Government of the United Kingdom reminded His Majesty's overseas subjects that trading with the enemy in time of war was frowned upon;
5. In 1772, a judge of the English Court of King's Bench ruled in the *Somerset v Stewart* case (Somerset was a slave and Stewart his master) that the state of slavery was "*so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law*", and slavery had never been authorized by statute within England and Wales. Somerset was set free.

Despite their High Ideals as Philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment, many in the Patrician classes of the British Colonies were dreadfully alarmed by these developments and professed to be incensed by the unbearable duress imposed on them by their King's Government.

However, it is worth considering that many in the Colonies either did not feel directly threatened or did not disagree with the Government.

The Patrician classes were morally scandalized by the perceived threat over their rightful and sacred privileges to:

1. Deny the Papists of the North the right to worship freely;
2. Deny the Native Nations sovereignty over their land;
3. Be exempt of taxation to support their own defense;
4. Trade with the enemy in time of war, and
5. Maintain and develop the Institution of Slavery.

Consequently, they rebelled against their King and fought a War of Independence between 1776 and 1783, in which they prevailed with the active support of the King of France, now Louis XVI, whose motivation was revenge against his nemesis, George III (little did he know that the troops he sent to America would come back with both good revolutionary education and training and would depose him within six years).

Those who had not supported the victors fled primarily to Canada, where they constituted the original English speaking population, after having left their estates behind. With them came the slaves freed by the British during the war. However, emboldened by their success, the victors endeavored a couple of decades later to finish off their revolutionary undertakings by attempting to annex the rest of British America, in which they failed, but not until their northern neighbors and brethren had burnt to the ground the Presidential Mansion and the Capitol in Washington.

Meanwhile, a Quasi-War had quickly erupted between the victors and the French when the former flatly reneged on their war debt to France, under the noteworthy pretext that France was now a Republic whereas the debt was owed to King Louis. However, they reconciled and only a couple of years later Jefferson purchased Louisiana from a French dictator who had just seized it secretly from Spain.

In the words of d'Alembert ¹, with regard to textbook history:

"C'est ainsi qu'on écrit l'histoire, et la postérité croit être instruite."

("That's how history is written, and posterity believes itself to be informed.")

¹ Co-editor with Diderot of the Encyclopédie (1751-1772)