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Chapter 7
The Road to Revolution
1763-1775

Because the British controlled more North American territory after the Seven Years War, they had to

devote more troops and supplies to secure the territories. The British needed more money to support this, so they started levying taxes on the American colonists.

The Deep Roots of Revolution

Two ideas had taken root in the minds of the American colonists by the mid 18th century (not mutually exclusive):

- 1) **Republicanism**: all citizens willingly work towards the common good, which trumps their private interests. The stability of society and the authority of government depended on society's capacity for selflessness, self-sufficiency, and courage. This school of thought opposed authoritarian institutions.
- 2) **Radical Whigs**: The Radical Whigs was a group of British political commentators who criticized the monarchy's corruption and encouraged citizens to be vigilant against attempts to take away liberty.

Mercantilism and Colonial Grievances

Georgia was the only colony to be formally created by Britain.

The British viewed the American colonists as tenants: the colonists should exclusively support Britain (via supply of raw materials, purchase of British exports, etc).

The **Navigation Law of 1650** stated that all goods flowing to and from the colonies could only be transported in British vessels. It aimed to hurt rival Dutch shippers.

The Stamp Tax Uproar

Britain incurred a large debt due to the Seven Years War, most of which was created defending the North American colonies. Britain began to look for ways of getting the colonists to pay for this debt.

In **1763**, Prime Minister George Grenville ordered the British navy to begin strictly enforcing the **Navigation Laws**. He also got Parliament to pass the **Sugar Act of 1764**, the first law ever passed by Parliament to raise tax revenue in the colonies for England. The Sugar Act increased the duty on foreign sugar imported from the West Indies.

The **Quartering Act of 1765** required certain colonies to provide food and quarters for British troops. In **1765**, Grenville imposed a **stamp tax** on the colonies to raise revenue to support the new military force. This stamp tax, known as the **Stamp Act**, required colonists to use stamped paper to certify payment of taxes on goods like newspapers, legal documents, and diplomas.

American colonists started to rebel against the newly passed taxation measures as they felt the laws were starting to impinge on their liberties.

Forced Repeal of the Stamp Act

27 delegates from 9 colonies met in New York City for the **Stamp Act Congress of 1765**. The members drew up a statement of their rights and grievances and requested the king and Parliament to repeal the hated legislation. The meeting was largely ignored by England, but it was one step towards **intercolonial unity**.

Nonimportation agreements (agreements made to not import British goods) were another stride toward unionism.

The **Sons of Liberty** and **Daughters of Liberty** took the law into their own hands by enforcing the nonimportation agreements.

The Stamp Act was repealed by Parliament in **1766**.

Parliament passed the **Declaratory Act**, which reaffirmed England's right to rule absolutely over the American colonies.

The Townshend Tea Tax and the Boston Massacre

In **1767**, Parliament passed the **Townshend Acts**. They put a light import tax on glass, white lead, paper, paint, and tea.

American colonists were rebellious to the new taxes and as a result of these rebellions, the British landed 2 regiments of troops in the colonies in **1768**.

On **March 5, 1770**, a crowd of 60 townspeople attacked 10 redcoats and the redcoats opened fired on the civilians, killing/wounding 11 of them. The massacre was known as the **Boston Massacre**.

The Seditious Committees of Correspondence

Lord North, the prime minister of Britain, was forced to persuade Parliament to repeal the Townshend revenue duties.

Samuel Adams: master propagandist and engineer of rebellion; formed the first local committee of correspondence in Massachusetts in **1772** (Sons of Liberty).

Committees of Correspondence were created by the American colonies in order to maintain communication with one another. They were organized in the decade before the Revolution when communication between the colonies became essential.

In March of **1773**, the Virginia **House of Burgesses**, the lower house of the Colony of Virginia, proposed that each colonial legislature appoint a standing committee for intercolonial correspondence. Within just a year, nearly all of the colonies had joined.

Tea Brewing in Boston

In **1773**, the **British East India Company** was overstocked with 17 million pounds of unsold tea. If the company collapsed, the London government would lose tax revenue. Therefore, the London government gave the company the exclusive right to sell tea in America (at a discount).

Fearing that it was trick to get the colonists to pay import taxes, the colonists rejected the tea. When the ships arrived in the Boston harbor, the governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, forced the citizens to allow the ships to unload their tea.

On **December 16, 1773**, a band of Bostonians, disguised as Indians, boarded the ships and dumped the tea into the sea. (**Boston Tea Party**)

Parliament Passes the "Intolerable Acts"

In **1774**, Parliament punished the people of Massachusetts for their actions in the Boston Tea Party. Parliament passed laws, known as the **Intolerable Acts**, which restricted colonists' rights. The laws restricted town meetings and required that officials who killed colonists in the line of duty to be sent to Britain for trial (where it was assumed they would be acquitted of their charges). Another law was the **Boston Port Act**. It closed the Boston harbor until damages were paid and order could be ensured. The **Quebec Act** was also passed in **1774**, but was not apart of the Intolerable Acts. It gave Catholic French Canadians religious freedom and restored the French form of civil law. The American colonists opposed this act for a variety of reasons: it angered anti-Catholics; it extended the land area of Quebec.

Bloodshed

In **1774**, the **First Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia to respond to colonial grievances over the Intolerable Acts. 12 of the 13 colonies (excluding Georgia) sent 55 men to the convention. (The First Continental Congress was not a legislative body; it was a consultative body. It was a convention rather than a congress.)

After 7 weeks of deliberation, the **1st Continental Congress** created several papers. The papers included a **Declaration of Rights** and appeals to other British-American colonies, to the king, and to the British people.

The creation of **The Association** was the most important outcome of the Congress. It called for a complete **boycott** of British goods: nonimportation, nonexportation, and nonconsumption.

In **April 1775**, the British commander in Boston sent a detachment of troops to **Lexington and Concord**. Their plan was to seize stocks of colonial gunpowder and to capture the "**rebel**" **ringleaders**, Samuel Adams and John Hancock. At Lexington, 8 Americans were shot and killed. This incident was labelled as the "**Lexington Massacre**." When the British went to Concord, they were met with American resistance and had over 300 casualties and 70 deaths. Because of this, the British realized that they had a **war**, rather than a rebellion, on their hands.

Imperial Strength and Weaknesses

The population of Britain was over 3 times as large as America. Britain also had a much greater economic wealth and naval power.

Unfortunately for the British, though, British troops were committed to fighting the rebellion in Ireland.

Troops were also needed in case France decided to attack Britain. (France was bitter from its recent defeat.) Britain was therefore forced to divert much of its military power and concentration away from the Americas.

Britain's army in America had to operate under numerous difficulties; provisions were short, officers were not well-trained, troops were operating far from their home base, the Americans did not have a single city from which they operated (ex: Paris for the French).

American Pluses and Minuses

Americans benefited from good leadership and from the fact that they were fighting defensively. They were poorly organized, though.

Marquis de Lafayette: Frenchman who was made a major general in the colonial army at the age of 19; the "French Gamecock"; his services were invaluable in securing further aid from France.

The **Articles of Confederation** was adopted in **1781**. It was the first written constitution adopted by colonists.

Due to the lack of metallic money in America, Continental Congress was forced to print "**Continental**" paper money. Within a short time, this money depreciated significantly and individual states were forced to print their own paper money.

A Thin Line of Heroes

Food and military supplies were limited in the colonies. At **Valley Forge**, Pennsylvania, American men went without food for 3 days in the **winter of 1777-1778**.

Baron von Steuben: German who helped train the American fighters to fight the British.

Lord Dunmore: royal (British) governor of Virginia. In **1775**, he issued a proclamation **promising freedom** for any enslaved black in Virginia who joined the British army. "**Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment**"

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