

LECTURE 2C: THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

LECTURE 2C HANDOUT: THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

I. ARREST ORDER FOR LEADERS OF CONGRESS

- A. In January of 1775 LORD DARTMOUTH, Secretary of State for America, sent a letter to GENERAL THOMAS GAGE in Boston instructing him to arrest JOHN HANCOCK (He had been chosen governor of the revolutionary government in Massachusetts), and SAMUEL ADAMS.
- B. MARCH, 1775: Patrick Henry said "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"
- C. By the time Gage received the letter on April 14, 1777 most of the patriots had left Boston. It was rumored that Hancock and Adams were hiding in Lexington.

II. LEXINGTON AND CONCORD

- A. GAGE decided to send a force to confiscate provincial military supplies stockpiled at Concord.
- B. PAUL REVERE, WILLIAM DAWES, and DR. SAMUEL PRESCOTT alerted the countryside. In preparation for armed resistance, Massachusetts had trained MINUTEMEN (militiamen who stood ready for action at a moment's notice). The other colonies had also recruited militiamen.
- C. On APRIL 19, 1775 about 700 British soldiers met 70 American militia (Mass.) at Lexington. The American commander, CAPTAIN JOHN PARKER, ordered a withdrawal. A SHOT RANG OUT, the British fired. 8 Americans were killed and 10 wounded. The British moved on to Concord.
- D. At CONCORD there was a larger group of militia (100). It attacked British infantry at the North Bridge. 3 redcoats were killed and nine wounded. 2 militiamen were killed. The British retreated to Boston peppered by militia fire along the way.

* Videotape - "Liberty Story" - Lexington and Concord (9 minutes) *

III. SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS: See Handout

IV. BRITISH RESPONSE: See Handout

V. BRITISH STRATEGY: See Handout

VI. RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AS WAR BEGINS: See Handout

III. SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

- A. MAY 10, 1775: The delegates who convened in Philadelphia found themselves in charge of intercolonial government. They were the *de facto* government for the colonies. JOHN HANCOCK was elected President of Congress.
- B. ACCOMPLISHMENTS
 1. It authorized borrowing, taxation, and the printing of money (*Continental*s) to purchase supplies and ammunition.
 2. It established a committee to supervise relations with foreign countries.
 3. It established an intercolonial post office. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN was chosen *Postmaster General*.
 4. The AMERICAN ASSOCIATION was formed to enforce a boycott of all English goods.
 5. It strengthened the militia. It also created the CONTINENTAL ARMY and appointed generals. GEORGE WASHINGTON of Virginia was named *Commander-in-Chief*.
 - a. Washington worked as a surveyor but the early death of his older brother and marriage to the wealthy widow Martha Custis had made him rich.
 - b. He was committed to representative government but had not played a prominent role in prerevolutionary activity.
 - c. He had great stamina and in 8+ years of war never had a serious illness. He was known for judgment, steadiness, and discretion. Six feet tall, he commanded respect.
 - d. Washington took command of the army July 3, 1775. This was after the Battle of Bunker Hill. He had to bring order and discipline to unruly troops and organize a supply system.
 6. OLIVE BRANCH PETITION JULY, 1775 Congress sends this begging the king to stop the war and bring about a "happy and permanent reconciliation".
- IV. BRITISH RESPONSE: George III declared the colonists to be traitors. Not all in England agreed. The WHIGS under the leadership of *William Pitt* and *Edmund Burke* sympathized with the colonial cause and opposed the policies of George III and his Tory ministers.

V. BRITISH STRATEGY was under the supervision of LORD NORTH and his new American Secretary of State, LORD GEORGE GERMAIN. They assumed 3 things:

- A. American forces could not withstand the assaults of trained British regulars. A huge force was sent to ensure a quick victory. This force included thousands of Hessian mercenaries from Germany.
- B. Britain could win using the same strategy that had worked in European conflicts. This included CAPTURING MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES, and defeating the rebel army decisively without suffering many casualties themselves. But this was a new type of conflict - the first modern war of national liberation.
- C. A clear-cut military victory would automatically achieve the goal of retaining the colonies' allegiance.
- D. ERROR IN BRITISH THINKING: These assumptions did not take into account the 1) COMMITMENT of the COLONISTS to ARMED RESISTANCE; 2) VAST AREA covered by the colonies. In addition, capturing major cities and ports did not affect most of the population. COLONIAL COMMERCE could easily be rerouted to other coastal harbors. 3) Most important, a military victory did not guarantee a political victory. After 1778 the British made more use of loyalist forces and restored civilian authority in occupied areas but it was too late.

VI. RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AS WAR BEGINS

A. MILITARY STRENGTH

- 1. British army was well-equipped, well-trained, and had experienced officers. British Navy was strong. BUT, the battlefront was 3000 miles away so reinforcements could not be sent quickly and orders from the London War Office took months to reach British officers in America.
- 2. The American Continental Army was badly equipped and poorly trained. Primarily composed of young single men, there was a constant turnover of men since enlistments were short. Troops were augmented by local militia who disappeared during planting and harvest times. As the supply of white volunteers diminished recruiters turned to blacks, both free and slave, to fill the rolls. American soldiers not accustomed to taking orders. BUT, the colonists had home court advantage. They were skilled in guerrilla warfare; conditioned to fighting in the open; had the psychological advantage of fighting for their homes & freedom.

B. INDUSTRY AND FINANCE

- 1. England was the wealthiest country in the world. She had the financial and manufacturing facilities to supply her armies adequately with war materials.
- 2. Colonies lacked wealth. Second Continental Congress had difficulty raising funds. Manufacturing undeveloped. Money had to be borrowed from other countries. Ammunition and guns had to be purchased from other countries and brought in by privateers and blockade runners.

VII. COURSE OF THE WAR: 1775 - NORTHERN BATTLES (Map page 165)

- A. STALEMATE: Siege lines were established around Boston and remained for nearly a year. British army snubbed the resident Tories.
- B. MAY 10, 1775: Patriots under BENEDICT ARNOLD and ETHAN ALLEN with his GREEN MOUNTAIN BOYS from Vermont, captured FORT TICONDEROGA on Lake Champlain and acquired cannon.
- C. BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL - JUNE 17, 1775
 - 1. The British under Gage drove the Americans under Putnam and Prescott from positions on Breed's Hill in Charlestown. This battle is mistakenly called "Battle of Bunker Hill".
 - 2. To save ammunition, Putnam or Prescott issued orders: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."
 - 3. Although the Americans lost ground (they ran out of ammunition) their casualties were 400 out of 1500. The British lost 1,150 out of 2500. THE BRITISH SUFFERED THE GREATEST LOSS OF MEN OF THE WAR.
- D. NOVEMBER, 1775: Colonel HENRY KNOX, Chief of Artillery, moved guns (59 pieces) captured at Ticonderoga by sled to Framingham near Boston
- E. ATTEMPTED CONQUEST OF CANADA - 11/1775 thru 5/1776: Benedict Arnold led an unsuccessful northern campaign which was plagued by horrible weather, loss of supplies, starvation. The campaign failed at QUEBEC (12-31-1775)

VIII. COURSE OF THE WAR: 1776 - NORTH AND MOVE TO MIDDLE COLONIES

A. JANUARY 10, 1776 - THOMAS PAINE'S "COMMON SENSE" PUBLISHED

- 1. Paine had only lived in the colonies since 1774. He called for independence from England. He urged that a republic be established. He asserted that Britain had exploited the colonies. He prophesied a stronger America when freed from European control.
- 2. Paine's pamphlet was written in common language with frequent Biblical references. It was a primary cause of many people deciding to support independence.

B. BRITISH EVACUATION OF BOSTON - MARCH, 1776 (Map page 165)

- 1. The American army was preparing an assault on Boston after capturing Dorchester Heights (March 5, 1776) which had been fortified by artillery brought down from Ticonderoga.
- 2. SIR WILLIAM HOWE, who had replaced Gage, wanted to move his troops to New York City. He did so on March 17, 1776, encouraged by the patriots' bombardment of Boston. The British fleet went first to Halifax, Nova Scotia. THE WAR SHIFTED FROM NEW ENGLAND TO THE MIDDLE COLONIES.

C. MOVES TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

1. May 10, 1776 the Second Continental Congress recommends the formation of state governments.
2. June 7, 1776 *Richard Henry Lee* introduced a resolution for independency. It was seconded by *John Adams*. A vote on the resolution was postponed to assess public reaction.
3. A COMMITTEE was formed to draft a declaration of independence. It consisted of *Thomas Jefferson* of Virginia, *Benjamin Franklin* of Pennsylvania, *Robert Livingstone* of New York, and *Roger Sherman* of Connecticut. Jefferson was assigned the task of writing the document.

D. DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

1. The draft was presented to Congress on June 28, 1776. It was adopted on July 4, 1776.
2. The Declaration was addressed to *King George III* and listed numerous grievances.
3. The document asserted man's unalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

E. BATTLE FOR NEW YORK CITY

1. On July 2, 1776 Howe's redcoats landed on Staten Island from Halifax, Nova Scotia. In mid-August Howe began his attack on New York City. *Washington* marched 17,000 troops south to meet the attack.
2. Washington's Strategy: The nature of the geography compelled *Washington* to divide his forces among Long Island, Manhattan Island, and the mainland. The British fleet under *Admiral Lord Richard Howe*, brother of William, controlled the harbors and rivers that divided the American forces.
3. Battle of Brooklyn Heights (Battle of Long Island): On August 27 Howe's forces attacked Brooklyn Heights and pushed rebel troops back. Fishermen ferried 9000 men to the southern tip of Manhattan Island in less than 12 hours on August 29. As of September 15, 1776 the British occupied New York City and would do so until the end of the war. Advancing north into the mainland, *Washington* left part of his forces at Fort *Washington*. Howe attacked and the fort surrendered in early November.
4. Retreat: Through November and December *Washington* led his men in retreat across New Jersey. Howe followed, establishing a string of outposts, until *Washington* crossed the Delaware into Pennsylvania. Then Howe turned back to winter quarters in New York City. HOWE'S HESITANT MOVES QUESTIONABLE. WHY NOT CRUSH THE AMERICANS?

5. British Control New Jersey: The British controlled most of New Jersey and offered pardons to those in the occupied territory. Unfortunately for the British side, some redcoats went on a rampage of rape and plunder, not differentiating between rebels and loyalists. This alienated many potential allies in the colonies.
6. THOMAS PAINE, to rekindle patriotic fervor, published a new pamphlet, *The Crisis*. "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

F. BATTLES OF TRENTON AND PRINCETON

1. On December 26, 1776 *Washington* with 2400 troops attacked the Hessian camp at Trenton (After "Crossing the Delaware" on Christmas night 900 Hessians were captured and 30 killed. 3 Americans were wounded. This was a great morale booster for the colonists.
2. Princeton: On January 3, 1777 *Washington* attacked at Princeton and was victorious. He then established winter quarters at *Morristown, New Jersey*.

IX. BRITISH PLAN TO CAPTURE NEW YORK STATE - 1777: three-pronged drive (Map page 168)

- A. GENERAL JOHN BURGOPYNE, "Gentleman Johnny", would lead an invading force of redcoats and Indians down the Hudson River from Canada thereby cutting off New England from the rest of the colonies.
 1. Burgoyne set out from Montreal in mid-June, 1777. They took Fort Ticonderoga.
 2. Bad terrain caused a delay in the march to the Hudson River. Short of supplies Burgoyne sent 800 German mercenaries to forage. On August 16 they were almost wiped out at the BATTLE OF BENNINGTON by American militia.
 3. BATTLE OF SARATOGA: Burgoyne finally crossed the Hudson in September but met American forces under *Horatio Gates*. On October 17, 1777 he surrendered his 6000 men at Saratoga, New York. Howe never showed up. TURNING POINT OF THE WAR.
- B. COLONEL ST. LEGER would march eastward from *Oswego*.
 1. In July, 1777 the British force started marching from the east under Colonel Barry St. Leger.
 2. They turned back and returned to *Quebec* after meeting and winning against American forces at ORISKANY on August 6, 1777. (They heard a larger American force was coming under *Arnold*.) The fighting at Oriskany caused a split in the Iroquois Confederacy.

- a. The Iroquois Confederacy had declared neutrality in 1776.
- b. Joseph and Mary Brant, Mohawk leaders, tried to convince the Iroquois to back the British. The Brants won to their side the *Senecas, Cayugas, and Mohawks*.
- c. The *Oneidas* and *Tuscarawas* backed the American side. The *Onondagas* split into three groups: British, American, and neutral.
- d. The two sides fought each other at Oriskany, marking the end of a 300 year old confederation.
- e. The 1778 Iroquois raids on frontier villages in Pennsylvania and New York brought retaliation in 1779 when an expedition under General John Sullivan burned Iroquois crops and settlements. Many Iroquois fled to Canada and settled there permanently.

- 2. The TREATY OF ALLIANCE stated that neither country would negotiate peace without consulting the other.
- 3. France gave up all claims to North American territory east of the Mississippi River and to Canada.
- b. In 1777 the MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE volunteered for service with G. Washington; fought until the end of hostilities.
- c. There were three major benefits of the French alliance:
 - 1. France sent troops, naval vessels, arms, ammunition, clothing, and blankets.
 - 2. The British could no longer focus their attentions on the American mainland exclusively. They had to fight the French in the West Indies.
 - 3. In 1779 Spain entered the war as an ally of France. This further hampered the English side.

C. GENERAL HOWE would march north from New York City. The three armies would meet in Albany.

- 1. British Capture Philadelphia: Howe planned his strategy without regard to Burgoyne's plan. His troops sailed south from New York City to Philadelphia. He eventually captured Philadelphia September, 1777, but took so long that his supplies were depleted & his men debilitated. The Continental Congress fled to York, Pennsylvania.
- 2. Brandywine and Germantown: By the time Howe's forces were in position Washington had time to prepare his defenses. The armies clashed at BRANDYWINE (9-11-1777) and at GERMANTOWN (10-4-1777). The British won both engagements but the Continental Army acquitted itself well.
- 3. Winter at Valley Forge (20 miles NW of Philadelphia): Washington and his troops spent the winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Conditions were terrible but VON STEUBEN (Prussian) & LAFAYETTE (major general - no pay) trained the soldiers during this time.

- X. WAR IN THE NORTHWEST - 1778: George Rogers Clark secured the Northwest Territory for the colonists by driving the British out of the Ohio Country. (southern Illinois and southern Indiana)
- XI. WAR AT SEA: 1779: September 23, 1779 battle between the English ship *Serapis* and the *Bonhomme Richard* under John Paul Jones.

XII. COURSE OF THE WAR: 1778-1781 - SOUTHERN STRATEGY

- A. BRITISH STRATEGY SHIFT: After the defeat at Saratoga Lord North decided to switch the focus of the war to the South.
 - 1. Sir Henry Clinton: In early 1778 he replaced Sir William Howe and ordered the evacuation of Philadelphia June 18, 1778 and sent an expedition to Georgia.
 - 2. Battle of Monmouth: June 28, 1778 Patriots attacked near Monmouth Court House in New Jersey. The battle ended in a draw. THIS WAS THE LAST MAJOR BATTLE IN THE NORTH.
 - 3. Savannah (Dec. 29, 1778) & Augusta fell easily to the British. It looked like the southern strategy would be successful.

B. THE FALL OF CHARLESTON

- 1. In late 1779 Clinton sailed down the coast from New York to attack Charleston, South Carolina, the most important American city in the South.
- 2. CHARLESTON FELL to the British on May 12, 1780. The American general Benjamin Lincoln surrendered his 5500 troops. The redcoats then established garrisons throughout the interior of South Carolina. Many citizens declared their loyalty to Britain and a *pacification process* began. However, patriot bands still operated in the area.

D. DIPLOMATIC RESULTS OF THE BATTLE OF SARATOGA

- 1. ENGLAND: After the defeat at Saratoga in 1777 Lord North authorized a peace commission to offer the Americans a return to the imperial system of 1763. The patriots refused.
- 2. FRANCE: After the patriot victory at Saratoga, France officially came into the war. Previously France had furnished military supplies, particularly gunpowder.
 - a. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN sent to France in late 1776 to solicit French aid. In February, 1778 two treaties were signed.
 - 1. The TREATY OF AMITY AND COMMERCE recognized American independence and established trade ties.

3. Battle of Camden: The fall of Charleston served to inspire the patriots to greater effort. In August of 1780 an army under Horatio Gates was defeated at Camden by the forces of Lord Cornwallis who was in charge of the British southern campaign.

4. Plot for the Surrender of West Point

5. Blacks: The English army was constantly being joined by blacks who were responding to the invitation of Lord Dunmore. About 55,000 slaves fled, seriously impeding planting and harvesting in 1780 and 1781.

C. General Nathaniel Greene: After the Camden defeat Washington gave the command of the southern patriot forces to Greene who found supplies to be short and morale poor.

1. New Orders: Greene persuaded the governor of South Carolina to offer pardons to those who had fought for the British if they would join the patriot militia. He ordered his troops not to loot loyalist property. Civilian authority began to be established again.
2. GREENE NEGOTIATED WITH THE INDIANS. In 1781 peace was achieved with the Cherokees; the next year with other tribes; at the end of the war only the Creeks were still allies of the British.

D. PATRIOT VICTORIES

1. Battle at King's Mountain In December, 1780 "overmountain men" from settlements west of the Appalachians defeated a party of redcoats and loyalists at King's Mountain near the North-South Carolina border.
2. Battle of Cowpens: In January 1781 Brigadier General Daniel Morgan defeated Tarleton's Legion (British) at Cowpens near the North-South Carolina border.
3. 7000 French troops under General Rochambeau arrive.
4. Battle of Guildford Court House: Greene fought Cornwallis' troops here in North Carolina in March 1781. Cornwallis had to retreat to Wilmington for supplies and fresh troops.
5. British Return to Charleston: Greene returned to South Carolina and forced the redcoats to abandon their interior outposts and return to Charleston.

E. SURRENDER AT YORKTOWN

1. Cornwallis headed north into Virginia even though he had orders not to leave South Carolina until it had been secured.
2. Yorktown Fortified: His forces joined with those led by Benedict Arnold, the American traitor who had defected in 1780. Cornwallis and his 7200 men fortified Yorktown and waited.

3. Siege of Yorktown: Washington moved over 7000 troops south from New York City. A French fleet under COMTE DE GRASSE arrived from the West Indies and defeated the Royal Navy vessels sent to rescue Cornwallis. The siege began 9/28/1781. Trapped, Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, 1781.

4. With news of the defeat, Lord North's ministry fell. Parliament voted to cease offensive operations and negotiate peace.

F. FURTHER CONFLICT AFTER YORKTOWN

1. Guerrilla warfare continued for more than a year in the Carolinas and Georgia between patriots and loyalists.
2. Retaliatory raids between Indians and whites continued on the frontier.
3. Massacre at Gnadenhuetten: In March 1782 white militiamen massacred 96 Christian Delawares at Gnadenhuetten in Ohio.

G. TREATY OF PARIS

1. A preliminary peace treaty was signed at Paris Nov. 1782
2. The American negotiation team was made up of Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams. They operated on their own rather than with France whose ministers were secretly working to prevent the establishment of a strong, unified, independent government in America.
3. LORD SHELBURNE was the new prime minister of Britain. He made so many concessions that he was soon ousted from power.
4. The Treaty of Paris was formally signed on September 3, 1783
 - a. Americans were granted unconditional independence.
 - b. They were granted unlimited fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland.
 - c. The boundaries were set: North to Canada; South the 31st parallel; West the Mississippi River. Florida was returned to Spain. The British ignored the territorial rights of their Indian allies.