

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

In 1763, the French and Indian War came to an end. Great Britain (England), with the help of the American colonists and the Iroquois Indians, defeated France and took control of French territory stretching to the Mississippi River.

During the war, the British sent soldiers to America to defend the Thirteen Colonies. They spent large sums of money on weapons, ammunition, and other supplies. When the French and Indian War ended, the British government was deep in debt. Its citizens were beginning to complain about high taxes.



To make matters worse, colonists who had moved into the Ohio Valley came under attack by various western tribes led by the great warrior Chief Pontiac. The Indians wanted to drive the white men out of the land that they had long considered their own. British soldiers were sent to the frontier where they ended Pontiac's War. Afterwards, the British government decided that an army would have to be kept in America to protect the colonists against further trouble. But maintaining an army would be costly, and the British thought the colonies should help pay the expenses.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain at this time was George Grenville. He drew up a four-part plan aimed at solving his country's problems with its American colonies:

1. The Proclamation of 1763 said that no colonists could settle in the Ohio region. Grenville hoped that this would ease tensions between the pioneers and Indians. He proposed sending 10,000 soldiers to guard the frontier.
2. The Navigation Acts would be strictly enforced to end smuggling and raise profits for English traders and manufacturers. More taxes would also be collected.
3. The Sugar Act was passed by Parliament to raise tax monies for the military defense of the colonies. The act placed taxes on sugar and molasses being imported by colonial merchants from the West Indies. Additional taxes were placed on imported wine, coffee, silk, and linens. Iron, hides, and potash were added to a growing list of products that could be exported only to Great Britain.
4. Prime Minister Grenville also urged Parliament to pass the Stamp Act in 1765. It required the colonists to buy stamps from the British government and place them on such articles as business and legal papers, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets, calendars, almanacs, dice, and playing cards.

The colonists were unhappy about each part of Grenville's program. Families that wanted to settle in the Ohio region went there in spite of the Proclamation of 1763. Colonial merchants and shipowners were angered by the strict enforcement of the Navigation Acts because smuggling had brought them huge profits. The passage of the Sugar Act and Stamp Act prompted cries of "no taxation without representation." There were no colonial representatives in the British Parliament which had enacted these tax laws. If the colonists had to be taxed, they wanted it to be done by their own legislatures. This was the message sent to Great Britain by delegates who attended the Stamp Act Congress in New York City.

To protect their rights many men joined the Sons of Liberty. Angry mobs rampaged through New York, Boston, and other cities, destroying property, burning stamps, and threatening the tax agents. A "boycott" was organized in which the colonists refused to buy British goods. English merchants and manufacturers soon lost so much money that Parliament repealed the Stamp Act. Celebrations broke out everywhere in the colonies.

But the British still felt that they needed to raise money to govern and protect the Thirteen Colonies. So the Townshend Acts were passed in 1767 to provide money to pay the salaries of royal officials -- governors, judges, and other employees of the king. The Townshend Acts levied duties on lead, painters' colors, glass, paper, and tea. British customs officials were given the right to use "writs of assistance" to search warehouses and private homes and to seize smuggled goods. The number of courts was increased to handle the cases of those colonists accused of smuggling. Defendants appeared before British-appointed judges, and were denied the right to a trial by jury.

Once again, angry protests were heard in the colonies. Another boycott was organized and Britain's colonial trade dropped off by almost 40%. Occasional incidents of mob violence occurred, including the Boston Massacre in 1770. On the night of the "massacre," a group of boys began throwing snowballs at a British soldier standing guard duty outside the Boston Customs House. When more people gathered around, a squad of soldiers arrived on the scene. The unruly crowd called the soldiers "lobsterbacks," yelled other insults, and began throwing stones. The redcoats opened fire, killing five in the crowd and wounding others.

News of the "Boston Massacre" spread quickly through the Thirteen Colonies and provoked a new wave of anti-British feelings. A very tense situation was eased somewhat by the announcement a month later that the Townshend Acts had been repealed. Parliament took this action not because of the Boston Massacre, but because of the effectiveness of the colonial boycott. While Parliament ended the taxes on lead, paint, glass, and paper, the tax on tea was continued. The British kept the tea tax as a symbol of their right to tax the colonists.

Relations between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies were reasonably good from 1770 to 1773. Then Parliament passed the Tea Act. This law permitted ships of the British East India Company to carry tea directly to the colonies without first stopping in Great Britain to pay the usual heavy taxes. This meant that the British East India Company could now sell tea in the colonies at very low prices. But the colonists resented this action. First, the cheap tea cost less than tea sold by colonial merch who were smuggling it into the colonies, thus threatening their business. Second, the cheap British tea still included the hated tea tax imposed by the Townshend Acts. For these reasons, 60 members of the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Mohawk Indians, boarded three ships in Boston Harbor and dumped 342 chests of tea overboard. An enthusiastic crowd watching from shore was delighted by the "Boston Tea Party."

When word of the Tea Party reached Great Britain, King George III and Parliament realized that a critical point had been reached in British-colonial relations. Great Britain either had to punish the colonies, especially Massachusetts, for the Boston Tea Party, or risk losing effective control of her colonies. King George and Parliament decided to punish and humiliate the colonists. The harsh Intolerable Acts were passed. These laws stated that:

1. Boston Harbor would remain closed until the colonists agreed to pay for the ruined tea.
2. Citizens of Massachusetts could not hold town meetings without written approval of the governor. The newly appointed governor was General Thomas Gage, commander of British troops in Boston.
3. British soldiers in all colonies could be housed in private homes, as well as in inns, public buildings, and warehouses without permission of their owners.
4. British officials accused of committing crimes in America could have their trials moved to England, where they had a better chance of being cleared of the charges.

The Intolerable Acts quickly backfired on King George and Parliament. Instead of accepting these punishments, the colonists united as never before in defense of their liberties. "Committees of Correspondence," first organized in Boston by Samuel Adams,

sprung up throughout the Thirteen Colonies. The Committees of Correspondence were local groups that directed opposition to Great Britain. The groups kept in touch by writing letters to each other that told what was happening in their colony and what they thought should be done to guard their rights. At the request of the Committees of Correspondence, delegates from twelve of the colonies met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at what came to be known as the First Continental Congress. The delegates wanted to discuss British-imposed taxes, the Intolerable Acts, and the restoring of colonial rights.

British-Colonial Relations

You have just read about the deteriorating relationship between Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies in the years following the French and Indian War. Each action by the British prompted a determined reaction from the colonists. Events during the 1760's and early 1770's drove the two sides farther apart and brought them closer to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775.

For each of the British actions in column one below, fill in the spaces in the second column with the colonial reaction. Use the colonial reactions described here:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sons of Liberty staged the Boston Tea Party. * Committees of Correspondence were organized; First Continental Congress met to discuss a plan of action. * Boycott of British goods; more incidents of mob violence, including one that ended in the Boston Massacre. * Relations improved between the British and colonists from 1770 to 1773. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Violent demonstrations in colonies; first cries of "no taxation without representation;" Stamp Act Congress sent protest message to Great Britain; boycott of British goods. * Pioneers continued settling west of the Allegheny Mountains. * Colonial merchants smuggled goods into the Thirteen Colonies. |
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<u>British Action</u>	<u>Colonial Reaction</u>
1. Proclamation of 1763 banned settlement in Ohio region.	1. _____ _____ _____ _____
2. Navigation Acts were strictly enforced.	2. _____ _____ _____ _____
3. Parliament passed the Sugar Act and Stamp Act.	3. _____ _____ _____ _____
4. Stamp Act was repealed, but Townshend Acts were passed within a year.	4. _____ _____ _____ _____

British Action

5. Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts -- taxes on lead, paint, glass, and paper, but kept the tax on tea.
6. Tea Act allowed British East India Company to sell inexpensive tea to the colonies; the low price of tea included a tax.
7. King George III and Parliament decided to punish the colonists with the Intolerable Acts.

Colonial Reaction

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

