

\*I. Henry David Thoreau:

- Born back in 1817, Henry David Thoreau came of age in a time when human actions were completely transforming the landscape and ppl's relation with the Earth. That is why we often know him in early environmentalism. Thoreau was contrary to rising industrialization, he was an outspoken critic of industrial progress, large corporations, even the growth of the state.

\*- To counter against industrial he moved to a woodlot. There Thoreau had a pond, the now famous Walden Pond, where he built his cabin. He lived there about two yrs (Jul1845-47) and during this time he kept a journal: we know it was *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* [p.1854]. At this time 60% of New England's landscape was open space as opposed to forests. In fact, it is reverse today: New Eng has 60% if its landscape as forest in the 2000s. But then the first wave of industrialization, including shipbuilding, foundries, massive textile complexes, farming, mining, putting up fences, and deforestation.

- Aside from his romanticism of nature, we know Thoreau for another famous writing, published earlier in 1848, entitled "Resistance to Civil Government". Thoreau was also an abolitionist, seeing slavery as an extreme of statism. And he feared American slavery would be extended into the new territories conquered by the US over Mexico (1846-48), in their short but decisive American victory.

- Thoreau's moral problem came during tax time. And he hated the idea of paying taxes to a big government to support a war effort that might include extending slavery. His essay "Resistance to Civil Government" urged his fellow Americans to follow a higher moral code. The essential argument was that you do not morally have to fund a government that has left the social contract. So, he spent about one night in prison when he refused to pay a small highway toll tax, his aunt bailed him out, and he went on to finish his two famous works (plus others).

Questions:

\*II. The American Revolution:

- When is revolution justified? (Was America justified in leaving the British Empire?)

\*1. **A New Imperial Order:** There was a long and brutal war between Britain and France ending in the 1760s. The Seven Years War, as it was called in Europe, concluded with a victory for Britain, which forced France to give up its NA empire. What looked stunning on a map was actually a heavy burden. Fighting that war had deeply indebted Britain, it also put it in financial responsibility over a vast swath of land, at the same time its debts were being called in.

- Backtrack, NA was the least important priority to the British Empire until the Seven Years War. But for the previous 150 years America was largely unnoticed by the Empire, and that made Americans accustomed to sovereignty, despite that up until the 1740s they very much held pride in their English ancestry and held few problems with the monarchy.

- Well, in 1763, France and Britain signed peace. Britain was only ostensibly a victor, like in the Great War of 1914-18; in reality no one was a winner. And moreover, Britain was broke. Because the war had been conducted primarily for the conquering of NA, their eye had necessarily shifted. They had fought the French in India and South Africa, but NA took on the primary theatre of war.

- The major problems went as such. Britain attempted, in financial duress, to rearrange the empire, bring regulations to America that the colonists had been ducking for 150 years. It was a receipt for disaster. Traditionally the Empire had neglected NA since its inception; they had incurred war debt to fight France; and responsibilities for twice as much of NA.

- 1760 witnessed a new monarch coming to power: King George III: he was young, immature, insecure, and he suffered from a rare mental disease that caused intermittent insanity. Moreover, there was a new Prime Minister, with more immediate power than the King, PM George Grenville. Grenville, in retrospect, appears to be a bit too populist; meaning being to the sometimes emotional whims of the public. So, followed popular British public opinion at the time. Well, the British public felt that for too long the American colonists had not helped the empire, not paid their fair share. 1763, with the Treaty of Paris signed, almost instantly, PM Grenville brought a new level of statist control to America.

\*- Grenville moved to establish authority, and he used a variety of tactics:

1. Regular Br. troops were now permanently stationed in the colonies. Before they had cost too much for the empire to station in the backwater, and so colonists used their own firearms. Now there were professional soldiers, who felt somewhat foreign, as security;
2. In 1765 the Mutiny Act forced colonists to assist in provisioning and maintaining that standing army, which felt ever-more like occupiers;
3. Br. ships started patrolling the shoreline of the eastern seaboard. American merchants were not accustomed to this and it felt a brand new police force with a bullying problem;
4. Custom services were reorganized and enlarged, and British administrators could no longer send substitutes. They now had to move to NA to administer it;
5. Colonial manufacturing was limited, *on purpose*, so as not to compete w. England's. The free market of America was forced into a lesser gear and this was critical;
6. Sugar Act 1764, raised taxes generally, not on income, but on services;
7. Currency Act 1764, ordered: stop issuing paper money and to retire all that money; this killed colonial loans, which seasonal workers often depended on;
8. the Stamp Act of 1765, tax on printed documents: newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, deeds, wills, testaments, licenses, tracts, anything notary and stationary.

- All these actions were, in a sense, a way of *re-introducing* the colonists to 'the fine print' of mercantilism, which they had avoided bc they were at the 'end of the world' (on their own from the 1620s-1750s). Comparing 1762 to 1763, the Br. made 10x more on tax revenue from the colonies. All Americans resented this, but the individual states were still fairly divided amongst themselves; almost as much as they were individually with London. So, at first mass, organized resistance was elusive, difficult to find. They had had some bonding bc of skirmishing with the Fr., and they commonly disapproved of their new relationship with the mother country, but for over 100yrs they were separate entities, lacking commonality, with VA having little in common with NewEng.

\*Convergence: It wouldn't take too long, however, for the lack of commonality to whither. Americans from all colonies had some degree of frustration with the new imperial order. Americans frustration festered and it came from a variety of sources. In the north, merchants were not looking forward to increased taxes nor either constrictions on manufacturing, just the same as regular workers were upset by both of these measure. The upper-class and the lower-class, in a rare moment of harmony, agreed with each other and were united in opposition.

- In the northern backcountry there was a great deal of resentment over the 'closing of the west' as official policy. So now, on top of the class convergence, we had east and west convergence, and agreement bw urban centers and rural farms.

- For Southern Plantations they found themselves increasingly indebted to Br merchants, who traditionally had handled the South's cash crops at an international level. We know that the boom-and-bust cycle of tobacco reduced the consistency of income from that plant, and so Southern Planters by the 1860s, feared continual debt to the Br. They felt locked in an international system that put them at a disadvantage. They also feared more taxes and they felt that they would lose additional money from being denied land speculation in the west, with 'the closing of west'.

- Professionals all across the colonies, like ministers, lawyers, professors, editors, bureaucrats, they all relied on merchants and farmers as their source of income, and so quickly fell in line. Small farmers feared more taxation, and were mad about the loss of paper money, which helped them pay their loans. They knew it was not attached to a mineral, but farming often needs credit and loans. So now we also had the North and South agreeing with each other and professionals agreeing with all other strata on opposition to the new, close relationship with the empire. A near-perfect convergence.

\*Recession: Also, there was an economic recession after the war. To fight the war the Br had poured cash into the continent, creating a boom, or bubble; and when money stopped flowing in 1763 the bubble popped, and a recession was triggered. Now authorities wanted to take money out of the colonies, we know this, the Br had a desperate need for tax revenue. But, it occurred at the same time money flow was constricting and, as a direct result, jobs were drying up. A raise in taxes when ppl are losing jobs is a sure-fire way to disgruntle that population.

- So, colonists feared a permanent economic stagnation and a declining standard of living. The Br message of reduce your economy was all the proof they needed for these fears. Ultimately, colonists were accustomed to home rule, and Britain's presence after the war with the French interfered too much with that way of life. So what arose was a social and political movement against the new imperial order.

## \*2. **Revolt:**

- By the mid- and late-1760s, there was a hardening of positions on both sides. Both sides felt justified and righteous. The Seven Years' War had informed the British of a need to re-introduce the colonies; it taught the colonists self-confidence, the Fr-Indian Wars taught the colonists they could even stand their own against the might of the French Empire, and it even taught them embryonic unity. So, with the hardening of positions, in the 1706s, events slipped out of control, and the shattering of Br. NA precipitated far more rapidly than anyone expected.

\*- From 1765 until 1770, tensions rose greatly, climaxing in the Boston Massacre, 5 Mar 1770, ironically the same day the current PM in Britain was repealing most of the unpopular taxation, like the Sugar and Stamp Acts which had ultimately galvanized Americans and crystallized specific views.

- To the colonists, the Stamp Act was interpreted as: the British raising revenue directly from the colonists w/out the consent of the various colonial assemblies. They try to peer into the future, and were filled with fear. They think if the act is successfully enforced, it will open the door to a whole new, larger system of taxation.

\*Tea: Surprisingly, calm was maintained and actually tensions started to release after the seriousness of the shooting in Boston. The first few years of the 1770s were not tension-free however, and Americans spent the time looking to justify revolution and independence. At points they found bits in the Bible that implied the right to oust bad leaders.

- Perhaps more immediately tho was the writing of British philosopher John Locke, who wrote on private property and basic rights of man to concepts of liberty. Specifically, John Locke had noted that if a gov should get too heavy-handed, ppl have the right to resist unjust laws and even over-throw gov. Americans write to each other over the intellectual under-pinnings of revolution; influential Scottish writers with a whole host of governmental grievances, sometimes engaging republicanism; and some attacks on British ships. But, generally the ferment is less active than it was in the late-1760s when everything was introduced.

- Re-Ignition: But the fervor was re-ignited with the Tea Act of 1773. Britain's East India Company had large stocks of tea it was unable to sell in England, and the company was about to go bust. The gov gave the company a bunch of commercial advantages (particularly selling directly to colonies instead of going thru colonial merchants).

- In practicality this meant that a British company was exempt from taxes, as a bailout advantage, while say American merchants were not exempt from that tax. They then reasoned why are we paying taxes when we don't have representatives in the British parliament? As so a bailout for one company produced grievance in another and was hitched to pre-existing tensions.

- The response was classic civil disobedience in the form of a tea boycott. This was the most popular and largest boycott to-date, even larger than the stronger ferment of the late-1760s. The first mass experienced popular protest in the US. Women got infused into the conflict more than before bc they were the principle consumers of tea. And so we even had a convergence on gender in the opposition to the new imperial order.

- Activists kept tea from landing in Philadelphia, NY, and Charleston, but Boston's was the most dramatic: 16 Dec 1773, protestors dressed as Mohawks, protected by a massive crowd, boarded some ships and threw tea overboard. When news of this Boston Tea Party spread, other ports did the same.

- King George III and Lord North, when Boston refused to pay for damages, decide to isolate Mass with four acts in 1774. These were the Coercive Acts: Boston port was closed, reduced power of gov generally in Mass, trials held in Britain, and enhanced quartering of British troops. But, as per the laws of unintended consequences, instead of isolating Mass, it generated martyrdom among all the colonies and acted as a connector.

\*- About two years later, once insurrection had commenced, the influential writer Thomas Paine published a 50pg pamphlet entitled *Common Sense* [1776]. Very succinct, eloquent, called George a "royal brute" and essentially destroyed the colonists' rosy view of the monarchy. Specifically noted that GIII unleashed Redcoats, Hessians, AAs, Iroquois against them; and lorded over a tyrannical system. Denunciation of monarchism that more befits the 1910/20s than the 1770s.

- Americans also promote a new form of popular governance called Republicanism. 7 June 1776, a Virginian proposed full independence to the 2ndCC. Congress appointed five men to draft a declaration of independence (Jefferson, Franklin, Adams,). 4 July 1776, the declaration was formally approved. Declaration: 2 parts. The first villianizes King George. The second adopts Thomas Paine's "radical anti-monarchism" -- people's consent, not divine right is true source of power. They borrow their language from John Locke: "rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (tho Locke wrote Life, Liberty, Property).