

# The Three Phases of the American Revolutionary War

## I. THE NEW ENGLAND PHASE: April 1775-Spring 1776

- A. Battles of Lexington and Concord (18-19 April 1775).
- B. Washington's Siege of Boston (April 1775 to 7-17 March 1776).  
General George Washington's men forced the British to evacuate Boston by placing captured cannon from Fort Ticonderoga on Dorchester Heights near Boston.
- C. Failed Invasion of Canada (Fall-Winter 1775).

## II. MIDDLE ATLANTIC PHASE: Summer 1776-Summer 1778:

*Remember, King George declared that the colonists were in an open state of rebellion in August 1775, and he sent forces to bring them back under control.*

- A. July 1776, the British navy arrived in New York Harbor
  - 1. 30,000 troops
  - 2. 10,000 sailors
  - 3. 300 supply ships
  - 4. 30 battleships with 1,200 cannon
  - 5. Largest British seaborne attack
- B. 27-29 Aug. 1776, Battle of Long Island
- C. General George Washington lost Fort Mifflin and Fort Mifflin late in 1776
- D. Dec. and Jan. 1776 – 1777, Battles of Trenton and Princeton (revolutionary victory)
- E. 1777, Saratoga Campaign

General John Burgoyne's master plan was for two British armies to capture the Hudson River, one attacking down from Canada, the other up from New York City. By this strategy the British could cut the New Englanders off from the rest of the colonies. They would then be master of North East America.

- 1. Battle of Fort Ticonderoga (July 1777)
- 2. Battle of Bennington (August 1777)
- 3. Battle of Freeman's Farm, also called 1st Battle of Saratoga (Sept. 1777)
- 4. Second Battle of Saratoga (Oct. 1777).
- 5. Surrender of Gen. Burgoyne's forces at Saratoga, NY (17 Oct. 1777)
- 6. Possibly most important campaign of the war.
  - a. Convinced French to openly support the colonial cause
  - b. Saved New England from isolation.
  - c. 1st major American victory: Morale booster.
  - d. Eliminates a large British army.
- F. At the same time however, General Howe moved from New York City to Philadelphia
- G. Howe meets Washington at Battle of Brandywine Creek (9-11 Sept. 1777).
  - 1. Howe won fierce battle, but both sides suffered heavy losses.
  - 2. Washington forced to retreat away from Philadelphia.
  - 3. Howe: British forces occupy Philadelphia (26 Sept. 1777)
  - 4. Empty victory, Congress gone. This was not a war of posts.
- H. Saratoga led to French Alliance (Feb 1778)
  - 1. Friendship and Commerce: recognized United States and trade
  - 2. Military alliance: no separate peace, neither can withdraw until US independence
- I. 1779 World War
  - 1. British must keep troops all over the globe and at home to counter French if they invade
  - 2. Spain entered the war on the side of the French

## III. SOUTHERN PHASE (29 Dec. 1778-19 Oct. 1781)

- A. After Saratoga, General Howe, although he had not commanded at Saratoga, turned in his resignation and was replaced by General Henry Clinton as Commander-in-Chief of British forces in US (8 May 1778).
- B. Clinton decides to move the war south to get support of slaves and loyalists.
- C. British capture Savannah, GA (29 Dec. 1778).
  - 1. British move South.
  - 2. Constantly harassed by colonial militia.
- D. British captured Charleston, SC (12 May 1780).

1. Commercial center of the southern colonies.
  2. The Americans defended Charleston for six weeks, but in May the British captured the city.
  3. The entire southern Army -- 5400-man garrison -- was captured. SC was controlled.
  4. Worst colonial defeat of the war.
- E. Clinton returned to New York, leaving the South under the control of General Cornwallis.
- F. 1780, Benedict Arnold, convinced that the Americans would lose, moves to the British side.
- G. Marquis de Lafayette joined the Americans and got a regiment of French troops from Louis XVI
- H. By Dec 1780, British occupation of the South had lasted six months. They controlled the cities, but the country was a place of general warfare.
- I. Nathaniel Greene sent south by Washington. British followed Greene's army for six months
- J. Greene went from South Carolina, through North Carolina, to Virginia, then back to North Carolina. Greene was running from the British.
- K. Greene lost every battle he fought, but he won the South by getting the population to his side, and by keeping his army alive.
- L. **The British won battles, but could not win because they could not:**
1. hold territory
  2. cement loyalty
  3. create functioning administrations
  4. restore the authority of the crown
- M. Cornwallis takes his force to the coast so they can be re-supplied, reinforced, or evacuated
- N. August 1781 arrives with 10,000 soldiers at Yorktown, Virginia
- O. **Yorktown Campaign (14 Aug-17 Oct. 1781)**
1. Washington in Rhode Island with the Comte de Rochambeau and his 5000 French soldiers preparing for attack upon NYC.
  2. When Comte de Grasse's fleet becomes available, Washington decides upon a daring maneuver to trap Cornwallis in Yorktown.
    - a. Slips away from positions around NYC.
    - b. Moved down Chesapeake Bay
  3. Franco-American Army needs naval help, and de Grasse provides it with victory over British Admiral Thomas Graves in Battle of the Capes (5-8 Sept. 1781).
    - a. Also brings 3000 French reinforcements.
    - b. Cornwallis cut off from aid.
  4. Siege of Yorktown begins (28 Sept. 1781).
  5. By 17 October 1781, Cornwallis was ready to give up.
    - a. Cornwallis surrendered 8000 men on 17 Oct. 1781.
    - b. Washington had: 9000 Americans; 7000 Frenchmen.
  6. The Revolutionary War ended with this British defeat.

#### **IV. The Peace Process**

- A. Yorktown was a major victory, but it did not destroy British army. In fact, it still held NYC.
- B. However, after 6 years of war, the British realized that they were no closer to victory than they had been in 1775.
- C. Lord Rockingham formed a new government and negotiated to end the war.
- D. Three main American negotiators: John Jay (NY); John Adams (Mass.); Ben Franklin (PA).
- E. **Treaty of Paris (3 Sept. 1783)**
1. Treaty a diplomatic triumph for the US.
  2. Jay, Adams, and Franklin violated their instructions and signed separate peace with British.
  3. Britain ceded everything East of the Mississippi River -- south of Canada -- to the US.
  4. British gave Florida to Spain.
  5. Britain also promised to withdraw troops from US territory.
  6. British concede the right of free navigation of the Mississippi River to its source.
  7. British promised to compensate masters who lost slaves during war.
  8. The US promised two things: it would compensate the Loyalists for property confiscated during the war; it would not create obstacles to impede British merchants from recovering money owed them.