

## The French and Indian War

The French and Indian War was a continuation and intensification of a long imperial rivalry between France and Great Britain in North America. Starting with confrontations on the western frontier of the colonies of Virginia and Pennsylvania between the French and their Indian allies and American colonial forces led by a young George Washington in 1753 and 1754, the conflict widened with the dispatch to America of British General Edward Braddock in 1755. Finally, in 1756 France and Great Britain formally declared war on each other and the bloody frontier fighting merged into a larger world conflict that historians have dubbed "The Seven Years' War." Even after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, however, British forces continued to be dispatched to America to bolster the provincial soldiers fighting to dislodge the French from their forts on the western and northern borders of the British colonies. Eventually fighting extended to India and the West Indies, culminating in an improbable British attack on the Spanish in the Philippines after they had joined with the French. Britain allied with Prussia led by Frederick the Great, providing him with huge subsidies. The point of this aspect of the war was to safeguard the British king's homeland of Hanover, a small principality threatened by French and Austrian forces. Finally, in the Peace of Paris of 1763 the conflict came to an end with the near total defeat of the French and their allies.

The vast expense of the war will nearly bankrupt both Great Britain and France. The British had the advantage of a well-developed money market where government debt found ready buyers. France, on the other hand, lacked a similar capitalist-style financial system and had to rely largely on a few rich investors and on the issuance of currency without any gold or silver backing, leading to drastic inflation and, eventually, to serious social unrest. The huge debt will play a key role in precipitating the American Revolution, due to post-war efforts of British leaders to try to force the American colonists to foot a large portion of the cost of their own defense. Similarly, the accumulated debts from this war and the vast expense of the French participation in America's Revolutionary War from 1778 to 1783 helped to precipitate the crisis that led in to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

The American Indians sought tactical alliances with both the French and the British. The key difference between the two European powers, from the Indians' point of view, was that the French were interested primarily in trade, while the British, and especially the British colonists, wanted the Indians' land in order to implant settlements. The Indians recognized that the colonists posed a long-term, existential threat and fought among themselves over whether to try to strike a deal with the colonial governments, or to use terror tactics to prevent the expansion of settlements into their traditional hunting grounds. Perhaps the most important impact of the Indians on the war was their use of the ambush and scalping as tactics. European armies were accustomed to close-order marching and mass gunfire as the way to conduct battles. They soon learned, however, that the terrain of America did not permit easy movement and maneuver, and that a relatively small band of Indians and their French allies attacking from hiding places in the forest could overpower a much larger European-style force, strung out along a rough wilderness trail. The French, whose experience with the Indians pre-dated that of the British, had learned this truth early on and had even adopted Indian style dress. Despite their numerical inferiority in most cases, the French and Indians inflicted heavy losses on the British and colonial forces due to the failure of the latter to adapt to the woodland environment and the tactics it dictated. One might add that by the time of the Revolution, the colonists had mastered this approach to fighting, with fatal effect on British forces. As we will see, however, George Washington, as a young colonel in the Virginia provincial army, sought to imitate the British (and European) model of organizing his forces. He experienced extreme frustration in trying to mold his unruly Virginia recruits into a smooth-running military force. The colonials did,

however, successfully adopt the Indian idea of scalping a defeated adversary, although the scalp was usually that of a slain Indian rather than another white man.

Rather than try to recount the entire history of the war (something already well done in Fred Anderson's book *Crucible of War*), I will look at three figures – two Americans and a British prime minister – and the roles they played during the war years: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and William Pitt, the Elder. Washington's role is readily apparent. He was dispatched by Virginia's governor, Robert Dinwiddie, in late 1753 to demand the French withdrawal from the Fork of the Ohio, where the Monongahela and the Allegheny Rivers join to form the Ohio. France had long claimed the area based on the explorations of Ferdinand La Salle along the Mississippi River in the late 1600s. But it wasn't until 1753 that they sought to establish a permanent presence in the Ohio area. Their long-term strategy was to link their settlements in Canada via the lakes and the Ohio River, with their settlements along the Mississippi down to New Orleans. This ambitious plan entailed the construction of forts at various strategic points along the main waterways with a new fort at the Forks, to be named Fort Duquesne after the then royal governor in Quebec, as the linchpin of their expanding empire. Dinwiddie saw the new fort as a threat to Virginia's claim to the Ohio country (not to mention a similar claims by Pennsylvania and even Connecticut) and dispatched the 21 year old George Washington with a letter to the fort's commander demanding a French withdrawal. From this point, until his retirement from the army and his marriage in 1758, Washington seemed to be at the center of the action between the rival French and British claims to the area.

Benjamin Franklin's role was much more peripheral to the actual fighting. As a member of the Pennsylvania colonial assembly he helped raise money and provide transportation for British and American forces pushing west through Pennsylvania to attack Fort Duquesne in 1756. But then he was dispatched by the colony's legislature to London to represent the assembly's interests in its ongoing dispute with the colony's proprietor, William Penn's son Thomas, whose family's hold on large tracts of the colony aggravated relations with the Indians and rendered financing of the war more difficult. The story of Franklin's evolution from a firm believer in the bright future of the British Empire to a proud advocate for American independence goes beyond the war itself, but as we will see, in many ways the war experience showed the incompatibility of the emerging American character and the old, aristocratic prejudices of the Mother Country.

Finally, we will look at the part played by the eccentric but brilliant William Pitt, who ascended to power in Britain in 1757 and directed the country's successful war against the French and their allies, gaining in the process total British control of North America. In many ways Pitt was not a representative English leader. His family had gotten rich a few generations before, primarily due to his grandfather's tenure as a governor for the British East India Company in Madras (today's Chennai). As a newcomer to the ranks of the ruling elite, Pitt lacked the family connections and the breeding expected of a British prime minister. This maverick leader – nicknamed "The Great Commoner" – exemplified the sort of confident individualism usually associated with rising American statesmen. In fact, toward the end of his life, as the American war for independence of the 1770s began to loom, Pitt took the side of the colonies and denounced the British leadership that seemed determined to forfeit the most valuable part of the Empire that he had done so much to build. Not surprisingly, almost two hundred years later, another British statesman, Winston Churchill, looked upon Pitt as a man after his own heart. One note on Pitt: He is often confused with his equally brilliant son, William Pitt, the Younger, who led Britain during a key phase of the war against Napoleon in the early 1800s and died in office, making him as great a hero as his late father.

## **George Washington**

### **A Brief Chronology:**

- December 11, 1753 Presents ultimatum to withdraw to French commander at Fort Le Boeuf
- July 4, 1754 Mission to take Fort Duquesne ends in defeat at Fort Necessity
- July 9, 1755 Retreats after Braddock's defeat on the Monongahela River
- November 24, 1758 Participates in taking of Fort Duquesne as part of Gen. Forbes's army
- November 1758 Resigns from the Virginia Provincial Army

Washington's service in the Virginia provincial forces lasted almost exactly five years and dealt almost entirely with throwing back the French and Indian threat on Virginia's northwestern frontier. His aspirations for a successful future career as an officer in His Majesty's Forces came to naught and left him hurt and perplexed. The war against France and its Indian allies went on for another three years after his retirement, with most of the fighting taking place along the border with Canada and then at Quebec and Montreal. Thus, the future commander of the American colonial forces never succeeded in attaining a royal commission and only led provincial troops as a subordinate to a series of British generals after Braddock's arrival in the colonies in 1755. Nonetheless, Washington's less than stellar performance on the battlefield gained him widespread recognition throughout the colonies as America's foremost military figure, even though he was still in the 20's during the whole period from 1753 to 1758.

Starting in 1753, the French governor in Quebec, the Marquis de Duquesne, dispatched forces south across Lake Erie to Presque Isle (near present-day Erie, Pennsylvania) to establish a string of forts along the Allegheny River leading to the "Forks" where it meets the northward flowing Monongahela River at present day Pittsburgh. French strategy aimed to link their colony in Quebec through the Ohio/Mississippi River system with their colony of Louisiana. They laid claim to the entire area based on the explorations of Ferdinand LaSalle who had declared in 1682 that all land adjacent to the Mississippi and its tributaries belonged to France. This move posed a direct challenge to the British colonies, several of which had royal charters claiming all territory west of their Atlantic boundaries as far as the Pacific Ocean. English traders had established trading posts along the Ohio and also on the Miami River in present day Ohio. The French and their Indian allies drove these traders out even before Washington's mission to "the Forks" in late 1753. These conflicting claims to the Ohio country seemed destined to lead to armed conflict between the British and the French, despite an overall state of peace between the two countries dating from the Treaty of Aix-le-Chapelle of 1748.

Virginia Governor Dinwiddie dispatched Washington with a polite ultimatum, telling the French commander at the Forks that he and his men had encroached on territory belonging to his Royal Majesty King George II and that they must withdraw or face the consequences. Given that British and colonial troops in Virginia and neighboring Pennsylvania numbered only a few thousand at most, and that France and England were not at war, Dinwiddie's ultimatum amounted to a bluff. He was motivated in part by his own personal stake in the Ohio Company, a land speculation entity seeking to sell land in this frontier area to prospective white settlers. Washington's half-brother Lawrence as well as a number of other Virginia notables also owned stock in the company. The 1700s was a period in which public officials routinely mixed public and private business interests, hoping to profit from their official positions.

After an arduous trek through the wilderness, guided by one of the English traders who maintained a trading post at Cumberland, Maryland, Washington arrived at the Forks on November 23, 1753 but found no sign of the French, who had decided to halt further north with the onset of winter. He pressed on to the settlement of Logstown on the Ohio River, south of the Forks, where British Indian allies of the Six Nations and some English traders had made camp. Washington pow-wowed with the Indian leaders, explaining his mission, and asked for their assistance in delivering his message to the French commander. The Indians faced a dilemma, not knowing whether they should maintain their alliance with the British, or throw their support behind the French, who they knew to have a far larger military force than the little band of men under Washington's command. They informed him that the French forces were up the Allegheny River at a place called Venango, whence Washington proceeded with three Indian guides. At Venango Washington was told that the army commander, a French-Canadian named Claude-Pierre Contrecoeur, was further upriver at Fort Le Boeuf, a new installation about half-way to Presque Isle on Lake Erie. Washington proceeded up the Allegheny in freezing cold conditions, reaching Fort Le Boeuf on December 11, 1753. He presented Dinwiddie's letter to the commander, who took it, read it, and informed Washington that he had orders from Governor Duquesne to erect a fort at the Forks, but would forward the Dinwiddie letter to Quebec City. A reply would obviously take weeks. The commander then provided Washington with a good meal and an Indian escort and sent him back down the river (into which Washington fell a few days later, almost freezing to death). Back in Virginia, Washington reported to Dinwiddie that he had delivered the governor's letter and gotten a negative response.

Interestingly in view of his later fame, Washington kept a detailed journal of his trip up and back which he presented to Dinwiddie upon his return. Rather than just reading the account, Dinwiddie gave it to a local publisher who printed it up. It soon became a "best seller" around the colonies and Washington became a household name, and was considered a valiant young man who had braved the wilds to warn off the French interlopers.

The French challenge to Virginia's claims in the Ohio country set the scene for Washington's next military exploit. As noted, private interests seemed to play an important role in Dinwiddie's determination to keep the French out of the Ohio country. As one historian writes: "Virginia's campaign to repel the French 'invasion' looked increasingly like an Ohio Company project. . . ." (Clary, p. 70) British traders who had been expelled from the area by the French joined with representatives of the Ohio Company in the effort to head off a French occupation of the Forks. Even before the snow melted in early 1754, Dinwiddie dispatched a construction brigade to the Forks and accelerated Washington's preparations of an armed force to accompany or follow close behind the work crew. His orders were to build a fort there and to repel any efforts by the French and Indians to occupy and fortify this strategic point. As would soon become clear, this was a tall order for the rookie commander and his rag tag Virginia provincial forces.

The Virginia construction brigade had barely finished work on its "fort" at the Forks, when on April 17 some 500 French soldiers and Indian allies disembarked from their canoes and pirogues and began to advance on the British. Contrecoeur invited the Virginians to enjoy a hearty meal and then to depart with their arms and flags flying. The greatly outnumbered and outgunned colonials had little choice but to accept. Meanwhile, Washington's small army of Virginia provincials had not yet begun the trek toward the Forks, delayed by lack of supplies and transport back at Wills Creek (today's Cumberland, Maryland). He learned of the French take-over of the Forks on April 22 when a retreating member of the construction party rode into his camp with the news. Eventually Indian scouts arrived with further details, including an account of how the French had unceremoniously knocked down the Virginian's little stockade and proceeded to construct a substantial fortress in its place. Now Washington had to decide whether to press ahead with his rather hopeless mission to deny the French this strategic point, or await reinforcements, which might well never arrive. Recruiting men to counter the French had not been easy, since the

colonial legislature had voted only a small amount of money to pay them. As a result most of the men were the dregs of Virginia society, and had a tendency to desert when Washington's back was turned.

The thought of retreating was anathema to the young Washington, whose fame would be badly tarnished should he simply walk away from the foe. Then Washington received a poignant "oral letter" from the British-allied "half king," the Eastern Delaware leader Tanaghrisson. The chief had sent a runner who had memorized the message and recited it to Washington (through his interpreter). Tanaghrisson begged Washington to move against the French and their Indian allies (enemies of the half-king), saying his braves would join Washington's forces in an attack on the fort. Tanaghrisson also warned that the French were moving out of the fort in Washington's direction and that he should be ready for a fight with them. Much of Tanaghrisson's message (there was also a second one warning about the French advance) was self-serving, since the Eastern Delawares and the so-called Six Nations Indians (members of the Iroquois Confederation) sought to retain control of the Ohio country and thought the British would help them throw back the French . . . and then leave. But of course the Virginians and the other British colonials had no intention of departing once they had defeated the French, making the alliance with Tanaghrisson and the Iroquois tribes a transparently unworkable deal.

Washington pressed ahead until he and his troops reached a point about 40 miles from Fort Duquesne, an open meadow that provided good forage for the horses and oxen and plenty of water. On the other hand, it was commanded by the surrounding hills, making it a less than ideal defensive position. Receiving further alarms about an advancing French force (initial reports proved erroneous and led Washington to send part of his troops off in the wrong direction), Washington moved under cover of darkness with Indian guides showing the way. Tanaghrisson who had since joined Washington's small army with a group of allied Indians, accompanied the Virginians. At sunrise on May 27, the Indians led the attack on the French encampment, while Washington stood aghast at the carnage. The French contingent, led by Joseph Jumonville, amounted to about 30 to 40 men, twelve of whom were quickly killed and scalped. The most daunting aspect of the incident, however, was Tanaghrisson's personal attack on Jumonville, whose head he smashed with a tomahawk and whose brains he scooped from the poor man's broken skull ritually "washing" his hands with them. The Indians looted the camp and decapitated one of the dead, placing his head on a stick. Washington's soldiers eventually managed to restore order and protected some 20 of the French from being massacred. But the damage had been done. Jumonville had important connections within the French military, where his family had a tradition of providing officers over the years. Word of the slaughter quickly got back to Fort Duquesne, arousing angry calls for vengeance among the soldiers there.

Historians often cite the massacre of Jumonville and his men as the ignition point for the French and Indian War, not formally declared, however, until almost two years later in June 1756. It appears that Jumonville was actually on a mission to inform Washington and the Virginians that they had entered French territory and to order them to withdraw and had actually started reading his message to Washington through an interpreter when the attack began. In other words, he was doing much the same thing that Washington had done a few months earlier when he carried a message from Governor (actually "lieutenant" governor) Dinwiddie to the commander of the French forces ordering them to leave British-claimed space. From this point of view, the attack on the French violated a fundamental principle of 18<sup>th</sup> century warfare: you should not kill the messenger. Since the two countries were not formally at war, the attack on Jumonville amounted to an unprovoked ambush and hardly redounded to Washington's credit. He did everything he could afterwards to cover up the horror of the event and succeeded in getting his superiors back in Williamsburg to believe he and his forces had actually carried out a successful military action.

After the slaughter, Washington's forces returned to their encampment, known as Fort Necessity, and awaited what they feared would be an attack by French troops from Fort Duquesne. But, ever the

optimist, Washington refused to recognize the hopelessness of his plight and set about planning an eventual attack on Fort Duquesne, hoping that promised reinforcements would arrive and that the less than enthusiastic Indian allies would rally to the British cause. In the event, he proved to be wrong on both counts. Although a few small contingents arrived, the total effective force never exceeded 400. As for the Indians, they listened to Washington's appeals to join in the war against the French, signaled their doubts, and then melted away into the forest. Undiscouraged, Washington sent a group of road builders back into the wilderness to try to clear a trail toward the Monongahela from whence an attack on Fort Duquesne could be launched. But heavy rains in June and early July flooded the pathetic little fort, while the road builders suffered from lack of food and made little progress. Finally, after hearing about the advance of a French force of 800 soldiers and some 400 Indians sent under the command of the murdered Jumonville's brother, Coulon, Washington pulled back his men into Fort Necessity and prepared for battle.

The battle took place in pouring rain over two days, July 4 and 5, 1754. The French did not attack head on, thereby negating the British advantage of having several small cannons. Instead, they hid behind trees around the fort and poured musket fire into it. By the end of the second day, Washington had lost one-third of his men either killed or wounded. It was his good fortune that the French attackers were also running out of food and ammunition and when Coulon offered "to talk" Washington sent his interpreter out to meet with the French commander. Declaring that he had taken the action against the British due to the "assassination" of his brother and felt that he had inflicted enough harm on the guilty parties, Coulon said he would agree to the surrender and protected withdrawal of the British forces from the area without any further fighting. In desperation, Washington signed off on the articles of surrender, abandoned his little fort to the French and made his way back to Wills Creek and eventually Williamsburg. Coulon had sought to punish the Virginians, but recognized that the two countries were not at war and felt he had no right to take prisoners or allow his Indian allies to rampage through the defeated troops. He did hold two of Washington's aides hostage, however, pending the return of the 21 French troops that had been taken prisoner following the attack on Jumonville.

By any measure, Washington's first military encounter (not counting the attack on Jumonville) had been an abject failure. The French military force greatly outnumbered the Virginia provincial force (supplemented by a later arriving group from South Carolina). Beyond that, the French were led by professional soldiers with long experience operating in the backcountry. The difference showed quite clearly. He had been especially fortunate that Coulon and the French were running out of ammunition and food, and that the Frenchman arranged to protect the retreating colonials from Indian depredations (although a few of them were murdered and scalped nonetheless). Back in Williamsburg he offered numerous excuses for his lack of success but actually encountered little criticism and much praise for his courage and fortitude in confronting a much larger French force. It is also notable that Washington emerged basically physically unscathed from the fighting, although eventually he was to suffer a long siege of dysentery, probably attributable to the rough conditions he lived under on the frontier.

A few months later, in late 1754, Washington inherited his older brother Lawrence's plantation, Mount Vernon, and at the age of 23 he became a man of some means. Resigning his commission in the colonial forces, he turned his hand to producing tobacco on the plantation's lands. But he soon found himself called back to military service, this time by the newly arrived General Edward Braddock, who had disembarked at Norfolk on February 20, 1755, having been sent out by the British government to respond to the French threat in a more professional manner than the provincials had yet managed to mount. Braddock thought Washington's experience in the wilderness would prove valuable to him and asked him to be one of his aides de camp. Washington accepted enthusiastically, explaining that he wished "to serve under a gentleman of General Braddock's abilities and experience." He clearly saw this as a chance to

attain the royal commission that would place him on a par with other British army officers. He was to be disappointed in this regard, however.

In the event, Washington chose to serve as an unpaid volunteer on Braddock's staff. He soon found the blustery general to be a man of great personal bravery, but sadly lacking in common sense. Braddock refused to believe that the Indians could constitute any threat to the British professional soldiers. He rejected advice to travel lightly through the wilderness and to always scout out the road ahead in order to avert ambushes, the favored technique of both the French and their Indian allies. As the cumbersome supply train of his forces lumbered out of Cumberland, Maryland along the trail blazed by Washington a year earlier, his every move was observed by Indian scouts and reported back to the French at Fort Duquesne. There would be no element of surprise in Braddock's march on the Forks.

Braddock did finally take Washington's advice and break off a contingent of 800 men who forged ahead toward Fort Duquesne as their supply train followed, lagging some 40 miles behind by the time they reached the Monongahela River. Washington himself had to stay behind with the supply wagons due to a violent attack of dysentery and hemorrhoids that had laid him low. But he had recovered enough by the time the lead force had reached the river near the fort to take part in Braddock's ignominious defeat. Just after crossing the Monongahela on July 9, the British and colonial forces were ambushed by whooping hollering Indians and their French allies. The British soldiers were terrified by these tactics and fired their guns wildly, killing many of their own men, with many breaking and running to the rear. By the time the fighting was over, an estimated one thousand of Braddock's men were either dead or wounded and Braddock himself lay dying on the ground. The French and Indians, on the other hand, suffered 23 dead and 16 wounded. Most of the British and colonial officers had been killed or wounded, leaving the apparently charmed Washington as the only officer still functioning. Washington's remarkable physical stamina astounded everyone. Ron Chernow's description of the 23-year-old Virginian's activities that day hints at how the legend of Washington's invincibility got started:

Though he must have been exhausted, he kept going from sheer willpower and performed magnificently amid the horror. Because of his height, he presented a gigantic target on horseback, but again he displayed unblinking courage and a miraculous immunity in battle. When two horses were shot from under him, he dusted himself off and mounted the horses of dead riders. One account claimed that he was so spent from his recent illness that he had to be lifted onto his second charger. By the end, despite four bullets having torn through his hat and uniform, he managed to emerge unscathed. (Chernow, p. 59)

A later account based on interviews with Indians who took part in the battle revealed that they shot repeatedly at Washington and missed every time. They concluded that he had special magical powers. Mercifully, the French and Indians did not pursue the retreating British and colonial forces, the Indians preferring instead to scalp and ransack the possessions of the dead and dying soldiers.

Once safely out of the range of the enemy, Washington conducted the services for the deceased Braddock and superintended his burial, hiding the grave to prevent desecration by the Indians. He probably realized that his hopes for a royal officer's commission went to the grave along with Braddock, who doubtless would have recommended his promotion had he lived. Washington also took away from this humiliating defeat a new appreciation for the fallibility of the much praised British army. He had seen the folly of its bullheaded leadership and the cowardly behavior of the redcoats under fire. This impression would stay with him during the years to come and doubtless reinforced his belief that an American colonial force, fighting on its home ground, could defeat the vaunted British army. Commenting years later on Braddock's defeat, Benjamin Franklin remarked that "This whole transaction gave us the first suspicion that our exalted ideas of the prowess of the British regular troops had not been well founded." (quoted in Chernow, p. 61) Shortly after the battle, Braddock's very British contempt for their Indian allies drew a bitter comment from the Oneida chief Scarouady:

[The cause of the defeat] was the pride and ignorance of the great general who came from England [Braddock] who looked upon us as dogs and would never hear anything that was said to him. Those that come from over the great seas are unfit to fight in the woods. (Quoted in Wilson, p. 125.)

Thus ended Washington's third sally into the wilderness to confront the French and Indians. Upon his return, Washington's attention turned to romance, real estate, and election. He courted Martha Dandridge Custis, a rich young widow, and married her on January 6, 1759, after his fourth and final effort to dislodge the French from the Ohio Country; on his second attempt, he was elected to the House of Burgesses from Winchester, Virginia, near which he had a plantation; and, finally, he endeavored (for the rest of his life) to make his plantation at Mount Vernon a paying proposition by adopting the latest in agricultural techniques. While his marriage and political career were great successes, his farming business failed to turn much of a profit and he found himself in constant financial arrears. Given these three other preoccupations, Washington had been quite prepared to stay a retired 26-year-old colonel in the Virginia militia upon his return to Virginia after Braddock's defeat. However, Governor Dinwiddie, trying to respond to continuing depredations by the Indians against settlers on the Virginia frontier, prevailed upon Washington to accept the position of commander in chief of all of the armed forces raised in Virginia. After some hesitation, on August 31, 1755, Washington accepted this position and now had the nearly impossible task of trying to protect settlements west of the Blue Ridge Mountains from Indian attacks. In fact, the Shawnee and other tribes continued a war that the French had largely abandoned in the area to the west of Virginia. Of course their objective was to prevent the further expansion of white settlement into their hunting grounds, not to gain empire for the king of France.

Washington had to try to staff a series of makeshift forts along the frontier in the hope of affording some protection to the settlers, and he had to do this with as sorry a group of soldiers as any commander was likely to see. Washington had to threaten them with hundreds of lashes to keep them from deserting or getting dead drunk. He even resorted to public hanging of repeat offenders. Nothing seemed to work.

On May 18, 1756, Great Britain officially declared war on France, with the French reciprocating a month later. What came to be known as the Seven Year's War was officially underway. But, ironically for Washington, the main theater of action in the future would be further north and in Europe, with Virginia, where the war had its origins, becoming a military backwater. The years 1756 and 1757 brought renewed bouts with dysentery and thwarted attempts to obtain a royal commission from the new British commander in America, Lord Loudoun. By early 1758, reconciled to his second-class status in the British pecking order, he responded almost with relief to the call of Gen. John Forbes to head up a Virginia force for yet another attack on the French at Fort Duquesne. Forbes, Lord Loudoun, and Gen. James Abercromby had been named by the new British prime minister William Pitt to lead a three pronged attack on the French: Forbes to attack through Pennsylvania at Fort Duquesne; Abercromby to move north along Lake George and Lake Champlain toward the heart of French Canada, and Loudoun to launch yet another attack on the French bastion at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Washington had urged Forbes to follow the existing Braddock Road route toward the Forks of the Ohio, but Forbes and his second in command Gen. Bouquet deemed a thrust directly west through Pennsylvania as the most practicable route. This left Washington in a subordinate role, since his two regiments had to first be mustered at Cumberland, Maryland, and then led north to join Forbes's advance through the forests of western Pennsylvania. The most notable event in Washington's involvement in the attack on Fort Duquesne turned out to be yet another bloody fiasco. This time it followed upon a false alarm about a massing of French troops on the flank of the advancing British army. First Washington sent a contingent of 500 men to attack the French. Then, he got word (totally erroneous) that the French force was far larger than at first reported. He therefore dispatched another 500 men to assist in the attack. In the thick forest, obscured by smoke from heavy musket fire, the second group mistook the first group for the enemy and opened fire. The result: fourteen men killed and another twenty-six wounded. Once again Washington experienced the fatal whimsy of the battlefield. He



may have been thinking of this terrible mishap when he wrote a friend a few years later: ““Human affairs are always checkered and vicissitudes in this life are rather to be expected than wondered at.”” (quoted in Chernow, p. 91)

In the event, when Forbes’s army finally arrived at the Forks on November 25, 1758, they found only the smoldering ruins of Fort Duquesne. The French, whose supply lines to the north had been cut by other British forces operating in New York and on the lakes, had decided it was not feasible to hold their fort at the forks of the Ohio and had decamped down river toward the Mississippi. Thus, the chance for a glorious victory over the hated foe had been lost and Washington returned to Virginia and retirement from military life until he was called to lead the Continental Army in 1776.

Ron Chernow in his Pulitzer-prize winning biography of Washington comes to several conclusions about the impact of the French and Indian War on the future general and president. First, as just seen, he learned that war could “humble” even the proudest of men “leaving him more philosophic and reflective.” (p. 91) Chernow and other biographers also make the point that by spurning Washington’s repeated applications for advancement into the regular British Army the arrogant redcoats had awakened in him a burning resentment against them and the country they represented.

Finally, Washington also learned from his war experience that he could lead men into battle and they would love and follow him willingly because they believed in his courage and determination. Citing Chernow once again: “. . . it is impossible to imagine [Washington’s] life without this important preamble.” (p. 92)

## Lecture II

Stepping back from Washington’s experiences from 1753 to 1758, we can see that the British had, in general, badly botched the confrontation and then the war with France. In the long run, British victory will depend not on its land forces, but on its navy. Naval victories over the French and then the Spanish (who join the war against Britain in 1761) cut off manpower and supplies intended for the French effort in North America. But most of these victories occurred in late 1758 and then in 1759 – which came to be called the *annus mirabilis* – due to the triumph of British arms in North America, Europe, and the West Indies.

Following Gen. Edward Braddock’s humiliating defeat on July 9, 1755, at the hands of the French and a bunch of “Indian savages,” command of British forces in North America passed temporarily to Massachusetts governor William Shirley. On June 16, 1755, a few weeks before Braddock’s defeat and death, a combined British and colonial force had attacked and captured Fort Beausejour, the French fort guarding the narrow isthmus connecting Nova Scotia to the Canadian mainland. Following the French capitulation, Shirley oversaw a large-scale uprooting of the French-speaking Acadians, thousands of whom were expelled to Britain, France, and to the American colonies or (according to Longfellow’s *Evangeline*) all the way to the coast of Louisiana. They were replaced by several thousand New Englanders, who simply moved in and took over the Acadians homes and land. As Fred Anderson noted in his book *Crucible of War*, “This extraordinary move – perhaps the first time in modern history a civilian population was forcibly removed as a security risk – ostensibly came as a consequence of the Acadian’s unwillingness to declare unqualified allegiance to George II.” (Anderson, p. 2220 on Kindle).

The New Englanders main objective, however, was to capture the French fortress at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, adjacent to Nova Scotia, in order to cut off access to the St. Lawrence River, the lifeline of Quebec and Montreal. This would require naval support, however, and none was currently available.

Shirley next sought to reinforce a small fort on Lake Ontario at Oswego, New York to be used as a stepping stone toward Fort Niagara, the main supply base for the French fortresses on Lake Erie and down to the Ohio at Fort Duquesne. Despite a major effort, however, the winter of 1755 started to close in with his force hardly able to reach Oswego. The newly arrived French commander in chief in Canada, Baron de Dieskau and Duquesne's successor as royal governor, Marquis de Vaudreuil, concluded that before advancing to reinforce Fort Niagara, Dieskau should attempt to throw back Gen. William Johnson, who had been ordered to head north from Albany to take the lightly defended Ft. St. Frederic on Lake Champlain.

Johnson's advance north from Albany was part of a four-pronged attack that Gen. Braddock had outlined prior to his untimely death. In addition to his abortive attack on Fort Duquesne, and that on the French forts on the border with Nova Scotia, and a planned attack on Fort Niagara, Gen. Braddock's plan called for a strike straight north from Albany toward Fort St. Frederic. The lack of military talent available meant that Johnson, a man more noted for his diplomatic skills with the Indians than for his military acumen, had been chosen to lead the troops. As it turned out, Johnson moved slowly north, stopping to erect a "fall back" fort on Lake George (recently renamed in honor of King George II). By the time he started north to attack Ft. St. Frederic, the French and Indians led by Dieskau had taken the initiative and ambushed his advancing forces well short of Ft. St. Frederic. The resulting clash had no clear victor, but allowed the French to move further south, where they began construction of yet another fort, this one named Ft. Carillion. It was situated on a high bluff overlooking the northern end of Lake George in a place called Ticonderoga by the local Indians and the British. One interesting aspect of the battle between Johnson's forces and the French led by Baron Dieskau was the unwillingness of Indians from the same tribes allied with the French and the British to fight each other. They would only go after the Europeans and Americans and members of different tribes. Both Dieskau and Johnson were seriously wounded in this battle. By the end of 1755 the situation on the ground in North America had not improved much from the point of view of the British. The continued raids on the frontier settlements from the Carolinas north (which George Washington's pathetic militiamen were supposed to combat) drove thousands of settlers back from the frontier to refuge in more settled areas further east.

Despite the relative success of French arms in America, the French government in Paris was losing interest in this faraway contest with Great Britain. As the war heated up on the European continent, French King Louis XV and, especially his mistress, Madame de Pompadour, moved to upend England's longstanding alliance with Austria, allying with that nation's monarch Maria Theresa, and launching unremitting warfare against King George's Hanoverian possessions as well as England's new ally, King Frederick of Prussia. The British found themselves forced to provide huge subsidies to Frederick to keep the French and the Austrians from achieving dominance on the continent, but were loath to commit British troops to the fighting there. France's shifting priorities meant that the Marquis de Montcalm, who replaced Dieskau as French commander in chief in North America, would be faced with declining resources in the struggle with Britain and its colonial subjects. A series of poor harvests also greatly undermined French fighting strength. The short growing season along the St. Lawrence had always been problematical for the Canadians, limiting the ability of the region to support any larger population. Looked at from Paris, New France, as it was called, appeared to be a losing proposition. Only France's rivalry with Great Britain kept it in the fight, as well as the obvious interest of the French administrators in Montreal, who had a personal stake in seeing the colony preserved. The British colonies, on the other hand, were growing by leaps and bounds, largely due to the influx of thousands of Scotch-Irish and German settlers from the 1730s on. The French government, it should be noted, only allowed French Catholic citizens to emigrate to New Canada (Spain had a similar policy with its American colonies), with the result that they were in danger of demographic decline. In fact, not many French Catholics wanted to leave France for the inhospitable climate of New France.

But these were long-term weaknesses. France in 1756 and 1757 had the best of it in the fight for dominance in North America. After assuming command of the British forces, Massachusetts Governor Shirley agreed to allow colonial forces to operate independently of the British regulars in a planned attack on Fort Frontenac (called Crown Point by the British) and continued with the effort to turn Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario into a staging ground for an attack on the French at Fort Niagara. Before he could carry out his plans, however, he received word from London that he had been relieved of command and would be replaced by Lord Loudoun. Before Loudoun arrived in New York, however, after a two-month voyage from Britain, his second in command, Major General James Abercromby, arrived in Albany on June 25 and relieved Governor Shirley of his command. Abercromby's task was to lead the assault on Crown Point. In fact, Abercromby, a less than dynamic career officer, hesitated to take any action, preferring to await the arrival of Lord Loudoun. In the interim, Abercromby learned that the colonial forces had been recruited with the understanding that they would not be under the command of British regular army officers and would very likely refuse to follow orders from members of Abercromby's and Loudoun's staff. The situation remained in suspense until the arrival of Loudoun himself in New York on July 22. Then, before Loudoun and Abercromby could get their bearings in their new situation, the new French commander, the Marquis de Montcalm, launched a surprise attack on the Oswego forts (there were actually three of them, one worse than the other in terms of defensive capability). Montcalm had arrived in May 1756 from France with a force of several hundred French regulars. He disliked the idea of using Indians or even local French Canadians, preferring an all-European professional army. But under the urging of Governor Vaudreuil in Montreal, he agreed to use the local forces and Indians, who together with his 1,300 regulars amounted to 3,000 men, opposed to some 1,135 British and colonial soldiers. The brief (August 11 to 13) siege of Oswego proved to be a great success, except the ensuing massacre of the fort's defenders along with traders and their families by his Indian allies horrified Montcalm as much as it terrorized British and colonial defenders further east. The upshot of these two setbacks was that Lord Loudoun, who had just set foot for the first time in the New World, went on the defensive, postponing any further probes against the French until he had a chance to whip his various armies into fighting shape.

The situation was no better on the Virginia and Pennsylvania frontier. Washington and Dinwiddie's efforts to protect frontier settlements in Virginia have already been noted. In Pennsylvania, the ongoing conflict between the colonial assembly in Philadelphia and the Penn family over taxing that family's vast land holdings in the colony had resulted in a deadlock. This meant no funds were available to pay for colonial defenses and frontier settlements suffered greatly under attacks by French-allied Indians during 1756. Benjamin Franklin, leader of the anti-Penn faction in the assembly allied with William Galway, a moderate Quaker leader and Isaac Norris in the assembly to come up with a compromise. The Penn's agreed to a one-time payment of 5,000 pounds toward a defense fund of 55,000 pounds, but the Quakers still refused to support a policy of armed defense due to their pacifist beliefs. In the event, the Quaker delegation withdrew from the assembly, allowing the funding of the defense force to move forward, but in the interim hundreds more settlers were massacred, and the defense perimeter moved to within 80 miles of Philadelphia. The Quakers did succeed in arranging a conference with Eastern Delaware chiefs, however, with the result that at least these formerly pro-British Indians did not go on the warpath.

Lord Loudoun, who served as Virginia governor (thus Loudoun County) as well as commander in chief of all British forces in North America, found the lack of discipline among the colonial forces, particularly those raised in New England, to be intolerable. He wrote to his civilian superiors in London, describing the insubordination of these local troops, who refused to take orders from regular British officers, and rejected the harsh disciplinary code used to keep regular troops in line. Loudoun perceptively observed that the Americans, especially those recruited in New England, joined the forces in a contractual relationship and operated under the command of their friends and neighbors, whom the troops had actually elected to be their officers. Governor Shirley had agreed to this arrangement in order to get the Massachusetts assembly to grant the funds necessary to pay these troops. Loudoun saw this as totally

unacceptable and Shirley found himself being sent back to England with the likelihood of a trial and punishment hanging over his head. One sees in this gulf between the British and American conceptions of military service the beginnings of the eventual break between the two peoples. Subordination was just not an American trait. It is also worth noting that the troops in New England were better paid, and generally more prosperous, than the miserable rabble that Washington had to contend with in Virginia. This was a legacy of the old Yankee (i.e., Puritan) mentality on the one hand, and the fact that many of the Virginia whites were descendents of indentured servants and other lower class whites, often ex-convicts shipped from England in the previous one hundred years. Many of them were landless men willing to enlist for the small bounty they were paid, but who tended to desert when the officers' backs were turned.

After the poor start to his tenure as commander in chief, Loudoun realized he had to score an early victory over the French and Indians in order to establish his authority and to ensure his superiors back home that he could end the series of disasters suffered by British arms since Braddock's defeat the year before. Loudoun had been granted 6,000 additional troops by parliament, both brought from Britain and recruited locally. But Parliament expected him to rely on the colonial assemblies for funds to pay for the war and housing for the troops. He soon found out, however, that the assemblies wanted a say over pay and conditions of service for the troops they raised, and that they refused to force private homeowners to provide lodging for the British troops arriving to carry out Loudoun's planned offensives. To Loudoun this was another sign of gross insubordination. The assemblies eventually relented, however, and voted money to construct barracks for the troops, although they continued to insist on the principle that troops could not be housed in private homes without the owner's consent (later enshrined in the 3<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the U.S. constitution). Loudoun soon came to realize that the resistance to British military discipline and the refusal to provide housing for his troops, although strongest in New England, actually characterized all the American colonies. He warned Lord Cumberland (George II's son and head of the British army) that the colonial assemblies' control of the purse strings meant that royal officials could not exert the King's authority in places like Massachusetts and Connecticut. "I am assured by the Officers," he wrote, "that it is not uncommon, for the People of this Country to say, they would be glad to see any Man that dare exert a British Act of Parliament here." (quoted in Anderson) Thus, London was alerted well before the 1760s and the run up to the Revolution, that colonial assemblies did not recognize the authority of Parliament to legislate for them, especially to levy taxes. Loudoun rapidly became highly unpopular in the colonies, with many colonial leaders viewing him and the British troops as a bigger threat to their welfare than the French and Indians.

### Lecture III

Loudoun's chances of defeating the French should have been greatly enhanced by the coming to power in England of William Pitt, whose first ministry lasted only four months, before crashing. But in April 1757 a revived ministry with Pitt at the helm as Secretary of State for the South arose from the ashes and managed to hold together through 1761. Pitt's intention was to focus all of Britain's military energies on defeat of France in North America and in the West Indies, while paying huge subsidies to Prussia, Hanover and Hesse to fight the French on the Continent.

William Pitt, nicknamed "The Commoner," was a man of enormous vanity and energy, but something of a loner in politics. His grandfather had established the family's fortune in India, where he served for many years as British East India Company "Governor" in Madras. His accumulated wealth went into several properties in London and elsewhere in England, so by the time William came of age, his family owned estates and parliamentary seats in, among other places, the "rotten borough" of Old Sarum in rural Wiltshire. He married into another well-to-do family – the Grenvilles – and thereby acquired several in-laws who went on to have significant political careers in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century England. But Pitt did not have

the landed pedigree of the main movers and shakers of British life. He relied for political support on “the people,” which in his case meant the rising commercial and merchant class of London. Pitt also had poor relations with King George II, stemming from his friendship with the King’s estranged grandson, the future George III, and Pitt’s perceived antipathy toward defense of the King’s German possessions, to which he was strongly attached. Finally, he depended for his political fortune in the House of Commons on the Duke of Newcastle, a man who had overseen the “Whig machine” that ruled England from 1715 until 1760 or so. The Duke had no love for Pitt, whose independence and arrogance chafed the imperious nobleman. Newcastle manipulated the political machine from his seat in the House of Lords and thus had to rely on a trusted lieutenant to run affairs in the House of Commons. It is no surprise that he accepted only reluctantly the popular “commoner” as the head of an unstable coalition government, and only gradually came to recognize the “uncommon” talents of a man whose sole goal was to achieve greatness for England and himself. Pitt thought big in a time when pettiness characterized most of the leading figures of British politics.

Unlike his predecessors, and, it would turn out, Lord Loudoun, Pitt had no trouble accepting the prerogatives of the colonial assemblies. His own lack of aristocratic pretensions (relatively speaking) inclined him to view the dynamic citizens of the British colonies as partners rather than subordinates in a joint project to oust the French from their possessions in the Western Hemisphere. The disastrous course of the war against France in America in 1755 and 1756 – from Braddock’s defeat to the loss of Oswego to Montcalm – aroused popular outrage in Great Britain. Although public opinion was still not a decisive factor in British political life, the country’s newspapers and pamphleteers had growing influence and their near unanimous condemnation of Newcastle and his allies had the effect of raising Pitt’s stock greatly. This popular uproar provided the momentum he needed to carry out a vigorous war effort. He got parliament to lavish money on the army and navy, providing munificent subsidies to colonial assemblies so that they could pay soldiers a rate equal to that accorded British regular forces. Pitt authorized harassing raids on the French coast, as well, to forestall any attempt to launch an invasion of Britain and mandated the raising of a 50,000 man militia on the island to throw back any French landing should one occur. Before taking office, he had declared in a letter to one of his supporters (later made public) that “I and only I can save this country.” Pitt’s speeches in the House of Commons are known only at second hand, since no verbatim records were kept of MP’s oral interventions in those days. But, from all accounts, he was a ferocious opponent and an electrifying advocate. Winston Churchill – a somewhat similar personality – often compared his own role in British politics before and during World War II to that of the Elder Pitt. Both men’s lives seemed to be largely a preparation for their years as leaders of the British people during a national crisis leading to a glorious victory.

Pitt also knew he could rely on the City of London – the nation’s immensely wealthy banking and merchant class – to finance his imperial designs. “The City of London, and the merchant communities of the big commercial centers, especially those with interests in America and the West Indies, saw Pitt as their man.” (Ayling, *Pitt*, p. 181) He had no problem with vastly increasing expenditures using borrowed money, as long as it came from wealthy British investors who readily purchased national debt issues at a relatively low rate of interest. The expense of his aggressive policies, however, would come home to roost in the 1760s, after he left office. Administrations following his own would have to foot the bill for Pitt’s extravagance, and the landowners upon whom much of the tax burden fell to meet the huge debt payments, turned against Pitt and the Whigs with a vengeance. They also strongly supported measures in the decade leading up to the American Revolution to get colonial subjects to pay a larger share of the taxes, with well-known results.

When he finally took the reins of government in June 1757, Pitt inherited Loudoun and his planned assault on Louisbourg. Earlier in the year, (before a hiatus from April to June when negotiations on a new British government dragged on) he had sent a fleet under Admiral Holbourne to counter the French naval presence along the coast of Canada, but delays in the dispatch of the fleet, which left only at the

beginning of May 1757, and Loudoun's own doubts about the possibility of defeating the French once reinforced by their own naval support, led to the British commander's decision to abort the attack. At the same time, the new French commander, Montcalm, launched another successful attack into upstate New York, this time besieging and then taking British Fort William Henry on Lake George. (The bloody aftermath of the battle there provided the inspiration for James Fennimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*). All of this occurred between December 1756 and the summer of 1757, but Pitt was undaunted by these early defeats, including setbacks in Germany and along the coast of France, where an attack on Rochelle miscarried. In September 1757, once he had learned about Loudoun's decision to withdraw from the attack on Louisbourg, Pitt cashiered that general and replaced him with Abercromby once again. While Loudoun had been hesitant, Abercromby would prove to be even worse. When his new government was established in June, Pitt had named Field Marshall Jean Baptiste Ligonier as his chief military adviser. This proved to be a wise choice. Ligonier, a descendent of a French Huguenot family, was an elderly officer with a talent for identifying and promoting men of merit (rather than just connections). Ligonier reached down into the ranks of the British army to appoint the 40-year-old Jeffery Amherst as the new commander in chief in North America and an even younger James Wolfe to command the assault on Louisbourg and, eventually, the British attack on Quebec City, where he would die a heroic death, later depicted in a famous painting. Meanwhile, the unfortunate Abercromby -- "the least competent officer ever to serve as British commander in chief in America" (according to historian Fred Anderson) -- was brought home by Pitt and promoted to the rank of lieutenant general.

Wolfe, supported by a British fleet under Admiral Boscawen, launched his assault on Louisbourg in the early morning hours of June 8, 1758, landing to the west of the French bastion on an unprotected but rocky beach. Wolfe himself believed the assault had miscarried and motioned frantically for the landing parties to withdraw, but then realized that, in fact, the French defenders were too few to stop the British invaders, who made rapid progress inland. Thus began a long siege of the Louisbourg bastion, the largest such installation in North America. With Boscawen's assistance over the coming weeks, the French were bombarded into submission and finally surrendered on July 25. The role of the British fleet highlighted the major advantage Britain had over France in this conflict, in which blockades of French ports prevented prompt resupply of their forces in North America and a similar blockade of Louisbourg all but guaranteed the surrender of the defenders, many of whom were on the verge of starvation by the time they gave up. Pitt and Britain received news of the victory almost two months later and the country immediately lit up with celebratory bonfires and the clanging of church bells. But a few days after this good news, Pitt and his countrymen received news of a less happy nature.

On July 8, General James Abercromby (nicknamed Mrs. Nabbercromby by his disgusted American troops) attacked the French fort at Ticonderoga (Fort Carillion to the French) on a promontory overlooking Lake Champlain. Although greatly outnumbered by Abercromby's forces, the French set up a highly effective defense of their position and when the English and colonial troops launched a head-on charge, they were mowed down in a terrific hail of gunfire. Abercromby had failed to bring up his artillery before launching the attack, thereby more or less ensuring defeat. This final demonstration of his unfitness as a commander, and the loss early in the battle of young Lord Howe, a particular favorite of the British army and public, aroused Pitt's ire and consternation. By the end of 1758, Abercromby had been recalled and Amherst placed in charge of British operations on the mainland.

Two other British advances did provide some reason for optimism. Colonel John Bradstreet, a Nova Scotia-born soldier whose leadership qualities and impetuous valor moved him quickly to the fore led an expedition against Fort Frontenac during the fall of 1758, taking this important supply base from the French and thereby cutting off the lifeline to the string of French forts on Lake Erie and down to Fort Duquesne. Bradstreet's victory greatly facilitated the work of Gen. John Forbes, leading the advance on Fort Duquesne straight west through the Pennsylvania wilderness. Forbes had rejected George

Washington's pleas to use Braddock's Road (which would have put the Virginian in a key leadership position, since he knew the way by heart), and chose instead to hack his way through the Pennsylvania forests, establishing supply bases every fifty miles or so. His cautious approach meant that the mixed British and colonial force he led did not reach Fort Duquesne until November 25, by which time the French had already evacuated this position, burning down the structure and fleeing down the Ohio River toward the Illinois Country. Forbes renamed the new fort constructed by the British after the country's wartime leader, Fort Pitt.

Thus, 1758 ended with mixed results in all of the theaters of the world-wide conflict. Pitt had taken one important step, however, that would help ensure future success in America. He had ordered that colonial officers (those not holding a royal commission) would enjoy equality with their British counterparts up through the rank of colonel. This move reversed a 1754 order which had placed any British officer above any colonial officer, regardless of rank. It was such British discrimination against their own colonial people that had done so much to undermine support in the colonies for the war against the French.

Pitt also plowed ahead with massive appropriations for the next year's military effort, confident in the belief that England's booming economy could easily carry the increased debt. As his biographer notes:

Britain's rapidly growing wealth, with a fiscal system far less inefficient than France's, enabled her to budget for thirteen millions [pounds] in 1759 and service the rapid increase in national debt, while France, with nearly two and a half times the population, was hard pressed to raise twelve millions.

Most of this money went as subsidies to Frederick the Great of Prussia and other German princes who were fighting the French and their Austrian allies for their own reasons, but served to liberate George II's homeland of Hanover from hostile occupation. Royal Navy attacks on coastal ports of France and blockades along the coast disrupted France's attempts to resupply its American colonies, both those in North America and those in the West Indies. Ultimately, it was Britain's command of the seas that proved decisive in its victory over France, which would come quickly between 1759 and 1761, the last two years of Pitt's four-year tenure as the country's first minister in parliament.

Abercromby's defeat at Ticonderoga in July 1758 meant that the British advance on Montreal and the heartland of French Canada along the St. Lawrence River had to be postponed until 1759. The long winter break in the fighting gave General Wolfe the opportunity to return to England, which he did, much to the surprise of Pitt and Amherst, who had not given him permission to do so. Wolfe's eccentric personality and grandiose egotism allowed him to get away with this sort of thing. While in England he met with Pitt and the two men seemed to recognize each other's peculiar genius. Be that as it may, on February 14, 1759 Wolfe set sail for the return to Canada with the fleet of Vice Admiral Charles Saunders which arrived in Halifax on April 30, where Wolfe took command of a force of 9,000 troops, including six colonial "ranger companies." Wolfe's anti-colonial sentiments were similar to those of Amherst. He supposedly considered the American colonials "the worst soldiers in the universe." (Quoted in Borneman, p. 207)

Leaving Louisbourg on June 4, Admiral Saunders expertly navigated through the tricky waters of the St. Lawrence to Quebec where, on June 26, his ships disembarked troops on the Isle d' Orleans, opposite the city. The British did have unwilling assistance in navigating the river from a couple of French Canadians, who had been lured aboard one of the ships by flying a French flag from its stern. Presumably these unofficial pilots helped prevent the ships from running aground as they made their way up river. The city of 6,000 had suffered through a terrible winter in 1758-59 and was near starvation when, late in the winter, before the arrival of the British forces, a French supply convoy had managed to get through an ineffective British blockade at the mouth of the St. Lawrence. This meant a successful British siege would have to last long enough for the city to exhaust its recently restocked food and ammunition supplies.

The situation of Quebec on a cliff some 300 feet above the river made it nearly impregnable. Only on its southwestern side, the so-called Plains of Abraham, was the city unprotected by high ramparts, but even here attackers would have to ascend almost two hundred feet up a sheer cliff to attack. Wolfe started his assault by bombarding the city from the other side of the river and on July 31 attempting a head-on attack on Montcalm's 14,000 man army encamped upriver from the city itself. This attack was repulsed with the loss of 443 men killed and wounded. Wolfe's lieutenants, who disliked their arrogant young commander, suggested moving troops piecemeal upriver past the city under cover of darkness and then attempting an attack up the cliffs, deemed an impossibility and therefore likely to take the French by surprise. Even if the assault should miscarry, by moving south, that is, upriver, they could at least block communication with Montreal, thereby cutting off Quebec from supplies and reinforcements from that source. After inspecting the likely landing place at the foot of the cliffs, Wolfe took the advice of his staff and slowly moved his operations upriver.

Preparations for the daring assault up the cliffs took more than a month. The British troops landed at the base of the cliffs on the night of September 12 to 13, with Wolfe among the first to ascend the steep, narrow path from the river to the plains above. Although not a total surprise, the arrival of the British troops under cover of darkness threw the defenders into confusion and allowed some 4,000 redcoats and colonials to reach the top before the alarm went out and forces from the city itself arrived in sufficient numbers to confront the British. Montcalm had to traverse the distance from his encampment north of the city before he could lead his troops into battle. The British formed a well-organized defensive line and awaited the advancing French. In the first hail of bullets, Wolfe was badly wounded, but the British mowed down the French forces, including the valiant Montcalm himself. Wolfe died on the field of battle and Montcalm expired from his wounds the next day. An estimated 200 French troops were killed compared to 60 British. The French governor, Vaudreuil, and Montcalm's second-in-command Bougainville abandoned the city before the British could capture them and fled toward Montreal.

General Wolfe became a British hero, despite the fact that the plan of battle came largely from his subalterns, especially General Townshend. Pitt eulogized the martyred warrior in parliament and in years to come Wolfe would be celebrated as a symbol of British Canada, such as in the song lyric: "*In days of yore from Britain's shore, Wolfe the dauntless hero came, and planted firm Britannia's flag on Canada's fair domain.*" But the battle, although decisive, did not end the war with France. In fact, the winter of 1759-60 would see the British occupiers risking starvation as the fleet departed and left a small force to hold the city. Actually, more decisive for the British was their victory over the French fleet at the Battle of Quiberon Bay off the coast of Brittany at the end of November. Fighting in the midst of a gale, Admiral Hawke sank or forced aground much of the French fleet, thereby obviating any further threat of a French invasion of Britain and diminishing the possibility of resupplying its forces in New France. Also in July 1759, a British/Iroquois force under the command of Brigadier General John Prideau and Indian Affairs secretary Sir William Johnson succeeded in besieging and taking Fort Niagara, France's last stronghold on Lake Ontario. Together with the loss of Ft. Frontenac in 1758, the taking of Fort Niagara effectively ended French access to the Great Lakes from the St. Lawrence. Particularly noteworthy was the decision by the Iroquois to abandon their policy of neutrality between the contending European powers and to throw in their lot wholeheartedly with the British. Thus, by the end of 1759, only Montreal held out, but Amherst would soon bring the French in Canada to their knees.

The winter of 1759-60 found Brigadier Murray and the British occupiers of Quebec anxiously awaiting the arrival of spring and (hopefully) the Royal Navy. Down in Montreal, the French commanding officer, Chevalier de Levis, sought to put together a force of provincials and Indians that could retake Quebec. De Levis succeeded in amassing about 6,000 irregular, poorly equipped men and a rather measly collection of artillery with which to besiege the city. Like the British at Quebec, the French at Montreal knew their fate depended largely on the arrival of supplies and fresh troops from their homeland. And it was here



that the British held all the cards. The French relief fleet had sallied out from Bordeaux in early April and was almost immediately intercepted by a fleet commanded by Admiral Edward Boscawen, the victor at Louisbourg a year earlier. The five supply ships and the escorting ships of the line were scattered, with only one managing to escape the British. But when that ship arrived at the mouth of the St. Lawrence on May 14 it encountered another British fleet that had sailed from Louisbourg. The armed supply ship and crew sought shelter in an inlet of the St. Lawrence north of Quebec but the British ships trapped and shelled the French vessel, whose crew abandoned ship and fled into the hinterland after setting it afire.

Meanwhile, de Levis, with his ragtag army moved north to try to retake Quebec. Arriving on April 28 at the same Plains of Abraham where the decisive battle of the summer before had been fought, the French made one heroic effort to overwhelm the defenders, before they ran out of ammunition and cannonballs and had to retreat. As they fell back upon Montreal, British commander Murray's army rallied, inspired by the arrival at Quebec on May 15 of the British ships from Louisbourg and supply ships from Britain itself.

In Albany, Jeffery Amherst prepared a three-pronged attack on Montreal. Amherst himself would move north from Oswego, across Lake Ontario and down the St. Lawrence. To his east, Brigadier Haviland would lead a force of some 3,500 men across Lake Champlain to attack Montreal from that direction. Simultaneously, Brigadier Murray would move south from Quebec, pushing Montreal's defenders back onto the island where most of the town was located. Interestingly, the 11,000 men Amherst commanded when he reached Montreal included some 800 Iroquois Indians recruited and led by the British liaison with the tribe, Sir William Johnson. Despite Amherst's distaste for the "savages," this show of solidarity by the main New York tribe had a profound psychological effect on the Indian allies of the French. They essentially melted away.

The three-prongs of the British attack converged in early September, just a little more than a year after Wolfe's successful attack on Quebec. Following a brief siege, the French governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, persuaded de Levis and the other French military leaders that further resistance would be futile. On September 8 the French signed a surrender document in which they accepted their defeat, including harsh terms denying them the "honors of war," such as the right to keep their battle flags. News of the final conquest of Canada reached London on October 5, creating yet another outburst of patriotic fervor, together with huge bonfires and outpourings of public rejoicing. And, at the pinnacle of his fame, William Pitt basked in the general good feelings. The American colonies, especially the old Puritan strongholds of New England, where anti-Catholic (and therefore anti-French) feeling ran high, evinced if anything even greater joy at the final defeat of the French and the bringing of Canada under British (and therefore Protestant) control.

Unfortunately, the almost simultaneous death of King George II on October 25, 1760, threw a momentary pall over the celebrations, and, more portentously, brought to power his youthful grandson as George III. The new monarch's focus had never been on military victory in Canada, but rather on disentangling Great Britain from its ties to Germany. Most importantly, the new king and his advisors did not share Pitt's belief that Britain's future lay in the New World, seeing the colonies only as a costly burden that had to be required to pull their own weight.

#### Lecture IV

Benjamin Franklin's long and varied career intersected with the French and Indian War on several occasions. His most notable contribution to rallying the colonies against the French and their Indian allies came at the Albany Congress of June- July 1754. This meeting, intended to bring together representatives of all thirteen colonies to meet with Indian representatives and to agree on a plan for common defense, turned out to be a failure. Only seven of the colonies actually sent representatives and most of the Indians

stayed away as well. The two biggest supporters of colonial cooperation were Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts and Franklin. Although the Congress itself adopted Franklin's plan for a loose confederation of British colonies, all of the colonial assemblies to which it was submitted rejected it, as did the British Board of Trade in London. The colonial assemblies, jealous of their prerogatives, feared a general government would reduce their power; the Board of Trade, which had the responsibility to administer Britain's overseas empire, did not like the plan because it suspected it could lead to greater autonomy for the North American colonies and reduce Britain's control over them.

Prior to the conference, Franklin had published in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* what is considered the first political cartoon in American history, showing a snake-like figure sliced into segments and labeled with the initials of the various colonies and the caption "Unite, or Die." Franklin later claimed that the Plan could have prevented or postponed American independence by obviating the need for an expensive British defense force in the colonies – and the taxes necessary to sustain it -- because they would have developed their own, independent military capability more readily. Of course, this is quite speculative. Had they become more united as a means of defending themselves, the colonies might well have even more readily decided they could do without British intervention in their affairs.

Back in Pennsylvania in 1755 after the Albany Congress, Franklin played an important role in supporting the efforts of Gen. Braddock in his ill-fated campaign to take Fort Duquesne. Braddock needed wagons, oxen, and drivers to transport his cumbersome army and its supplies through the dense forests of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania on his way to attack the fort. He called upon Franklin to requisition these items in early 1755, but provided no funds to do so. Franklin dipped into his personal wealth to advance payment to farmers and wagon drivers to provide the required transport on the assumption that he would be reimbursed by the British army. By making generous payments to hundreds of Pennsylvania civilians, he managed to provide Braddock with the needed transport in record time. After several requests, Braddock's successor, Lord Loudon, finally authorized reimbursement.

Franklin earlier had been appointed by the governor of Pennsylvania along with two other members of the colonial assembly to meet with Indian representatives at Carlyle, Pennsylvania in 1753 to reach an agreement with them regarding responding to French aggression in the Ohio Country. These Delaware and Mingo (a branch of the Iroquois) chiefs sought British aid against the French and their Indian allies, most of whom came from further west, the so-called *pays d'en haut*. They also pled with the three commissioners to rein in the British traders who were selling their braves large quantities of liquor in order to take advantage of them when trading for furs. In the event, Pennsylvania did not provide the Indians with any meaningful aid, and what agreement there was proved to be short-lived, since, like most of the agreements between the Indians and the colonists, it rested on the false assumption that the colonial leaders would restrain settler expansion into Indian lands. In fact, the influx of Scotch-Irish "squatters" into frontier areas in Pennsylvania (and Maryland and Virginia) took place without the approval of the proprietary authorities in Pennsylvania, but they did little to restrain the white people's flow into areas supposedly reserved to the Indians.

Finally, the Indians, with French assistance, launched a series of raids on frontier settlements and isolated farms, killing, scalping, and taking for hostage large numbers of white settlers. At this point, in 1755 and early 1756, the middle aged Franklin assumed the temporary rank of colonel in the Pennsylvania militia and led a force of colonial soldiers against the Indians. In fact, the Indian attackers simply melted away into the forests further west, so no actual fighting took place. The militia did construct a series of crude stockades along the frontier, however, and provided some degree of security for the often terrorized settlers. An example of Franklin's humor and laid back style was evident in a letter to his wife from the militia's encampment: "We have enjoyed your roast beef and this day began on the roast veal." He also enjoyed the unanimous support of his troops, who elected them their commanding officer. After six

months on “active duty,” Franklin hung up his uniform and returned to his role as a colonial assemblyman. Although hardly a heroic George Washington, Franklin exemplified the democratic nature of the American colonial militia which was disdained by the British professional officers and by the proprietary government of Pennsylvania, as well. We might add that Washington himself had no use for the democratic (not to say anarchic) colonial militias and their popularly elected leaders.

In early 1757, Franklin received appointment as the Pennsylvania colonial assembly’s representative in London, where he was supposed to pursue the assembly’s claims against the colony’s proprietor, Thomas Penn and the Penn family generally. He would remain in the British capital until 1762. Like several of the other British colonies in North America, a wide gulf separated the elected members of the assembly from the governor, who, in the case of Pennsylvania, was appointed by the Penn’s and had no popular base in the colony. Royal governors in places like Virginia and Massachusetts were similarly without local roots, since they were appointed by and represented the interests of the Crown, not of the local people, and thus posed an obstacle to popular government, represented by the members of the elected assembly. One need look no further than this fact to understand why the colonial revolt against the Mother Country took the form of a fight against arrogant and irresponsible executive power. Taxes, however, could only be levied on colonial subjects by the assemblies, and therefore raising money to fight the Indians (and later the French) required gaining the approval of these elected representatives. In Pennsylvania, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the Penn family refused to pay taxes on its vast land holdings. As noted in an earlier lecture, they did finally agree to a one-time contribution to help fund colonial defense, but the struggle to bring their properties under the authority of the assembly would drag on until the Revolution. Further complicating matters was the fact that the powerful Quaker community refused to vote for armed defense and the assembly only managed to pass a defense bill after their representatives had withdrawn from the assembly.

Franklin arrived in London in July 1757, a month after William Pitt had finally achieved a stable majority in the House of Commons and launched his aggressive policy of war to the death against the French. Although the two men shared many of the same views and both desired to end French rule in Canada, they did not meet at all during Franklin’s five years in London and Pitt’s four years as head of government. Franklin, in fact, spent much of his time traveling around the British Isles, enjoying the hospitality of men with whom he had corresponded for some time about scientific affairs. While in London, he dealt with the exasperating problem of the Penn family’s arbitrary rule over Pennsylvania’s affairs. Thomas Penn took an instant dislike to Franklin and refused to receive him at all. Given his lack of success in loosening the hold of the proprietor on Pennsylvania, Franklin had time to study the larger picture and became an enthusiastic supporter of Pitt’s grand scheme for completely uprooting French rule in North America. In 1759 and 1760, as victory followed victory, he argued in his friend William Strahan’s *London Chronicle*, that Britain should not consider a negotiated peace with France that would include trading Quebec or Louisbourg for Minorca or some other European possession held by the French. In a pamphlet published in 1760, following the British victory at Quebec, Franklin went into exhaustive detail regarding the benefits of British acquisition of the French possessions in North America. Entitled *The Interest of Great Britain Considered with Regard to her Colonies*, Franklin argued that the North American acquisitions and the taking of the sugar island of Guadeloupe in the West Indies would greatly enhance Britain’s international trade and provide a major market for the country’s manufactures. His was a classic mercantilist argument: Britain’s manufactured goods would be exported to America in return for agricultural products and raw materials. America would remain an agricultural land for as far into the future as one could see, he maintained. It would not seek to build factories, but would instead import its manufactured goods from the Mother Country. Many of Pitt’s opponents did, however, argue that Britain should not push the French out of North America entirely, since this would create a lasting enmity with the leading Continental power, and, also that once the French threat had vanished, growing colonial demands for independence could be expected. Franklin, an avowed British imperialist at this time, argued instead that a growing American empire would eventually result in more British subjects

living in America than in the British Isles and would inevitably redound to the benefit of the Mother Country. While there is no doubt that Franklin's vaunting of a vast English-speaking realm in the New World was sincerely felt, he mistook his own Anglophilia for the common opinion of the American colonists as a whole. In fact, those in England who feared that a total French defeat in North America would lead to a growing movement toward independence there had correctly forecast the course of events.

The death of King George II in October 1760 and the accession of his grandson as King George III brought with it a period of uncertainty for Pitt and the future of the war with France. George III and his confidante Lord Bute viewed the long war as "bloody and expensive," and were especially averse to continued fighting on the European continent, where, by this time, the war was centered. Pitt knew his days were numbered, but hoped to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion before retiring to his country seat at Hayes Place in Kent. Negotiations with France began in early 1761 with the aim of arriving at a peace that would preserve most of Great Britain's gains while placating the French with some small concessions. The French chief minister Choiseul had one last card to play, however: an alliance with Spain against the British. The rickety Spanish monarchy had suffered serial indignities from Great Britain, whose nationals captured Spanish ships on the pretext that they were trading with France and held them for ransom. British textile manufacturers also had a need for dye woods found along the Central American coast, and rather than trading with Spain to obtain these raw materials, they commissioned pirates to simply go into the jungles along the Mosquito Coast and hack down the trees needed and load them aboard their ships for transport to Britain.

Pitt refused until his resignation on October 5, 1761, to concede anything of value to the French, and actually looked forward to a war with Spain as a way of seizing the valuable port of Havana. But King George's new chief minister, Lord Bute, desired to end the long conflict and he had support for this policy from the Duke of Newcastle, the putative leader of the Whigs, and similar "doves," such as Lord Hardwicke and Lord Bedford. Upon the accession of George III and the subsequent resignation of Pitt, Bedford was dispatched to Paris to try to obtain a treaty of peace. But, as noted, he found his and the new monarch's plans stymied by the alliance between the Bourbon monarchs of Spain and France, both of whom gambled that Britain was tired of war and would make concessions not otherwise available. Instead, Britain found itself responding to a declaration of war by Spain. The Royal Navy once again demonstrated its prowess by besieging and then taking Havana and the whole island of Cuba, the jewel of the Spanish empire in the Caribbean, and then launching a similarly successful attack on Manila in the far off Philippines. Thus, George and Bute ended up conducting much the same policy that Pitt would have carried out, but without the popular war leader's vigor and panache. Bute in fact was so unpopular with the London populace that his carriage was attacked as he made his way to Parliament and he needed to move around the city with an armed guard.

The failure of the last French-Spanish offensive made peace negotiations imperative for Louis XV and he and the Spanish bowed to the inevitable, accepting small concessions: for France, the right to fish in the waters off Newfoundland, the so-called Grand Banks, and the ownership of two small islands where their fishing fleets could find safe harbor; and for Spain, the return of Havana (and Manila, which the British did not really want), in exchange for British acquisition of Florida (which covered the whole Gulf Coast up to the Mississippi River at this time). Meanwhile, Britain raked in all of Canada, several sugar islands in the Caribbean, the right to take logwood off the Central American coast, control of Senegal, total domination of India, where the French had previously had a toe hold, and the recovery of the island of Minorca in the Mediterranean, a key naval base. On the Continent, the French withdrew from all of their positions in Germany, leaving their erstwhile Austrian ally at the mercy of Frederick the Great of Prussia, who soon would build his makeshift kingdom into a major player on the European scene.

Franklin and the American colonists generally applauded the Treaty of Paris of February 1763 as a signal triumph for Britain and its colonial subjects. But they would soon realize that the vast cost of the war would cause parliament to look to the Americans for a significant contribution to the common defense fund. The ten years following the end of the war would see a steady deterioration in relations between the colonies and the Mother Country, with the question of taxation serving as the wedge that drove the two parties further and further apart.

Before the signing of the treaty of peace with France, Franklin finally decided in the summer of 1762 to return to America, but, as it turned out, only for a two-year stay. Although the war was officially over, those Indians who had allied with the French sought to push back against the British army as it took over the formerly French positions in the vast wilderness extending to the Mississippi. British commander in chief Amherst refused to provide the large gifts to the Indians that they had come to expect and disdained them as “savages.” It may be that the Indians had some assistance from French soldiers who remained in these areas even as the mass of Louis XV’s army withdrew, although there is no clear evidence of this and the historian Fred Anderson discounts it as a factor.

Obviously unrepresented at the treaty negotiations in Paris, the Indians in areas that had been under French control from the Appalachians to the Mississippi took up arms in a last ditch struggle to save their way of life. An Ottawa chief named Pontiac took to the warpath in late 1763, laying siege to the fort at Detroit, now a British stronghold. Other chiefs, inspired by Pontiac’s example, screamed the war whoop and fighting soon spilled over into Pennsylvania with a siege of Ft. Pitt. In fact, for a while, the whole area west of the Appalachians to the Mississippi, and south from Canada to the Ohio River became a battleground as Indian tribes, often inspired by a new religious zealotry, attacked white settlers and British forts. The ferocity of the onslaught caught Amherst completely off guard. His disdain for the Indians and his outright racism toward the native people of America have tarnished Amherst’s name ever since. Adopting a dirty trick already implemented by some British commanders on the frontier, Amherst encouraged the distribution of blankets to the Indians that had been used in hospitals for small pox patients. Well aware of their susceptibility to the disease, Amherst hoped a deadly epidemic would sweep through the Indian communities, saving he and his red coats from the necessity of facing them in fair combat. Tired of the endless struggle to pacify the tribes, Amherst readily acceded to a request that he relinquish command and return to England, which he did in November 1763. The Indian uprising accelerated decisions in London to concede all of the area west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River to the Indians, and, in the Royal Proclamation of October 1763 King George ruled the area from the crest of the Appalachians west to the Mississippi off limits to white settlement. While of temporary usefulness in quelling Pontiac’s rebellion, the Proclamation angered American colonists hoping to settle in the area, as well as traders who now found their commercial plans hedged in by royal regulations, and land speculators (including people like Benjamin Franklin and George Washington) who now found their hopes for eventual profits from selling land in the wilderness thwarted. Although widely flouted by settlers anxious to move into the Ohio country, the Proclamation served as one of the many causes of the eventual break between Great Britain and the colonies and would, of course, be voided once American independence had been achieved.

In late 1763, Franklin found himself embroiled in the nasty quarrel surrounding the actions of the so-called Paxton Boys, who attacked and killed innocent, defenseless Indians in settled areas of Pennsylvania, both due to racist hatred and a desire to seek revenge for the many white settlers who had been ruthlessly killed by the Indians during the Pontiac uprising. Although not totally innocent of ethnic prejudice himself (Franklin frequently inveighed against the influx of German settlers, who he feared would change the character of Pennsylvania), Franklin struck a particularly enlightened note in his pamphlet entitled “*A Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County,*” which appeared in January 1764. He wrote that these innocent Indians had befriended the white settlers in the 1600s when they first arrived in what became Pennsylvania, and lived among the white population, even as they gradually died

off (a jarring note in an otherwise commendable narrative) due, apparently, to disease. The Quakers had protected and traded with the Indians, but the Scotch-Irish, with their fire and brimstone Presbyterianism, saw no contradiction between the Ten Commandments and wholesale murder of “savages.” Franklin’s disgust with and abhorrence of the backcountry settler population comes through in his pamphlet and may explain to some extent his readiness to return to England later in 1764.

He would be sent back by the Pennsylvania assembly in 1764 on much the same mission: to persuade parliament and the Board of Trade to force the Penn family to pay taxes on their vast land holdings in Pennsylvania. Beyond that, he and some other members of the assembly believed an act of Parliament depriving the Penn family of its special governing powers and their replacement by a royal governor would be an improvement. Others doubted the wisdom of trading the Penn’s for the king’s authority. He remained in London for eleven years, until the outbreak of hostilities in 1775, returning to Philadelphia an older and more disillusioned man than when he first arrived back in 1757 as the representative of the Pennsylvania colonial assembly. Like Pitt, he had anticipated that the victory over France would open the road to even faster growth of Britain’s American colonies, with settlers spreading westward to the Mississippi and north, into the St. Lawrence valley. But neither man enjoyed the ear of George III and his conservative advisors, nor did they appreciate the depth of the discontent among the British colonial subjects in North America.

### Epilogue

The French and Indian War left the British in control of mainland North America, from Florida to Newfoundland, including all of Quebec. The war had cost a vast sum of largely borrowed money: Britain’s national debt went from 74 to 133 million pounds as a result of the war. Defending this huge area without incurring heavy additional expenses led the Grenville ministry in 1765 to get parliamentary approval of a Stamp Act for the colonies, a revenue measure already in effect in Great Britain itself. Although later repealed after vigorous protests from the colonies, the Stamp Act and the resistance movement it spawned can be seen in hindsight as the opening gun in the American Revolution. The war against France had pumped millions of pounds into the colonial economies and with its conclusion, many of them suffered serious economic depressions, especially in New England, further aggravating the conflict over “taxation without representation”. From 1765 until the outbreak of hostilities in April 1775, the relationship between Britain and the colonies went from bad to worse.

Although it took nearly ten years for actual fighting to begin, the growing rancor within British ruling circles toward the Americans made Franklin’s life in London increasingly unpleasant. The low-point came in January 1774 when he was pilloried during a parliamentary hearing for his part in the revelation of private correspondence from Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson to his superiors in London dating from 1769 to 1771. Faced with the growing revolutionary fervor of Boston firebrands, Hutchinson wrote, among other things, that “there must be an abridgement of what are called English liberties” to deal with the ringleaders. Franklin had somehow come into possession of the correspondence and sent it to his friends in Massachusetts with the injunction that it be kept strictly confidential. It, of course, was leaked and the role of Franklin in obtaining the letters became public, leading to a parliamentary interrogation in January 1774. It must have been excruciatingly embarrassing for the revered Dr. Franklin to be ruthlessly taken to task by Alexander Wedderburn, the British solicitor general before an almost totally hostile parliamentary committee. Wedderburn even pointed at Franklin (who at this time represented the Massachusetts colonial assembly in London) as the evil influence that had incited the Boston troublemakers who had dumped the East India Company’s tea into the harbor in December 1773. Although he took Wedderburn’s abuse stoically, Franklin still must have seriously considered giving up his mission in England and returning to Philadelphia. One year later, however, in February 1775, he was still in London and had the pleasure of receiving a visit at his humble

lodgings from the great William Pitt himself, known as Lord Chatham since 1762. Chatham wanted Franklin's views on a "peace plan" that he planned to present in the House of Lords as a last ditch attempt to stave off a bloody confrontation between Britain and the colonies.

Chatham foresaw that a break with the colonies would destroy all his hard work for the British nation during the heroic struggle of the French and Indian (or Seven Years') War. He clearly saw that preserving British rule in North America south of Canada would require compromise with the Americans, conceding their exemption from taxation by parliament (except in the form of tariffs) while leaving it up to the colonial assemblies and an eventual Continental Congress, to govern the colonies' internal affairs. His vision of a loose-knit British Empire with America a sort of "Jewel in the Crown" accorded quite well with Franklin's own ideas on the future relationship between the Mother Country and its giant offspring.

A few days later, when he presented his plan to the House of Lords, Pitt asked Franklin to accompany him and sit in the visitor's gallery. When he spoke, he declared that any attempt to conquer America by military means would be an exercise in futility. It was simply too big and once the British Army moved on, the colonists would immediately go back to running their own affairs. Far better, he urged, to work with the new Continental Congress to establish a self-governing entity within the empire, always preserving Parliament's ultimate authority (Franklin had told him this last point would not be acceptable to the colonists). Chatham's opponents – including King George and his chief minister Lord North -- rejected his plan, which some of them indicated actually had come from Franklin. In the House of Lords, the Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, attacked Franklin directly, glaring at him where he sat in the gallery, calling him "one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies this country had ever known." Shortly after this final attempt at reconciliation, Franklin, realizing the inevitability of war, prepared to depart for America, this time for good. Pitt, in poor health, died in May 1778, just as France and the colonies were signing a treaty of alliance against Great Britain. French soldiers and the French navy would play a crucial role in the eventual defeat of Britain in the American Revolution. France's intervention in the fight between England and her colonies was motivated largely by a desire to get revenge for its expulsion from North America as a result of Pitt's policy of relentless war between 1757 and 1761.