FOR SEVERAL DAYS, WE HAVE WATCHED AND TALKED ABOUT
EUROPEANS AND AFRICANS SETTLING THE AMERICAS... THE AFRICANS COMING INVOLUNTARILY AS DID SOME OF THE EUROPEANS.

WE HAVE SEEN THEM DECIMATE THE NATIVE POPULATION
WITH THE DISEASES THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM,
AND SEIZE CONTROL OF THE LAND ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD.

WE HAVE SEEN HOW THE COLONISTS OF NORTH AMERICA LIVED,
HOW THEIR ECONOMY DEVELOPED,
THEIR ART,
AND THEIR RELIGION.

TODAY, WE ASK OURSELVES,
WHY THEY CHOSE TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM EUROPE...
WHY THE BRITISH COLONISTS REVOLTED AGAINST IMPERIAL RULE...
WHY THEY CAME TO SEE THEMSELVES AS A SEPARATE PEOPLE
-- AS AMERICANS.

BY EUROPEAN STANDARDS,
THE COLONISTS OF NORTH AMERICA WERE LIVING QUITE WELL.
IMPERIAL AUTHORITY THROUGH THE 17TH AND WELL INTO THE
18TH CENTURY HAD ASKED LITTLE OF THEM.

AND THEN, IN THE 1760S, EARLY 1770S,
IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR
-- THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR --
THE MEN IN LONDON TOOK STEPS
TO INTEGRATE THE COLONIES INTO THE EMPIRE;
TO REQUIRE THEM TO SHARE IN THE COST OF THEIR DEFENSE;
TO LIMIT THEIR EXPANSION AND PRESSURE ON NATIVE AMERICAN LANDS.

THESE NEW REGULATIONS
-- THE FAMILIAR STAMP AND SUGAR ACTS,
THE PROCLAMATION OF 1763 REGARDING LAND RIGHTS --
PRESUMABLY MINOR IRRITANTS,
RESULTED ULTIMATELY
-- ASTONISHINGLY --
IN REVOLUTION.

WHY WERE SO MANY COLONISTS
WILLING TO RISK THEIR LIVES AND FORTUNES TO RESIST NUISANCE TAXES?
TO CONTROL LAND FOR WHICH THEY HAD NO APPARENT NEED?

WHY DID SOME MEN AND WOMEN REMAIN LOYAL TO THE CROWN?

WHY WERE THE BRITISH SO SURPRISED
BY THE REACTION OF THEIR AMERICAN COLONIES?
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALLOW SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY
MISUNDERSTANDING
TO DEVELOP BETWEEN ENGLISHMEN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC?
WHAT KIND OF REVOLUTION DID THESE SO-CALLED AMERICANS CREATE?
HOW RADICAL WAS IT?

AND WHAT WAS IN IT FOR AFRICAN-AMERICANS?
FOR WOMEN?

WE'VE ASKED GORDON STEWART TO COME BACK
AND DISCUSS SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WITH US.
AND YOU MIGHT REASONABLY ASK WHAT IT MEANS
TO HAVE A SCOT EDUCATED IN SCOTLAND AND CANADA
EXPLAIN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION TO US.

WOULD A NATIVE-BORN AMERICAN SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY?
HOW ABOUT A MEMBER OF A PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATION,
LIKE THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION?

THE STORIES AND IMAGES FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
FORM SOME OF THE CENTRAL LEGENDS OF AMERICAN HISTORY
AND SOCIETY,
THE KIND OF IMAGES AND STORIES THAT YOU GREW UP WITH
SINCE THE TIME YOU WERE IN GRADE SCHOOL.
THINK ABOUT IT.
(SHOUTING, GUNSHOTS)
SCENES FROM THE BOSTON MASSACRE IN 1770.
WHEN THE BRITISH TROOPS FIRED INTO AN ANGRY CROWD KILLING
FIVE PEOPLE
INCLUDING CRISPUS AttRiX, A MULATTO SAILOR,
THE FIRST PERSON OF COLOR WHO DIED IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.
THINK, TOO, OF THE MIDNIGHT RIDE OF PAUL REVERE
AS HE LEFT BOSTON TO WARN THE MILITIA AND CITIZENS
IN MASSACHUSETTS
THAT THE BRITISH TROOPS WERE ON THE MARCH.
THINK, TOO, OF THE SHOT HEARD AROUND THE WORLD,
WHEN THE MASSACHUSETTS MILITIA FIRED ON BRITISH TROOPS AT THE
CONCORD BRIDGE.
THINK, TOO, OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
WITH JOHN HANCOCK'S BIG SIGNATURE.
HE WROTE IT LARGE ENOUGH SO GEORGE THE III COULD READ IT
EVEN WHEN HE WASN'T WEARING HIS GLASSES.

THIS SEEMS A STRAIGHTFORWARD SERIES OF EVENTS,
AMERICAN COLONISTS RESPONDING TO A SERIES OPPRESSIVE ACTS BY THE
BRITISH,
RALLYING AROUND TO FIGHT THE BRITISH AND WIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE.

BUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS MORE COMPLICATED AND INTERESTING
THAN THIS,
JUST AS LIFE AND HISTORY IS MORE COMPLICATED AND INTERESTING
THAN IT OFTEN SEEMS ON THE SURFACE.

SEVERAL THINGS ABOUT THE REVOLUTION MAKE YOU THINK.
A KEY PHRASE AMERICAN COLONISTS USED THROUGHOUT THE 1760S AND 1770S
WAS THAT BRITISH POLICIES WERE DESIGNED TO REDUCE US TO SLAVERY.
YET, HOW CAN PEOPLE WHO HELD THOUSANDS OF BLACK SLAVES
TALK ABOUT SLAVERY BEING IMPOSED UPON THEM
WHEN THEY THEMSELVES ARE SLAVE OWNERS?
A SECOND ILLUSTRATION OF THE COMPLICATIONS OF THIS PERIOD
IS THAT AT LEAST 20 PERCENT OF AMERICANS
REMAINED Loyal TO BRITAIN DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.
IN FACT, DURING THE WAR AND BY ITS END,
100,000 AMERICANS HAD GONE INTO EXILE,
TO CANADA, TO THE WEST INDIES, OR BACK TO BRITAIN
BECAUSE THEY DISAGREED WITH THE PATRIOTIC VIEW OF
BRITISH POLICIES.
CLEARLY, THERE WERE DIVISIONS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.
IT WASN'T A STRAIGHTFORWARD STORY OF UNANIMOUS OPPOSITION TO
BRITISH POLICIES.

THIRD, AND PERHAPS MOST PUZZLING OF ALL,
IF YOU LOOK AROUND THE WORLD IN THE 18TH CENTURY
--LET'S CONFINE OURSELVES FOR THE MOMENT
TO THE EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN PARTS OF THE WORLD--
The American colonists were one of the most prosperous societies
in that world.
They were certainly the least taxed people in Western Europe.
Why did these people who were fairly prosperous, living
longer lives,
go to war to win independence
in what turned out to be a three penny duty on tea?
How could such a small tax lead to revolution?

TO UNDERSTAND HOW COMPLICATED, EVEN CONTRADICTORY,
the American revolution was to contemporaries,
let's look at two different views.
these views were written within a year of each other
by two men living through the events
we're now trying to understand.

FIRST A FAMILIAR VIEWPOINT.
Thomas Jefferson, in writing the declaration of independence
which was read in public in many towns and villages
across the colonies in 1776,
thought of British policy:
(stewart reads:)

SECOND, LET'S TURN TO THE VIEWPOINT OF
Daniel Leonard
who came from a long established Massachusetts family.
The family had lived in that colony at least since the 1690s.
Leonard was a Harvard graduate.
he was also a lawyer
who had occasionally been critical of British policies.
he was as American as Jefferson.

Daniel Leonard, however, found it difficult to understand
why American colonists could get so exercised
over such a small issue as a three penny tax on tea.
He was one of those people
who remained loyal to Britain throughout the revolution.
He wrote a pamphlet in 1775 called:
"To the Inhabitants of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay."
Listen to Leonard's account of what went on
and contrast it with Jefferson's account
as described in the declaration of independence.

"And now in God's Name,
what is it that has brought us to the brink of destruction?

Has not the government of Great Britain
been as mild and equitable to the colonies
as in any part of her extensive dominions?

Has she not she been a nursing mother to us
from the days of our infancy to this time?

Has she not been indulgent almost to a fault?

Might not each one of us at this day
have sat quietly under his own vine and fig tree
and there have been none
to make it afraid were it not for our own folly.
WILL NOT POSTERITY BE AMAZED WHEN THEY ARE TOLD
THAT THE PRESENT DISTRACTION TOOK ITS RISE
FROM THE THREE PENNY DUTY ON TEA
AND CALL IT A MORE UNACCOUNTABLE FRENZY
AND MORE DISGRACEFUL TO THE ANNALS OF AMERICA
THAN THAT OF WITCHCRAFT?

SO HERE YOU HAVE THE CONTRAST:
JEFFERSON AND THE PATRIOTS
BELIEVING THERE WAS A SYSTEMATIC PLAN TO REDUCE THE COLONISTS
UNDER THE TYRANNICAL SYSTEM FROM GREAT BRITAIN.
ON THE OTHER HAND,
DANIEL LEONARD ACKNOWLEDGING THAT BRITAIN MAY HAVE MADE
SOME ERRORS
BUT FAILING TO UNDERSTAND HOW A THREE PENNY DUTY ON TEA
COULD CAUSE PEOPLE TO GO TO WAR AND FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE.
TO UNDERSTAND HOW CONTEMPORARIES THOUGHT
AND TO WORK THROUGH THESE CONTRADICTIONS
TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS ALL ABOUT,
WE HAVE TO LOOK AT BRITISH POLICIES
AND AMERICAN COLONIAL RESPONSE TO THOSE POLICIES.

LET'S LOOK FIRST AT THE BRITISH SIDE.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
UNLESS YOU UNDERSTAND THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT IN THE
18TH CENTURY.
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN LONDON,
THE AMERICAN COLONIES WERE PART OF A GENERAL WORLD PROBLEM
FACING THEM IN CANADA, IN THE FLORIDAS,
IN THE WEST INDIES AND IN INDIA.
WHAT THEY DID TO THE AMERICAN COLONIES WAS IN RESPONSE
TO THIS GENERAL INTERNATIONAL SITUATION THEY FOUND
THEMSELVES IN.

THE BRITISH POLICIES OF THE 1760S AND 1770S
OUTLINED THEIR RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS
FACING THE GOVERNMENT AT THE END OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR.

THE WAR WAS, INDEED, SUCCESSFUL.
FROM THE BRITISH VIEWPOINT.
THEY DEFEATED THE FRENCH IN INDIA,
AND THEY REMOVED THE FRENCH FROM CANADA.

BUT LIKE ALL WARS, EVEN SUCCESSFUL ONES,
UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS FOLLOWED IT.
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FELT
IT MUST TAKE MEASURES TO REALIGN ITSELF.

THE STAMP ACT IN 1765,
LIKE THE TEA ACT IN 1773,
WERE SUCH MEASURES.

FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW,
THERE ARE TWO BASIC ISSUES THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND
WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO DO.
THOSE ISSUES WERE FACING CENTERED
FIRST OF ALL, ON MONEY,
SECOND OF ALL, ON LAND.

ON THE MONEY ISSUE,
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS FACING ENORMOUS NATIONAL DEBT
AT THE END OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR IN 1763.
BEFORE THE WAR,
THE NATIONAL DEBT HAD GROWN
TO ABOUT 73 MILLION POUNDS.
BY THE END OF THE WAR,
IT HAD RISEN
TO 137 MILLION POUNDS.

BEFORE THE WAR,
THE ANNUAL AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OF BRITISH GOVERNMENTS
WAS RUNNING AT ABOUT EIGHT MILLION POUNDS.
BY THE END OF THE WAR,
THE BRITISH WERE SPENDING FIVE MILLION POUNDS ALONE
SIMPLY TO PAY OFF THE DEBT AND THE INTEREST ON THE DEBT.
WARS WERE COSTLY IN THE 18TH CENTURY JUST AS THEY ARE IN
THE 20TH CENTURY.
AND JUST AS IN THE 20TH CENTURY,
POLITICAL PROBLEMS ENSUE FROM NATIONAL INDEBTEDNESS.
THIS WAS TRUE IN BRITAIN AND HER COLONIES IN THE 1760s.

TO ADDRESS THIS REVENUE PROBLEM,
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO LOOK TO THE COLONIES
FOR RAISING ADDITIONAL REVENUES
THROUGH THE KINDS OF TAXES THAT WERE ALREADY PREVALENT
IN BRITAIN.

THE BRITISH BELIEVED THAT THIS WAS A REASONABLE THING TO DO.
IN THEIR VIEW, THE COLONIES HAD BENEFITED
FROM THE WAR AGAINST FRANCE,
BECAUSE FRANCE WOULD NOW MOVE FROM CANADA
AND WOULDN'T ENCOURAGE HER NATIVE AMERICAN ALLIES
TO RAID THE ENGLISH COLONIES.

SINCE THE BRITISH BELIEVED THE COLONIES HAD BENEFITED FROM THE WAR,
BRITISH GOVERNMENTS OF THE 1760s AND 1770s
THOUGHT THE COLONIES SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE BRITISH REVENUES
IN THE DIFFICULT POST-WAR CONDITIONS BRITAIN FACED.

THIS BASIC BRITISH OUTLOOK LED TO THE REVENUE RAISING MEASURES
IN THE COLONIES THROUGH THE 1760s AND EARLY 1770s.
IN ADDITION TO RAISING REVENUE BY NEW TAXATION SUCH AS THE STAMP
ACT,
THE BRITISH ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY
TO TRY AND MAKE THE OLD IMPERIAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM
"-SO-CALL MERCANTILISM--
WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY.

THE PASSAGE OF THE STAMP ACT IN 1765
IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE
OF THE NEW DEPARTURES IN BRITISH POLICY AFTER 1763.

THIS ACT WAS CRITICAL
BECAUSE IT TOUCHED NEARLY EVERY COLONIST,
NOT SIMPLY THOSE ENGAGED IN IMPERIAL TRADE.

THE STAMP ACT REQUIRED THAT ALL PRINTED MATERIAL
BE EMBOSSED WITH AN OFFICIAL STAMP.
THIS AFFECTED ALL TRANSACTIONS IN THE COLONIES
THAT INVOLVED PAPER OF SOME SORT,
INCLUDING WILLS,
LAND CONTRACTS,
EVERY COLONIST, NOT SIMPLY THOSE WHO WERE ENGAGED IN TRADE, WERE AFFECTED BY THE STAMP ACT.

THE BRITISH ALSO TIGHTENED UP THE OLD IMPERIAL TRADING SYSTEM.
FOR EXAMPLE, UNDER THE SUGAR ACT OF 1764, IT BECAME MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE NEW ENGLAND COLONISTS TO GET MOLASSES.
MOLASSES IS A BY-PRODUCT OF THE SUGAR PRODUCTION OF THE FRENCH COLONIES IN THE WEST INDIES.
THE TRADING OF SUGAR AND SUGAR BY-PRODUCTS WAS TECHNICALLY ILLEGAL, BUT THE NEW ENGLAND COLONISTS HAD BEEN DOING IT ON A WIDE SCALE PRIOR TO THE 1760S.

THE GREAT RUM TRADE OF THE NEW ENGLAND AND MIDDLE COLONIES WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED.

IN ADDITION TO THESE INNOVATIONS, THE TOWNSHEND ACTS OF 1767 WERE ESTABLISHED BY GEORGE TOWNSHEND, THE BRITISH CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.
TOWNSHEND WAS IN CHARGE OF REVENUE RAISING MEASURES IN BRITAIN.

THE TOWNSHEND DUTIES WERE EXPRESSLY USED IN THE COLONIES TO PAY BRITISH GOVERNORS, TO PAY JUDGES, TO PAY BRITISH APPOINTED OFFICIALS OR OFFICIALS APPOINTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNORS IN THE COLONIES.

ALSO, UNDER THESE ACTS, ALL THOSE COLONISTS WHO FELL OUT OF GOOD FAVOR WITH THE IMPERIAL ECONOMIC REGULARS OR CUSTOMS LAWS, COULD BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN VICE ADMIRALTY COURTS.

THESE WERE COURTS SET UP UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE BRITISH NAVY IN NORTH AMERICA.
THE KEY POINT HERE IS THAT THOSE ACCUSED OF BREAKING THE CUSTOMS LAWS, WERE TO BE TRIED IN THESE COURTS WITHOUT BENEFIT OF JURY;

THE AMERICAN COLONISTS SAW THIS AS AN UNDERMINING OF THE RIGHT TO TRIAL BY JURY.

MORE GENERALLY, THE BRITISH IN THE LATE 1760S INTENDED TO USE THE NEW REVENUE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF BRITISH CUSTOMS OFFICIALS.
A BOARD OF CUSTOMS COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTH AMERICA WAS ESTABLISHED.
ALL THESE MEASURES WERE PASSED BY THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE 1760S TO SOLVE THE POST-WAR REVENUE PROBLEM.

A SECOND BIG ISSUE FOR THE BRITISH IN THE 1760S AND THE 1770S WAS WHAT TO DO WITH THE NEWLY-CONQUERED TERRITORIES, WON FROM THE FRENCH IN CANADA DURING THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR. THIS WAS A LAND ISSUE FACING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

THE AMERICAN COLONISTS EXPECTED THAT ONCE THE FRENCH HAD BEEN DEFEATED...
THAT AMERICAN SETTLERS COULD MOVE
INTO THE OHIO AND THE GREAT LAKES COUNTRIES.

THE BRITISH, HOWEVER, HAD MISGIVINGS ABOUT THIS,
ABOVE ALL, THEY WERE AFFECTED BY THE VIEWS AND ACTIONS
OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN THIS REGION.
A DANGER SIGNAL FOR THE BRITISH
WAS THE UPRISING IN 1763 OF PONTIAC,
A CHIEF FROM THE DETROIT AREA.

PONTIAC WAS CONVINCED NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES,
TRADITIONALLY WHO HAD WORKED WITH THE FRENCH IN CANADA,
PARTICULARLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE FUR TRADE,
WOULD SUFFER IF AMERICAN SETTLEMENT MOVED INTO THE AREA.
THE BRITISH ANTICIPATED A SERIES OF FRONTIER WARS
BETWEEN THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN THE REGION
AND AMERICAN SETTLERS AS THEY MOVED INTO THAT TERRITORY.

THE LAST THING THE BRITISH WANTED IN THE 1760S
WAS ANOTHER LARGE-SCALE SERIES OF WARS IN NORTH AMERICA,
WHICH A BRITISH TAXPAYER WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR.

IN ADDITION TO THAT CONCERN, THE BRITISH WERE ALSO ANXIOUS
TO KEEP THE FUR TRADE PROFITABLE FOR THE NEW CANADIAN COLONY.
IF WHITE SETTLERS MOVED INTO THIS REGION,
IT WOULD UNDERMINE NATIVE AMERICAN SOCIETIES
AND UNDERMINE THE FUR TRADE.

BECAUSE OF THE FEAR OF WAR AND CONSEQUENTIAL EXPENSE,
AND BECAUSE OF THE DESIRE TO KEEP THE FUR TRADE EFFECTIVE,
THE BRITISH DECIDED IN 1763 TO PROHIBIT AMERICAN SETTLERS
FROM MOVING INTO THIS AREA
- AT LEAST UNTIL TREATIES AND LAND ARRANGEMENTS
HAD BEEN MADE WITH THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES.

THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM FOR THE BRITISH
WAS TO JOIN THE OHIO COUNTRY AND THE GREAT LAKES COUNTRY
WITH ITS NEW COLONY OF CANADA.
THE AREA HAD BEEN TRADITIONALLY RUN BY THE FRENCH IN QUEBEC.
THE BRITISH, BY THE QUEBEC ACT OF 1774,
KEPT THAT TERRITORY UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE NEW COLONY
IN CANADA.

AT THE END OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR
WHEN AMERICANS HAD EXPECTED TO FLOOD
INTO THE OHIO COUNTRY AND THE GREAT LAKES COUNTRY
BRITISH POLICY PROHIBITED THEM FROM DOING SO
AND GAVE CONTROL OF THAT TERRITORY
TO THE BRITISH-CONTROLLED GOVERNMENT IN CANADA.

INTERESTINGLY, MANY NATIVE AMERICANS RESPONDED POSITIVELY
TO THIS BRITISH POLICY IN THE 1760S AND 1770S.

FOR EXAMPLE, JOSEPH BRANDT, A MOHAWK CHIEF,
JOINED WITH THE BRITISH AND Fought AGAINST AMERICANS
DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR,
AN INDICATION THAT IN THE LONG-TERM VIEW OF THINGS,
IT WAS BRITISH RATHER THAN AMERICAN POLICY
WHICH WAS MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD NATIVE AMERICANS
IN THESE MIDDLE DECADES OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

THese were the british policies on the money and land issues
WHICH SO DISTURBED AMERICAN COLONISTS IN THE 1760S AND 1770S.

SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS TO ASK ARE:
WHY ON EARTH THE BRITISH DID THESE THINGS?
HOW DID THEY THINK THEY WERE JUSTIFIED?
WHAT WERE THE BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COLONIES?

A KEY POINT TO UNDERSTAND FROM THE BRITISH PERSPECTIVE IS,
THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD EVERY RIGHT TO DO WHAT THEY WERE DOING
IN TERMS OF RAISING REVENUE AND CONTROLLING THE WESTERN FRONTIER
OF THE BRITISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA.

IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE TO ANY BRITISH PERSON
HOW THE GOVERNMENT COULD ACT UNLESS IT ACTED THROUGH PARLIAMENT.
THE KING COULDN'T MAKE LAWS ON HIS OWN.
THE ONLY WAY THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD FUNCTION
WAS BY PASSING PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATION,
PARLIAMENTARY STATUTES.
FROM THE BRITISH POINT OF VIEW,
THE COLONIES DENIED THEY COULD ACCEPT
OR BE UNDER PARLIAMENTARY STATUTES,
THE BRITISH BELIEVED THE COLONIES
WERE UNDER NO BRITISH AUTHORITY WHATSOEVER.

A SECOND POINT IS:
WHEN THE AMERICAN COLONIES HAD BEEN FOUNDED BACK IN THE 17TH
CENTURY,
PARLIAMENT DIDN'T HAVE A PARAMOUNT ROLE IN THE BRITISH
CONSTITUTION.
FOR EXAMPLE, DURING THE 17TH CENTURY,
FOR 11 OR 12 YEARS AT A TIME,
PARLIAMENT DIDN'T EVEN MEET.
BUT EVER SINCE THE BRITISH REVOLUTION OF 1688,
PARLIAMENT HAD BEEN MEETING EVERY YEAR.
IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT GOVERNMENT COULD FUNCTION
WITHOUT PARLIAMENT.
PASSING PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATION FOR THE COLONIES
WAS VIEWED BY THE BRITISH AS NATURAL AS
PASSING PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN.

MOREOVER, IN THE 18TH CENTURY, THE BRITISH ELECTORATE WAS TINY.
THERE WERE LARGE AND IMPORTANT SECTIONS OF BRITISH SOCIETY
THAT HAD NO DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE GROWING TOWN OF MANCHESTER IN THE NORTH
OF ENGLAND
HAD NO MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

THE BRITISH CONCEIVED OF PARLIAMENT
AS REPRESENTING BRITISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE
IN TERMS OF INTEREST GROUPS IN AREAS
RATHER THAN MAKING A HEAD COUNT OF INDIVIDUAL DISTRICTS
REPRESENTED.
IN THEIR VIEW, PARLIAMENT DID REPRESENT ALL THE BRITISH PEOPLE
WHETHER THEY'RE LIVING IN SCOTLAND,
WALES,
IRELAND
OR NORTH AMERICA.

A FINAL POINT TO MAKE ABOUT THE BRITISH
BEFORE TURNING TO THE AMERICAN RESPONSE,
IS THAT THROUGH THE 1760S,
THERE WERE A SERIES OF WEAK GOVERNMENTS.
THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF THE POLITICIANS' DISTRUST OF GEORGE THE III.
AFTER HE CAME TO THE THRONE IN 1760.
AS A CONSEQUENCE, WHEN THE COLONISTS PROTESTED IN THE 1760S,
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT Backed Down.
THEY RECONSIDERED THE STAMP ACT.
THEY DID AWAY WITH MOST OF THE TOWNSHEND DUTIES.
HOWEVER, IN 1770, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE CAME TO
THE THRONE,
GEORGE THE III GOT A STRONG PRIME MINISTER.
LORD NORTH CONTROLLED AN EFFECTIVE MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE
OF COMMONS.
THIS MEANT THAT WHEN AMERICAN COLONISTS PROTESTED AGAIN
AS THEY WERE TO DO IN THE BOSTON TEA PARTY,
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BACK DOWN.
FROM THE BRITISH POINT OF VIEW,
ALL THESE MEASURES WERE SIMPLY AN AD HOC RESPONSE,
A SERIES OF MEASURES, TO THEIR POST-WAR PROBLEMS.
MANY AMERICAN COLONISTS, HOWEVER,
VIEWED THESE MEASURES QUITE DIFFERENTLY
AS WE SAW EARLIER IN THOMAS JEFFERSON'S SPEECH.
LET'S LOOK AT THE AMERICAN RESPONSE
TO UNDERSTAND WHY THEY WERE SO DISTURBED
BY WHAT THE BRITISH SIMPLY CONSIDERED
A SERIES OF EXPEDIENT POLICIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1763 WAR.
FIRST, LET'S TURN TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES.
FROM THE COLONIAL POINT OF VIEW,
THESE BRITISH MEASURES PRESENTED CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGERS
TO THE LOCAL WAY THAT POLITICS AND CONSTITUTIONS HAD WORKED
IN THE 13 SEPARATE COLONIES IN THE PREVIOUS 80 OR 90 YEARS.
The Americans viewed these policies not simply as revenue measures,
or not simply as measures to regulate the land in the west,
but as measures designed to undermine the local liberties
they had built up in the colonies over the previous 80 years.
The colonial assemblies were a key point for the Americans.
Each colony had a British appointed governor
and a locally-elected assembly.
The American colonists feared
that if the British managed to raise revenue,
they would use that revenue to pay the governors,
to pay the officials who the governor appointed.
Even Lord North began to pay judges appointed in the colonies in
1772.
Gradually, the entire colonial government would be taken over
by British officials supported by taxes
that were raised by British parliamentary legislation.
FROM THE COLONIAL POINT OF VIEW,
THIS WOULD COMPLETELY UNDERMINE ASSEMBLIES
— THE LOCALLY-ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS
WHICH UP TO THIS TIME,
HAD BEEN SEEN AS EXERCISING SOME CHECKING POWER
ON THE BRITISH APPOINTED GOVERNORS.
THE PROSPECT FACING THE COLONISTS
WAS A LOSS OF THEIR ABILITY TO CHECK EXECUTIVE POWER
WHICH WOULD BE IN THE HANDS OF BRITAIN.
THIS ASPECT LED THE AMERICAN COLONIES TO CLAIM THE BRITISH WERE TRYING TO REDUCE THEM TO SLAVERY. THEY WOULD HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THEIR POLITICAL LIFE, NO CONTROL OVER THEIR GOVERNMENT.

A SECOND AMERICAN RESPONSE HAD TO DO WITH THE LAND ISSUE IN THE WEST. CLEARLY, THE AMERICAN COLONISTS WERE DISAPPOINTED ABOUT NOT BEING PERMITTED TO EXPAND INTO THE OHIO AND GREAT LAKES COUNTRY. BUT THE QUESTION WENT BEYOND THAT. THIS COUNTRY HAD BEEN GIVEN TO CANADA. CANADA HAD A POPULATION LARGELY OF FRENCH-SPEAKING PEOPLE. THE BRITISH SET UP A REGIME IN CANADA WITH NO REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS WHATSOEVER, PARTLY BECAUSE THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE FRENCH IN CANADA.

IN ADDITION TO A NON-REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN CANADA, THE BRITISH MAINTAINED MASSIVE GARRISONS IN CANADA AS A WAY TO OVER-AWSE THE FRENCH POPULATION, BUT ALSO AS A WAY TO KEEP CONTROL OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN THE AREA FOR TRADE.

THE AMERICANS THEN LINKED THESE TWO ISSUES. IN CANADA, THE BRITISH WERE SETTING UP A COLONIAL GOVERNMENT WITH NO REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS, A GOVERNMENT THAT WAS SUPPORTED BY AN ARMY. AMERICA CONCLUDED THAT THE BRITISH INTENDED TO DO THE SAME THING IN ALL COLONIES ALONG THE EASTERN SEABOARD -- IF THEY COULD GET AWAY WITH IT.


THE KEY ISSUE FOR THE COLONISTS WAS NOT SO MUCH ECONOMIC DISTRESS, AS WAS THE FEAR THAT THESE NEW DEPARTURES IN BRITISH POLICY WOULD PUT CONSTRAINTS ON AMERICAN ECONOMIC GROWTH; FOR EXAMPLE, PROHIBIT THEM TRADING TO THE FRENCH WEST INDIES. ALSO, UNDER THE TERMS OF THE TOWNESEND DUTIES, THE COLONISTS HAD TO PUT UP QUITE SIZEABLE BONDS TO MAKE SURE THEY ADHERED TO THE CUSTOMS LAWS.

IN ADDITION TO THAT, THE BRITISH MADE IT DIFFICULT UNDER THE CURRENCY ACT OF 1764 FOR THE LOCAL COLONISTS TO ISSUE THEIR OWN PAPER MONEY, TO MAKE TRADE WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY.

REMEMBER, TOO, THAT BECAUSE OF LOCAL POPULATION GROWTH, AND THE DIVERSIFICATION OF MARKETS IN THE COLONIES, IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR COLONISTS TO THINK ABOUT BEING INDEPENDENT FROM THE BRITISH IMPERIAL ECONOMIC NETWORK.

IN THE ECONOMIC REALM, THE FEAR OF MORE CONSTRAINTS BEING IMPOSED, AND THE BELIEF THAT THEY COULD GO IT ALONE, WORKED ALONG WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE TO MAKE MANY COLONISTS BELIEVE THAT IT WAS TIME TO MAKE A BREAK.
FROM THIS INCREASINGLY THREATENING IMPERIAL SYSTEM.

AS AMERICAN PATRIOT COLONISTS
ORGANIZED RESISTANCE AGAINST THE BRITISH POLICIES,
AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE BEGAN TO BE TRANSFORMED.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY WAS ESPECIALLY INTENSE IN THE URBAN AREAS
--IN TOWNS LIKE CHARLESTON, PHILADELPHIA, NEW YORK, BOSTON.
IN THOSE URBAN CENTERS,
CROWDS DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE STAMP ACT,
BURNED STAMP ACT OFFICES,
INTIMIDATED STAMP ACT OFFICERS,
AND MADE THE ACT UNENFORCEABLE
IN MANY PLACES ALONG THE SEABOARD OF THE 13 COLONIES.

IN ADDITION TO THAT, SONS OF LIBERTY ORGANIZATIONS WERE
ESTABLISHED.
BY AND LARGE, THESE WERE MIDDLE-CLASS ORGANIZATIONS
COMPRISING MERCHANTS AND LAWYERS
WHO TOOK THE LEAD IN THE PROTEST AGAINST BRITAIN,
PARTICULARLY IN TOWNS LIKE BOSTON.

COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE WERE SET UP,
SOMETIMES BY TOWN MEETINGS,
AS IN THE BOSTON TOWN MEETING IN WHICH SAM ADAMS PLAYED A CRITICAL
ROLE,
OR SOMETIMES BY A LOCAL COLONIAL ASSEMBLY.
NETWORKS BEGAN TO BE BUILT UP BETWEEN COLONIES
WHERE NONE HAD EXISTED PREVIOUSLY.

EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT IN THE LONG-RUN NATURE OF AMERICAN POLITICAL
CULTURE,
POLITICAL MOBILIZATION BEGAN TO TAKE PLACE
OUTSIDE THE NORMAL, MALE PROPERTY-OWNING CLASSES
WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN POLITICS UP TO THAT POINT.

EVEN WOMEN,
PROPERTYLESS WHITES
AND SLAVES TO SOME EXTENT,
PARTicipated in the demonstrations against BRITAIN.
IF THEY didn'T PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS,
THESE GROUPS AT LEAST BECAME POLITICALLY AWARE FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

VALUABLE INSIGHT CAN BE GAINED
FROM A LETTER THAT SALLY FRANKLIN WROTE TO HER FATHER, BENJAMIN,
WHO WAS A COLONIAL AGENT IN LONDON
AT THE TIME OF THE STAMP ACT CRISIS.
SALLY FRANKLIN WROTE:

"NOTHING ELSE IS TALKED OF.
THE DUTCH TALK OF THE STAMP ACT,
THE NEGROES OF THE TAMP.
IN SHORT, EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY."

WHEN SALLY NAMED THE DUTCH,
SHE WAS REFERRING TO THE GERMANS IN PENNSYLVANIA.
IN SHORT, HER MESSAGE TO HER FATHER WAS THAT,
WHEN IT CAME TO THE MAJOR EVENTS OF THE DAY,
SUCH AS THE STAMP ACT,
"EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY."
IN FACT, "EVERYBODY HAD SOMETHING TO SAY"
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

WOMEN OF THE COLONIES WERE VERY VISIBLE PARTICIPANTS IN THE POLITICAL PROTEST AGAINST BRITAIN.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN MANY TOWNS ALONG THE EASTERN SEABORD, YOUNG WOMEN BEGAN TO SET UP SPINNING WHEELS IN PUBLIC TO SPIN HOMESPUN CLOTH.

THEY HOPED TO ENCOURAGE AMERICANS TO BUY AMERICAN GOODS RATHER THAN THE IMPORTED, TAXED GOODS FROM BRITAIN.

AMERICAN WOMEN ALSO TOOK A ROLE IN MAKING HERBAL TEAS SO THAT AMERICANS WOULD NOT HAVE TO DRINK THE TEA FROM INDIA AND CHINA IMPORTED BY THE BRITISH EAST INDIES COMPANY.

IT WAS IN THIS SETTING THAT MANY WOMEN BEGAN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

GIVEN THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN 18TH CENTURY AMERICAN AND BRITISH SOCIETY,

MANY COLONISTS RIDICULED WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN POLITICAL PROTEST.

AN INTERESTING RESPONSE TO THIS RIDICULE CAME FROM A GROUP OF NEW ENGLAND WOMEN WHO DECLARED:

"INFERIOR AND ABUSIVE SARCASM AND PERSONAL INJECTIVE AND LOW WIT,
WE GLORY TO BE BUT INFERIOR IN VERACITY, SINCERITY,
LOVE OF VIRTUE, OF LIBERTY AND OUR COUNTRY,
WE WOULD NOT WILLINGLY BE TO ANY."

THIS ILLUSTRATES HOW NO ONE IN 1763 DREAMED THAT THE PROTEST AGAINST BRITAIN WOULD TRANSFORM AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE.

IN THE PROCESS OF PROTEST AGAINST THE VARIOUS BRITISH MEASURES, THINGS WERE BEGINNING TO HAPPEN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY THAT WERE UNEXPECTED BUT MOMENTOUS.

THIS WAS THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE BRITISH POLICIES.

ON THE ONE HAND,

THE BRITISH DEVISED A SERIES OF STRATAGEMS WHICH THEY HOPED WOULD HELP WITH THE POST-WAR IMPERIAL PROBLEMS.

ON THE OTHER HAND,

THE AMERICAN COLONISTS OR AT LEAST THE MAJORITY OF THEM, SAW THESE AS DIRECTLY THREATENING TO THEIR LOCAL CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

WHAT KIND OF BROADER ISSUES AND QUESTIONS CAN WE ASK ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION?

WHAT KIND OF IMPACT DID IT HAVE BOTH IN THE 18TH CENTURY AND RIGHT DOWN TO THE PRESENT IN THIS COUNTRY?

THE FIRST POINT I'D LIKE TO MAKE --AND IT'S PRETTY WELL ACCEPTED NOWAYS--

ALTHOUGH IT WAS CONTROVERSIAL FOR A TIME-- IS THAT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS NOT A RADICAL REVOLUTION.

IT WASN'T A REVOLUTION OF THE OPPRESSED AND THE DOWNTRODDEN.

THINK OF THE GREAT WORLD REVOLUTIONS IN MODERN HISTORY. . .

THE FRENCH IN 1789,

THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA IN 1917,

THE MANY UPRISING BY THIRD WORLD PEOPLE AGAINST IMPERIAL POWER

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IN THE COURSE OF THE 20TH CENTURY... IN ALL THOSE CASES YOU COULD POINT TO A SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION THAT WAS NEAR STARVATION CONDITIONS, OR THAT WAS GROUNDED DOWN BY THE FACTORY SYSTEM IN ST. PETERSBURG IN RUSSIA IN 1917. SETTING ASIDE THE SLAVE POPULATION FOR THE TIME BEING, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO FIND ANY SEGMENT OF THE COLONIAL POPULATION THAT WAS OPPRESSED. IN THAT SENSE, THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS CONSERVATIVE COMPARED WITH THE GREAT WORLD REVOLUTIONS OF THE LATE 18TH, 19TH, AND 20TH CENTURIES. AMERICANS--EUROPEAN AMERICANS AT LEAST--WERE SIMPLY A BETTER OFF SOCIETY THAN MOST OTHER SECTIONS OF WESTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

THE REVOLUTION WAS CONSERVATIVE IN THE SENSE THAT IT WAS NOT A REVOLUTION BY PEOPLE WHO WERE ECONOMICALLY DOWNTRODDEN, BUT A REVOLUTION BY PEOPLE WHO WERE GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS, AND ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, WHICH THEY BELIEVED WERE THREATENED BY BRITISH POLICIES.

HOWEVER, IF WE CAN DESCRIBE THE ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTION IN TERMS OF FEARS ABOUT TRADITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT IN THE COURSE OF PROTESTING AGAINST BRITAIN, AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE DID BEGIN TO CHANGE. NEW GROUPS BEGAN TO ENTER POLITICS. PROPERTYLESS WHITES AND WOMEN PARTICIPATED IN THE PROTEST AGAINST BRITAIN. HOWEVER, THE CHALLENGE AGAINST BRITAIN, PARTICULARLY BY 1775 AND 1776-- WAS WHETHER AMERICANS COULD CONTINUE ALLEGIANCE TO GEORGE THE III.

IT WAS A QUESTION OF PATRIARCHY, OF A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY DOMINATED BY ONE MAN, A KING, OF WHETHER THAT KIND OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION WAS VALID.

TOM PAINE WROTE A BEST-SELLING BOOK IN 1776 CALLED COMMON SENSE, IN WHICH HE WONDERED ALOUD WHY SOCIETY SHOULD DEFER TO THE LEADERSHIP OF ONE MAN IN THE FORM OF A KING.

WE'VE ALREADY SEEN IN THE CASE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF LIBERTY HOW WOMEN WERE BEGINNING TO ENTER POLITICS IN NEW WAYS IN THE 1760S.

WHILE THE ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION MAY HAVE BEEN CONSERVATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL IN THE COURSE OF THE REVOLUTION, AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE BEGAN TO BECOME MORE RADICAL.

THERE'S ONE POINT THAT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH CENTURY, REPUBLICANISM HAD A VERY SPECIFIC MEANING IN AMERICAN COLONIES. ESPECIALLY, REPUBLICANISM INVOLVED THE PARTICIPATION OF ONLY WHITE, MALE PROPERTY HOLDERS, ON THE GROUNDS THAT ONLY THOSE MEN WERE STRONG AND INDEPENDENT ENOUGH TO RESIST THE POWER OF
THE CROWN,
AND AT THE SAME TIME, STRONG AND INDEPENDENT ENOUGH
TO RESIST THE POWER OF THE PROPERTYLESS, THE
DANGEROUS DEMOCRACY.

WOMEN COULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS
BECAUSE THEY WERE REGARDED AS DEPENDENT.
WHITE MALES WHO HAD NO PROPERTY COULDN'T PARTICIPATE
BECAUSE THEY WERE REGARDED AS TOO SELFISH AND DEPENDENT.
OBVIOUSLY, DEPENDENT SLAVES COULDN'T PARTICIPATE.

POLITICAL CULTURE AT THE OUTSET
--THE REPUBLICAN POLITICAL CULTURE--
ENVISAGED A CIVIC-MINDED GROUP OF PROPERTY-OWNING MALES
RESISTING THE TYRANNY OF THE CROWN,
AND SETTING UP NEW REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS
WHICH PRESERVED THE LIBERTY OF INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN AMERICAN
COLONIES.

WHILE REFLECTING THIS CONSERVATIVE MID-18TH CENTURY DEFINITION OF
REPUBLICANISM,
THE REVOLUTION RAISED MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT POLITICS AND SOCIETY
AND HOW BOTH OUGHT TO BE ORGANIZED.

THIS THEN WAS THE GREAT PARADOX OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION,
ITS ORIGINS WERE LIMITED AND CONSERVATIVE,
CONFINED TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL WORLD OF 18TH CENTURY.
BUT THE BREAK FROM BRITAIN,
THE PROTEST AGAINST BRITISH POLICIES,
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KING'S AUTHORITY,
BEGAN TO OPEN UP QUESTIONS ABOUT PATRIARCHY,
ABOUT SOCIETY IN GENERAL AND HOW IT SHOULD BE ORGANIZED,
WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS.
QUESTIONS NOW BEGAN TO BE RAISED ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL
CULTURE
THAT HAD NOT BEEN RAISED BEFORE.

A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THESE NEW HORIZONS
--A SENSE OF THINGS BEGINNING TO OPEN UP--
CAN BE GAINED FROM ABIGAIL ADAMS.

HER HUSBAND, JOHN ADAMS,
WAS ATTENDING THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.
THERE, HE AND HIS FELLOW DELEGATES,
PREPARING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,
BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT HOW THE NEW NATION
WOULD BE SHAPED SHOULD INDEPENDENCE BE WON.

IN A LETTER TO HER HUSBAND, ABIGAIL WROTE:

"IN THE NEW CODE OF LAWS
 WHICH I SUPPOSE IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO MAKE,
 I DESIRE YOU WOULD REMEMBER THE LADIES.

REMEMBER:
 ALL MEN WOULD BE TYRANTS IF THEY COULD.
 IF PARTICULAR CARE AND ATTENTION IS NOT PAID TO THE LADIES,
 WE ARE DETERMINED TO FERMENT A REBELLION
 AND WILL NOT HOLD OURSELVES BOUND BY ANY LAWS
 IN WHICH WE HAVE NO VOICE OR REPRESENTATION."

THIS, IN FACT,
BECAME THE PERENNIAL ISSUE IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE AFTER
1776:
WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE?

AMERICAN HISTORY SINCE 1776 REFLECTS THE CONTINUAL STRUGGLE
OF THOSE WHO WERE NOT INCLUDED IN 1776--
WOMEN,
POOR WHITES,
SLAVES,
AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

IN MANY WAYS, THIS QUESTION HAS DRIVEN AMERICAN HISTORY
EVER SINCE THAT POINT IN TIME.

THERE ARE TWO FINAL THOUGHTS I'D LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH.
THE FIRST IS THAT IT'S VERY EASY FOR US IN THE 1990S
TO LOOK BACK ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND SEE ITS LIMITATIONS,
DESCRIBE ITS CONSERVATIVE ORIGINS,
EXPLAIN HOW IT DIDN'T INCLUDE BLACKS,
AND HOW IT INCLUDED WOMEN ON IN A MARGINAL SORT OF WAY.
BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE FAIR
TO THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH CENTURY.
IF YOU LOOK AROUND THE WORLD AT THAT TIME,
IT WAS ONLY IN THE NEW NATION OF AMERICA,
THAT KINGS HAD BEEN ABOLISHED,
THAT REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS
--ALBEIT ONLY FOR PROPERTY-OWNING MALES--
CONTROLLED THE LEGISLATURE AND ACTED AS A CHECK ON THE EXECUTIVE.
WHAT THE AMERICANS DID IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH CENTURY
--IN SPITE ALL OUR MODERN RESERVATIONS--
WAS RADICAL AND INNOVATIVE.
AS I'VE SUGGESTED, THE REVOLUTION WAS OPEN-ENDED ENOUGH
THAT IT COULD FORM THE WHOLE SUBSEQUENT SWEET OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

FINALLY, WHILE THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE REVOLUTION
ARE ENDLESSLY FASCINATING AND DEBATED BY US IN THE 1990S,

FOR THE CONTEMPORARIES LIVING AT THE TIME,
THERE WAS A MUCH MORE PRESSING QUESTION AT STAKE.
HOW COULD THIS NEW FRAGILE UNION,
THIS STRING OF 13 COLONIES,
OF BARELY THREE MILLION PEOPLE ALONG THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD...
HOW COULD THIS NEW ENTITY
POSSIBLY HOPE TO WIN A WAR OF INDEPENDENCE
AGAINST THE MOST POWERFUL EUROPEAN EMPIRE
IN THE MIDDLE DECADES OF THE 18TH CENTURY
WHOSE SHIPS PLOWED THE SEAS FROM INDIA AND CHINA TO CANADA?