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America's Revolution (27) –
Incompetence of King George III – III

Lead: In the 1700s the United States broke from England. No colony in history had done that before. This series examines America's Revolution.

Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts

Content: When he was a child, the parents of King George III doted on George's brother, Edward. This experience created a shy, insecure prince with a rather inflexible personality who had little respect for the opinions of others when they

disagreed with his own. His tutor and guide after the age of 17 was John Stuart, Earl of Bute, advisor to George's mother. Bute suffered the same personal rigidity and reinforced the future king's already deficient understanding of how people operate, too often getting personal strength confused with intransigence or stubbornness.

George was King for six decades and eventually he mastered the art of statecraft and on occasion brilliantly conducted himself as a great British monarch, but it would be long into that lengthy reign before he was able to shake himself of the grip of looking at people through the prism of Bute's inelastic abstract principles. A leader

needs to empathize and understand those whom he or she leads even though the leader doesn't agree. George hated political maneuvering in the service of special interests – assuming that it somehow dirtied the royal hands - and he idealistically desired to rid the Kingdom of this all-too-human tendency. Obviously, he failed.

Yet, in the very period where a more sympathetic, seasoned, and flexible monarch might have helped cool tempers on both sides of the American colonial situation and strengthened the hands of Americans who were not inclined to Revolution, King George was still in the thrall of the Earl of Bute and his inclination to

stiff-necked stubbornness. The King paid for it by losing a large part of the first British Empire.

One little-understood aspect of the King's relationship with Lord Bute would have ominous implication for future colonial relations and can be said in part to have compelled Britain down the road toward confrontation with its North American Colonies. In 1762 the ministry of the Duke of Newcastle collapsed and Bute became first minister. He oversaw the final stages of the peace negotiations between Britain and France which ended the Seven Years War. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in February 1763, Bute was on the way out of government. Yet, before he left,

one fatal decision he and his fellow ministers made was to keep a standing royal army in America to protect the frontier, but which later was also used to suppress Colonial agitation against taxes. These troops had to be paid for. Soon Parliament was looking for revenue to pay for the troops in America. This enterprise led to various schemes of colonial taxation and the estrangement which bred a Revolution.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

Resources

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