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America's Revolution (43) – Stamp Act **Repeal II**

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: George William Frederick, King George III of Great Britain and Ireland, in a remarkable 60-year reign presided over the loss of Britain's first great empire and helped lay the foundation for its next.

Nevertheless, his reign was punctuated with long periods in which his hand on the tiller of the ship of state could best be described as tentative. He had health problems. He had mental problems. And he was too often whip-sawed by national and international crises complicated by personal insecurities and a weak leadership style.

Shortly after his ascension to the throne his various governments faced an on-going and long-term financial disaster of tsunami-like proportions. Britain was in deep debt due to wartime expenditures. It won the Seven Years' War, but it cost a bundle. In order to prevent further descent into fiscal ruin, the solution of the King and his ministers in part was a series of revenue acts designed to force Britain's North American colonies to pay for the troops stationed in America to protect Americans. It was a laudable and understandable goal, but the

method they used was for Parliament to impose a series of tax measures on the colonies. This violated one of foundational stones of the British Constitution that no one should be taxed unless represented in the body imposing the tax and America clearly was not represented in Parliament.

These measures brought into bold relief the changes that had taken place in America since the founding of the first colony of Virginia in 1607. Americans had largely and with great success conducted their own affairs for a century and a half. They no longer considered themselves “junior Englishmen,” subject to the whims of a mother country whose motivation too often seemed to consider the colonies to be a minor and subservient part of the British economic system, to be simply milked for Britain’s benefit.

The author of the early tax schemes was First Minister George Grenville. He first tried a tax on sugar, really a tax on the molasses used to make colonial rum. Then came the fateful Stamp Tax, which required colonists to use for all important legal documents paper bearing a governmental crest or stamp, the sale of which generated money for London. Both taxes aroused increasing animosity and resistance in the colonies, the latter provoking widespread rioting.

Grenville would probably have tried to force compliance with the taxes in the colonies, but he was out of office by July 1765 because he had irritated the King on a purely personal matter. George had fallen ill early in the year and Grenville had refused to vigorously advocate the inclusion of the King's mother on the Regency Council which was set up to run the government if

George fell permanently ill or died leaving a heir who was a minor. The Queen Mother eventually was placed on the Council, but by this time the King was thoroughly annoyed with George Grenville and for this and other pretty petty personal reasons had seized the first opportunity to dump his Chief Minister and replace him with Lord Buckingham. The good Lord's government was weak in numbers, though he possessed a powerful asset in his private secretary and a member from Bristol, the remarkable and brilliant Edmund Burke, long a friend of American rights and sensibilities.

In the end Parliament, angered by American resistance and rioting, reluctantly repealed both the Sugar and Stamp taxes under pressure from London's merchant community whose business was suffering because Americans had cut back on the

consumption of British goods. Next time: the Prince bends in defeat.

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