Chapter 6 Lesson 3

Battlegrounds Shift

Native Americans took great interest in the American Revolution, some sided with the Patriots but many more sided with the British. British seemed like less of a threat, while Americans seemed intent on taking their lands. West of the Appalachian Mountains the British and the Native Americans raided American settlements. Mohawk chief Joseph Brant led a number of brutal attacks in SW NY and N PA. Henry Hamilton, commander of British forces at Detroit, paid Native Americans for settler’s scalps becoming known as the “hair buyer”.

VA militia leader George Rogers Clark led a force of 175 westward down the Ohio River and captured Kaskaskia, a British post. Then they took Vincennes. The British recaptured Vincennes but Clark vowed to get it back and braving harsh winter conditions surprised the British and defeated them.

The War at Sea

British vessels were forming blockades around the American harbors preventing the delivery of supplies and troops to Patriot forces.

Privateers

To break the blockade Congress ordered to construction of 13 warships but only 2 made it to sea. Several were quickly captured. The American Navy was too weak to operate well. So Congress authorized 2000 ships to sail as privateers, privately owned merchant ship outfitted with weapons. These privateers would capture merchant and cargo ships.

Finding crews was easy for the profitable privateering trade. Privateers captured more ships than the American Navy did.

An American Naval War Hero

American naval officer, John Paul Jones won success raiding British ports. Near the coast of Great Britain in September 1779, Jones’s ship, Bonhomme Richard encountered the British war ship Serapis. They fought for hours, when asked to surrender Jones declared “I have not yet begun to fight!” In the end he won and the Serapis surrendered.

Fighting in the South

In 1776 Patriot forces crushed Loyalists at the Battle of Moore’s Creek, near Wilmington, North Carolina. They also successfully defended Charles Town, SC. By 1778 these victories plus the victory at Saratoga had convinced the British this would not be an easy conflict.

The new British plan focused on the South, to take advantage of the number of Loyalists. At first, this strategy worked.

Late 1778, General Henry Clinton sent 3,500 troops from NY to Savannah, GA controlling most of the state. Clinton led attacks in 1780, attacking Charles Town forcing the city to surrender and taking thousands of prisoners. It was the worst defeat of the war. After his victory he returned to NY, leaving General Cornwallis in charge. The Continental Congress sent General Horatio Gates to face Cornwallis, Gates was defeated at Camden, SC. Cornwallis soon realized he was in for a different kind of warfare.

Hit-and-Run Tactics

The Loyalist support the British expected was less than they thought. As British forces moved throughout the countryside small groups of Patriots would attack them from surprise positions. These hit and run tactics caught the British off guard.

Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, was one of these successful leaders. He was quick and smart, one British colonel grumbled that “the devil himself” could not catch him.

Spain’s Help

Spain entered the war in 1779. Spanish governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Galvez had tons of supplies and ammunition shipped up the Mississippi River to the Northwest Territory. This helped George Rogers Clark capture key posts of Kaskaskia and Vincennes. Galvez’s forces drove the British from the Gulf of Mexico Region.

American Successes

After the victory at Camden, SC, British troops moved northward through the Carolinas. Along the way the British warned people to give up fighting and join the British, if they refused, the British threatened to “hang their leaders, and lay their country waste.

The Americans who received this warning were fiercely independent mountain men which had supported neither the Patriots nor the British. The threats angered them and they formed a militia to fight the British. At King’s Mountain the American led militia killed or captured a Loyalist led force of about a 1,000.

October 1780, Nathanael Greene replaced Gates as commander of the Patriot forces in the South. Greene split his army in two reinforcing Francis Marion and defeating some of Cornwallis’s troops in January 1780 at Cowpens, SC. After combining his forces he met Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse in Greensboro, NC. Greene’s army was forced to retreat but the British received heavy causalities forcing Cornwallis to abandon the plan to conquer the South.

Cornwallis Retreats

April 1781, Cornwallis marched north to VA carrying out raids in the area. General Washington sent Lafayette and General Anthony Wayne south to push him back. Cornwallis took shelter at Yorktown, VA.