

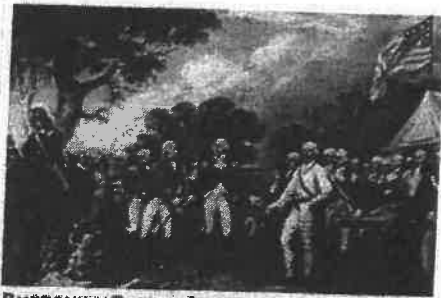
BURGOYNE SURRENDERS AT SARATOGA!

French Aid Coming to the States?

*The harsh realities of war in the American countryside
(or. Leave the champagne at home, Johnny!)*

"Oh Fatal Ambition"

SARATOGA, NEW YORK October 17, 1777 - A British army of nearly 7,000 surrendered today to a combined force of American militia and Continental regulars. "The fortunes of war have made me your prisoner," said British General John Burgoyne as he handed over his sword to his American counterpart, Horatio Gates. "I shall always be ready to testify that it was through no fault of your excellency," Gates replied.



Burgoyne Surrenders

News of the momentous British defeat spread quickly through the colonies and fueled speculation that the French government would now seriously consider entering the conflict on the American side. For months, rumors have suggested that Louis XVI needed solid proof of the strength of the revolution before he would officially commit French military aid to the cause. The British defeat at Saratoga could very well buy that help.

The end for Burgoyne and his army came on the heels of a long and arduous campaign that began with a stunning British victory at Ticonderoga. Burgoyne, known in the press as "Gentleman Johnny" began his sojourn in Canada. In an attempt to link forces with British General Howe traveling north from New York, Burgoyne sailed with his army down Lake Champlain, headed for Albany. They paused only to capture the formidable American fort at Ticonderoga. British expectations were dashed, however, in the American countryside. Burgoyne's cumbersome entourage, which included 30 carts of Burgoyne's personal possessions, and several cases of champagne, was stymied by the dense New York forests.

By the time Burgoyne reached Freeman's Farm near Saratoga, American patriots were less cowed by Burgoyne's haughty pronouncements demanding their surrender, than they were of general fears of having an invading army in the neighborhood.

In fact, the American militia had been fully alerted to Burgoyne's presence, and, as one observer put it, "were out in droves." By the time the two battles of Saratoga were fought, American forces led by Gates and his able field general, Benedict Arnold, outnumbered Burgoyne and his army by nearly 2 to 1.

Killed in the ensuing battle was Burgoyne's second-in-command, General Simon Fraser. A witness to Fraser's death heard him cry, "Oh fatal ambition," as life seeped out of him. He may have been speaking of the whole misguided campaign.

In Paris, it can be assumed that the American ambassador to Versailles, Benjamin Franklin, will act immediately on word of this victory, and once again beg Louis for French aid. If that assistance is forthcoming, it is certain that the war will continue and spread—by means of the ancient enmities between Britain and France—to the far reaches of the globe.

Benjamin Franklin the Diplomat

In government, he made contributions in developing unity and democracy in our colonies, and he also served for many years as official colonial agent in London for Pennsylvania. He pointed out for a long time to the British Government that taxation without representation was a principle upon which America stood firmly.

When Franklin went to France in the early part of the Revolution as the official diplomat and ambassador of the thirteen colonies, he came as a man of maturity, brilliance, ability, and as a world statesman. Upon his arrival in Paris, there was no other statesman or philosopher who could equal him in his ability and accomplishments. His presence in Paris annoyed the British minister and staff. Franklin enjoyed the situation. The years he remained in Paris were unusually fruitful ones for America and helping to work out the future destiny of the United States of America.

The colonies indeed needed help of every description--men, money, equipment, ships, and all things to fight a successful war. The long years of enmity between France and Britain opened the way for the leadership of Franklin. And he was not only the man to exploit it, but also the reason for the acceptance of thirteen states as a recognized nation in the world of nations.

Once the war was over and there were those in power who thought they could use Franklin, the American alliance and the United States to their own advantage. The French politicians were opposed to a separate peace treaty for the United States, but they proposed to have a treaty in which American independence and sovereignty would be tied directly to the French treaty. And then they could hold the United States under their own direction.

Franklin knew French politicians too well, and he resolved such conditions should not result. Franklin was courageous, bold and had a definite sense of vision plans in diplomacy. Consequently, he met the leaders of the British commission and secured a separate treaty with them. He secured just what he wanted for his country; namely, the absolute independence of the United States, recognition of it as a distinctive government, and at the same time the exact boundaries of the United States were generally established.

Marquis de Lafayette

King Louis XVI (1754–1793) refused to allow Lafayette to go to America, but Lafayette sailed anyway, after buying a ship with his own money. In June 1777 he landed in North Carolina. The Continental Congress had given him a commission as a major general, but his actual duties were as assistant to General George Washington (1732–1799). He assisted in battles against the British in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and eventually was sent back to France in an attempt to obtain greater French support for the Americans.

Upon returning to his homeland in 1779, Lafayette was arrested for having disobeyed the king, but all was soon forgiven. Although not all his proposals for aid to the Americans were approved, Lafayette returned to America in 1780 in command of French forces that were sent to help. In 1781 he was given command of the defense of Virginia with the rank of major general. He drew English commander Charles Cornwallis (1738–1805) into a trap at Yorktown, Virginia; Cornwallis was blockaded by the American forces and by French troops under Admiral de Grasse. Cornwallis's surrender was the high point of Lafayette's military career.

When Lafayette returned to the French army in 1782, he was considered a hero. He became a leader in the movement against the French monarchy (absolute rule by a single person). In 1789 he took a seat in the Estates General, the French legislature. The adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (loosely based on the Declaration of Independence) was his idea, and he was given the command of the Parisian National Guard, a force of citizen-soldiers created to defend the new constitutional monarchy.

French Alliance, French Assistance, and European Diplomacy during the American Revolution, 1778–1782

During the American Revolution, the American colonies faced the significant challenge of conducting international diplomacy and seeking the international support it needed to fight against the British. The single most important diplomatic success of the colonists during the War for Independence was the critical link they forged with France. Representatives of the French and American governments signed the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce on February 6, 1778.

Benjamin Franklin's popularity in France bolstered French support for the American cause. The French public viewed Franklin as a representative of republican simplicity and honesty, an image Franklin cultivated. A rage for all things Franklin and American swept France, assisting American diplomats and Vergennes in pushing for an alliance. In the meantime, Vergennes agreed to provide the United States with a secret loan.

Between 1778 and 1782 the French provided supplies, arms and ammunition, uniforms, and, most importantly, troops and naval support to the struggling Continental Army. The French navy transported reinforcements, fought off a British fleet, and protected Washington's forces in Virginia. French assistance was crucial in securing the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781.

With the consent of French leaders, U.S. commissioners entered negotiations with Britain to end the war, and reached a preliminary agreement in 1782. Franklin informed the French of the agreement and also asked for an additional loan. The French did lodge a complaint on this instance, but also granted the requested loan despite French financial troubles. The French and Franklin successfully presented a united front despite British attempts to drive a wedge between the allies during their separate peace negotiations. The United States and France formally ended the war with Britain with the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

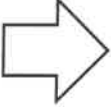
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Use the reading provided to fill in the boxes on how these two people and one battle led to the French signing the Treaty of Alliance with America.

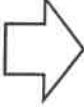
Benjamin Franklin

Marquis de Lafayette

Battle of Saratoga



French Alliance with America



How does the French Alliance help America during the Revolutionary War?

