

The Shock Felt 'Round the World

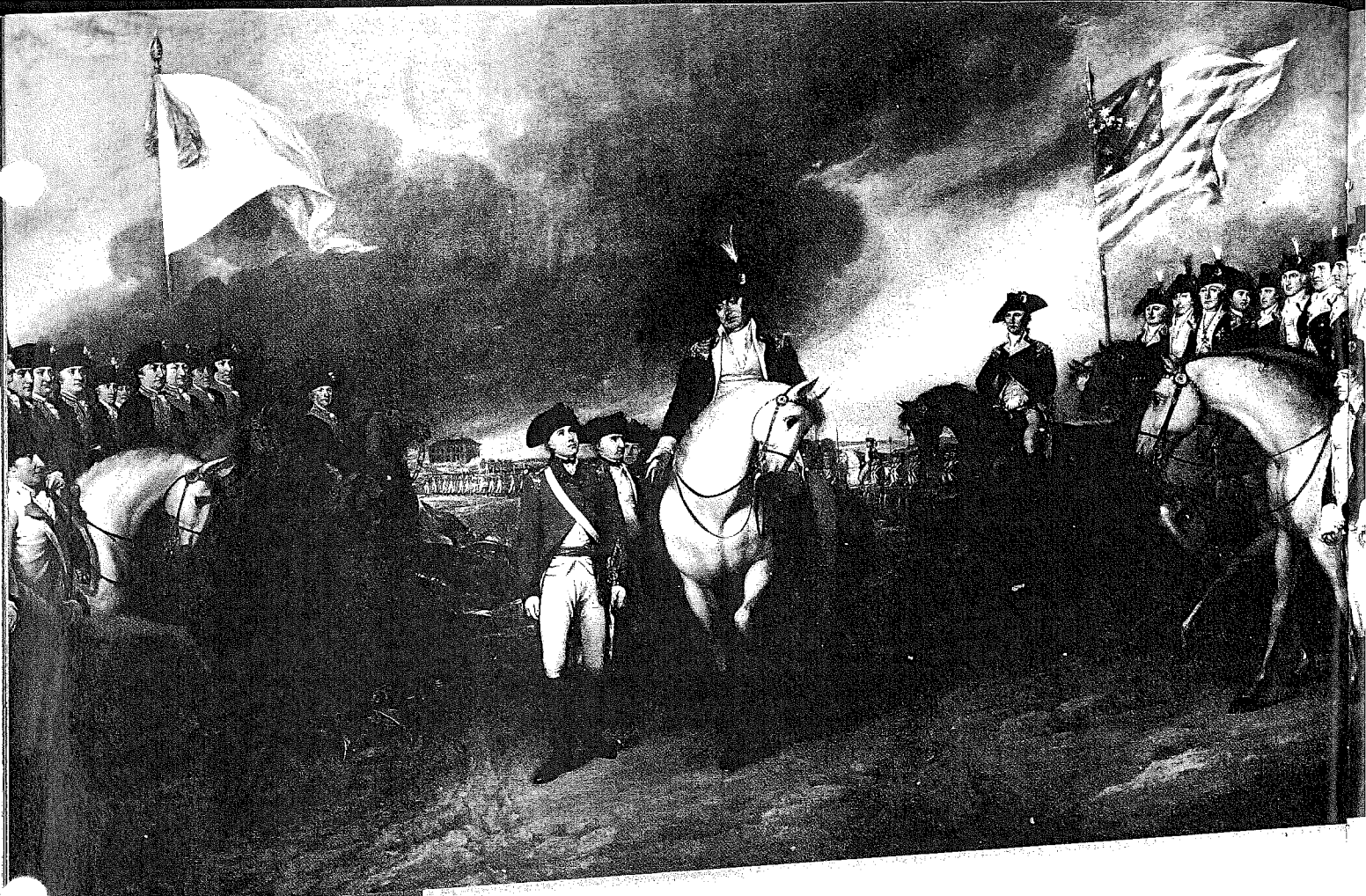
by Ruth Spencer Johnson

Shocking news was making its way across the Atlantic Ocean. It could travel only as fast as the ship could sail, but a man on the ship carried word from America that would stun the powerful nations of Europe. When the vessel landed in France, the messenger set off on horseback toward Benjamin Franklin's home near Paris. Franklin and his fellow diplomats were there, waiting anxiously for details of the war back home. The fighting had been going badly for the Americans, and Franklin had recently heard reports that the British had captured the important city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

As the messenger rode into the courtyard on December 4, 1777, Franklin called out to him, "Sir, is Philadelphia taken?" "Yes, sir," the man answered. Dismayed, Franklin turned away. "But, sir, I have greater news than that," the rider cried out. "General Burgoyne *and his whole army have surrendered!*"

The joyful news of Britain's surrender at Saratoga electrified the people of France and altered Europe's attitude toward the Americans and their struggle for independence. Earlier in the war, the Second Continental Congress had sent Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee to France to convince that powerful country to ally with America in its fight against Britain. France could provide financial aid, supplies, troops, and ships that America desperately needed. But discouraging war news had made France

Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga was immortalized in a painting by John Trumbull that now hangs in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. In it, Burgoyne offers his sword to Major General Horatio Gates, who refuses to take it.



The surrender of the British army at Yorktown in 1781 ended the fighting in the Revolutionary War.

reluctant to back a losing cause. It would help only unofficially by sending money and ammunition in secret. The remarkable British surrender at Saratoga gave courage to the French leaders that perhaps the Americans could win the war after all.

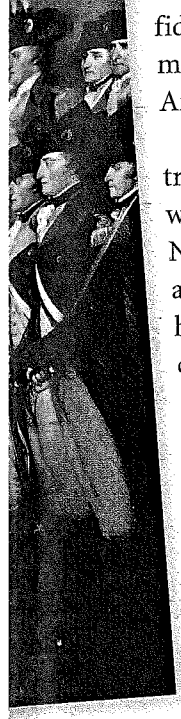
France feared that Britain, after its devastating defeat, might now be ready to reconcile with its former Colonies. But France, still smarting from its loss to Britain in the French and Indian War (1754–1763), wanted revenge. Aiding America could cripple Britain while boosting France’s prestige. Within days of the messenger’s arrival, French leaders decided to negotiate an alliance.

In England, the news of Burgoyne’s surrender horrified the country. An alliance between France and America meant that Britain would have to fight on more than one front. A wider war would strain Britain’s treasury and force British commanders to move some troops and ships from North America to protect their profitable Caribbean colonies, as well as their holdings in India and the Mediterranean. Other soldiers and vessels would have to relocate to Britain to defend the homeland in case of a French invasion across the English Channel.

Britain, growing weary of the difficult war, offered peace terms to its former Colonies: America could have its own Congress. It could control everything except foreign policy and trade. Britain would repeal the acts

I never had any doubt that the Americans could win.





that had incited the colonists to rebel. But Britain refused to recognize an independent country.

Americans might have accepted this offer at an earlier stage. But the Saratoga victory had boosted their morale and their confidence in their army. It showed that the Continental soldiers and militia troops could defeat the highly trained British regulars. The Americans demanded nothing short of independence.

France and America signed treaties of alliance, friendship, and trade on February 6, 1778. A few months later, Britain declared war on France. The war then spread to include Spain and the Netherlands, while other European countries joined together against Britain without formally entering the hostilities. What had started as a colonial rebellion escalated into a global conflict with fighting that reached around the world.

The surrender at Saratoga forced Britain to adopt a new strategy. Unable to protect both cities, British generals ordered the evacuation of Philadelphia in June 1778 so they could concentrate their troops on the defense of New York City. From there, the British focused on invading the South instead. They planned to capture key port cities where, they believed, Loyalists would rally to their side.

Despite some significant victories, Britain encountered difficulties in the South. The hoped-for Loyalists did not rally to their cause. Continental Army troops joined by militia forces simply refused to stop fighting. Finally, in October 1781, British soldiers found themselves boxed in by American and French forces at Yorktown, Virginia. With no way out, the British surrendered. Four years almost to the day after Saratoga, Yorktown became the last major battle of the Revolutionary War. After complicated negotiations, America signed a peace treaty with Britain in 1783.

The shock of the American victory at Saratoga was truly felt across the ocean and around the world. The dramatic triumph was a crucial turning point in the war. It gave confidence to America, and hope to the world, that the fledgling country just might succeed.

According to a 1999 *New York Times Magazine* article, the Battles of Saratoga deserve recognition as some of the most important battles in the last 1,000 years. They marked the beginning of the end of one empire—the British—and the rise to power of another—the United States of America. 🐎

Ruth Spencer Johnson is a freelance writer who loves to read and write about the American Revolution.

The final page of the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1783, shows the signatures of the American delegates.

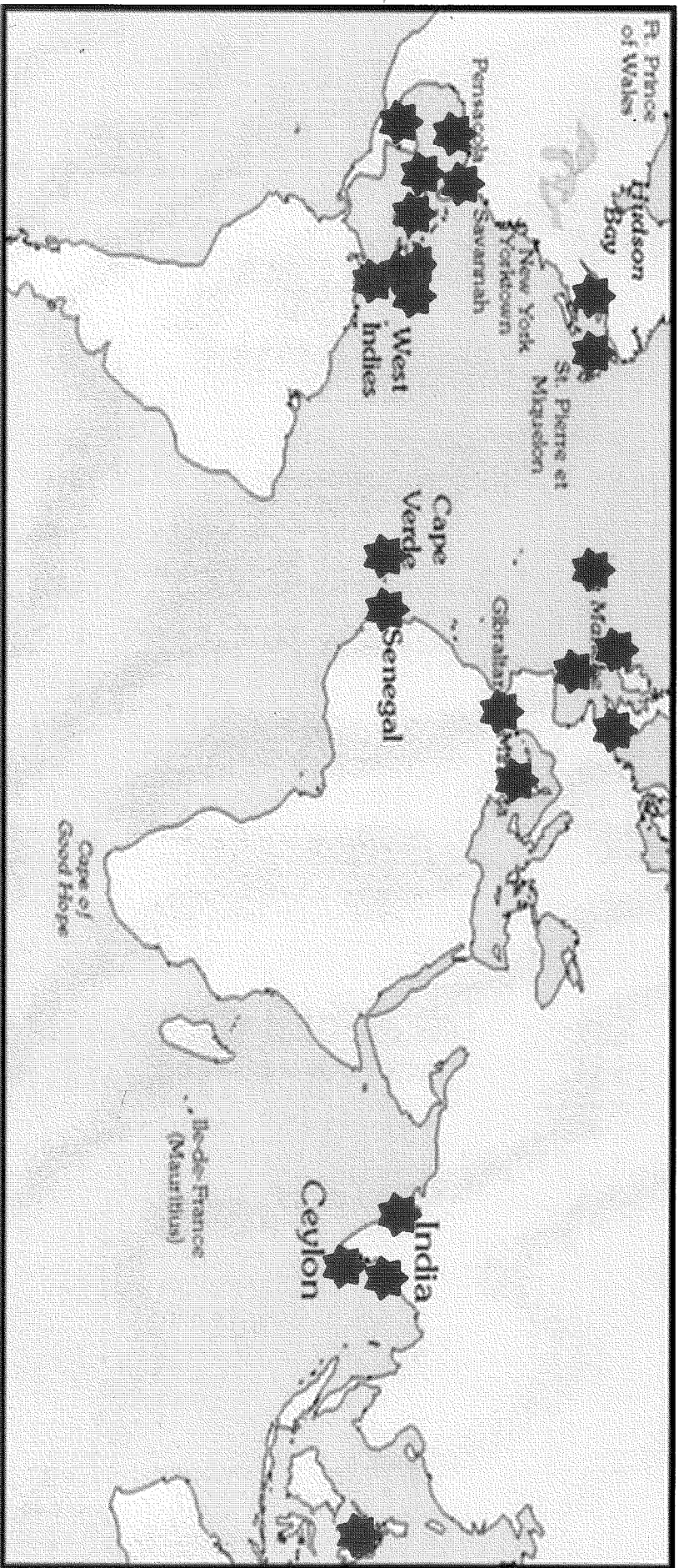
without Difficulty and without requiring any Compensation.

Article 10th

The solemn Ratifications of the present Treaty, expedited in good and true Form, shall be exchanged between the contracting Parties in the Space of Six Months or sooner if possible to be computed from the Day of the Signature of the present Treaty. In Witness whereof we the undersigned their Ministers Plenipotentiary have in their Names and in Virtue of our full Powers signed without Seal the present Definitive Treaty, and caused their Seals of our Arms to be affixed thereto.

Done at Paris, this third Day of September, in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty three.

John Adams
John Jay
Benjamin Franklin



Battles Between the British and America's European Allies

Directions: Use the map above to answer the following questions.

1. The area with the most battles between Britain and America's allies was which of the following?
 - a. West Indies
 - b. Senegal
 - c. India
 - d. Canada
2. One continent that had no battles of the American Revolution fought on it was _____.
3. Which of the following is TRUE about Gibraltar?
 - a. Gibraltar was the northernmost battle of the Revolution
 - b. Gibraltar is located where two major bodies of water meet
 - c. Gibraltar is the largest island in the West Indies
 - d. All of the Above