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Walking Towards Independence: An Analysis of the
Causes of
the Independence of the United States.

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ABSTRACT

In order to understand the creation of United States, this last-year dissertation is going to deal with the most significant causes that led American colonizers to search for independence. For this, the History of United States since Colonization until the Declaration of Independence will be analyzed. Furthermore, four texts written during the American Revolution will be analyzed with the object of showing the point of view of the people who lived under these circumstances.

Key words: Colonies, British Empire, Acts, rebels, Parliament, tyrannical power.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo de fin de grado trata de esclarecer las causas principales que llevaron a los americanos a crear una nueva nación independiente. Para ello, será necesario volver la vista al pasado y analizar la historia de Estados Unidos desde la Colonización hasta la Declaración de Independencia. Además, cuatro textos escritos durante esta época serán analizados con el objeto de ilustrar el punto de vista de aquellas personas que vivieron la Revolución Americana.

Palabras clave: Colonias, Imperio británico, leyes, rebeldes, Parlamento, tiranía.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As it is widely known, the United States is a nation that is universally considered young and modern as well as multicultural. The reasons why these ideas are extensively accepted lay on its history, especially in its creation as a nation. America was discovered at the end of fifteenth century; nevertheless, North America was not colonized until the seventeenth century by British enterprises. During this period, America was regarded as a new land with more opportunities than Europe and many people decided to board on a dangerous voyage in order to achieve a better life. At the beginning of the Colonization, people from all European countries went there, but the circumstances changed radically after the Seven Years' War. Due to the apparition of insubordinate groups, the king George III decided to utilize new laws, such as 'Coercive Acts', with the object of imposing his control over the colonies. This provoked a reaction within American colonists and radical propaganda spread out rapidly throughout the thirteen colonies, which gave rise to an increase in the number of radicals, among which is the famous 'Boston Tea Party' that was answered by tyrannical and drastic demands of the British king. Therefore, this was the beginning of the War of Independence that a year later would have produced the Declaration of Independence, written and signed by representatives of the thirteen colonies.

The aim of this last-year dissertation is to study the causes for the journey towards Independence. For this purpose, a study on recently documents talking about this period of American history will be carried out. The documents used for this first section of the dissertation deal with the era between the beginnings of Colonization until the "Declaration of Independence". Furthermore, it will be analyzed a group of documents, both political and private, which were written between 1775 and 1776; in other words, they were written by people who had first-hand experience on this complicated situation. All of them deal with the causes and development of the American Revolution. The first text, "Memorandum on Events of April 18, 1775", was written by Paul Revere (1735-1818), an American rebel who is famous for his midnight ride. This text is part of his memorandum, and Revere explains here all the problems that he found during his mission. The second text, "Diary, April 18-21,1775", is part of the diary of the British soldier Frederick

Mackenzie. As this text corresponds to the itinerary of a group of soldiers who were travelling around the same places and at the same moment that Revere, readers will see the perspectives of the two sides of the events that took place in April 1775. In addition, the third text is an article (“Response to Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation”) published in a periodical called *The Virginia Gazette*. Here, Mr. Purdie (1743-1779) exhibits Dunmore’s declaration and makes a response against this declaration. Therefore, this text is a propaganda document that tries to show the injustices carried out by the British government. Last but not least, the “Declaration of Independence” will be analyzed. This document is one of the most essential and famous records of the American Revolution. In the “Declaration”, readers can clearly see how American colonizers explained the reasons that brought them to want Independence.

Consequently, readers will see throughout all the entire essay the causes and facts that led American colonizers to look for the creation of a new and independent nation. The first chapter of this dissertation deals with the background of American history since the Colonization of North America by British enterprises. For this purpose, current researches and expert opinions will be taken into account. Then, following the same method as in the former chapter, the closest causes for the “Declaration of Independence” will be exposed. Furthermore, the last chapter is going to include an analysis of texts written during this period because it is essential to read the thoughts of people living this chaotic situation in order to reach a better understanding of the facts that took place until Independence. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to walk through the most representative stages of American Revolution as reflected in documents showing the reasons that led American colonizers to fight against the king and the British Empire along with Independence. Within this visit through history it is essential the mixture of the thoughts and discoveries of current historians and the texts created during this period by people who experimented this phase of American history.

2. CONTEXT

Explaining how North America was discovered, colonized, and the way people lived in the new English colonies is essential to understand why the people living in the New World fought for their Independence and the creation of The United States. As it is widely known America was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 when he was looking for an alternative route from Spain to India. Spanish soldiers, sailors, and priests rapidly colonized South America under the command of the Spanish crown in 1493. On the other hand, the British crown did not start to explore the New World until the end of the Elizabethan Era. The Elizabethan exploration and foreign policy were created in order to compete against the Spanish predominance in Europe and America. The British started to explore and discovered new places in the Caribbean, North America, and several areas that nowadays are part of Canada. Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth I sent her best sailors and pirates with the purpose of boycotting Spanish enterprises. Hence, it can be affirmed that Queen Elizabeth was more interested in blockading Spanish markets than in creating new settlements. This plan against Spanish market is one of the reasons why in this particular moment English people had not started to colonize America yet.

At the end of Sixteenth century, Captain Gilbert and his half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, claimed the Real Regulation; this means, they wanted to establish new settlements in North America under the same law and rights of the British Empire. The first attempts of Colonization were a complete disaster since most of the people traveling to North America died during the journeys. However, they planted the germ of ambition and hope in the next colonizers who dreamt about finding fortune in the New World (Álvarez 20). In addition, one of the causes that attracted people to America was that the New World was idealized; many people regarded it as the place where the perfect society could be established; consequently, the search for what centuries later was called the American dream is what motivated English people to embark on arduous and dangerous voyages in order to settle in new places where there existed the possibility to begin a new and better life. As Tejera affirms, the British Colonial politics started on 1606 when Jacob I gave licenses to make expeditions, create new markets, and establish new colonial settlements. This was the first

serious attempt to colonize the New World by the British Empire; and it was carried out by private enterprises (333). This will be a key point in the development of each colony since as Colonization was accomplished by different private enterprises that established their own particular rules and markets, each colony experienced a particular development.

After Colonization, the management of the government was peculiar in each colony; this means, there was a tradition of self-government, and in each colony they created their own rules and laws showing a huge independence from the British government. A good example is “The Mayflower Compact”, since it is the first written system of government of what today is The United States; it was written by the colonists that were travelling in the Mayflower, not by the English government (300). The crown did not establish any deep control in the colonies, but the British crown inspected the operations that took place within each colony with different institutions that were created along the way. For instance, one active institution during the first decades was the Privy Council. Thus, the colonies had a great independence from the British Empire, although they were all regulated by the British law and this is going to lead to a peculiar development in each of the British colonies.

The development of economy and market was different in each colony since it depended on numerous factors, such as the diversity of nature, the climate, the social conditions, etc. The economy of New England was typical of the coastal cities and places of this period; this means that people living in this colony made a living by fishing, obtaining whale oil, and agriculture for personal use. The social status that prevailed was the middle commercial class, artisans, and farmers. On the other hand, in those intermediate colonies there were better circumstances for agriculture since the weather and the land were more favorable for this sort of activities. Therefore, in these colonies there were basically porcine and bovine ranching as well as agriculture and hunting for the exportation of leather (Tejera 417). In Southern colonies, there were extensive concessions of land that were devoted to intensive farming of tobacco, cotton, and corn. In addition, in this area part of the market was utilized with the purpose of importing slaves since they decreased the labor costs. Nevertheless, all the colonies had something in common; the British crown had

priority over other countries in the exchange of products produced in America. They wanted to create a great Empire such as the Spanish one. Hence, they created institutions that controlled the market between the colonies and Britain (such as the previously mentioned Privy Council or the Board of Trade). Basically, the Parliament created numerous acts in order to establish an English monopoly of colonial goods; all the products from or to the colonies should be brought in English ships owned in England and many goods, for instance, cotton or tobacco had to be exported directly to England even if their final destination was elsewhere (Jones 15).

As a summary, English Colonization was carried out in a particular way in which the key point was the economy. The British Empire wanted to fight for the economic supremacy by expanding its market; consequently, they made expeditions and created new colonies in North America. The control that England imposed over the colonies was basically economic; the Empire assured its monopoly over the New World. On the other hand, the British government did not concentrate on the control of the law and government developed in each colony; in other words, the control over the colonies was lax. Although all settlements shared basic similarities, each colony used its own laws and governmental organization

3. CAUSES OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

As it has been stated in the previous section, the way in which colonization took place in North America would be essential for the development of the colonies. As George Louis Beer claims, as the colonization was the result of private enterprises, the mother country supervised and aided the colonies when necessary, having in this way several responsibilities for the colonies established in North America. However, “the colonies were not incorporated as organic parts of the English body politic.” (Beer 2) People living in the New World were expected to provide the necessary capital for their own public affairs; hence, taking this fact into account, “large powers of self-government were granted to them” (Beer 2). Thus, North America was formed by a number of miscellaneous colonies that had their own economic institutions and local governments, which tended in the direction of autonomy. One of the heaviest problems for the British Empire was the creation of a system that would not offend the principles of the colonists neither offend those of the people living in England. Consequently, the fundamental idea of the colonial administration was that the defense of colonies against any local enemy should be carried out by the colony itself; even so, the mother country should assist English colonies when the “situation were so serious as to endanger the Empire as a whole” (Beer 7). A good example of this is when Virginia was affected by the French advance in the New Continent. As Beer explains, “On August 28, 1753, Holderness, the secretary of state in charge of colonial affairs, addressed a circular dispatch to the governors authorizing them to repel, by force if necessary, any invasion of his Majesty's unquestioned dominions” (11); and England sent £10,000 in order to help this colony that was not only affected by the French advance, but also by the Indian war.

In addition, there was another important question in the colonial scope, and it was the parliamentary taxation. The Parliament could impose legally several taxes to the colonies. For instance, in 1733, it was imposed the “Molasses Act” which inflicted customs duties on molasses, rum, and sugar imported into the colonies. The main object of this law was substantially to obstruct the development of the French colonies avoiding the importation of French products into the English colonies (Beer 22). Thereupon, it can be

affirmed that the purpose of these duties was not to increase revenue, but to take control over the colonies although it was not the only method the British Empire used to command in North America. As Beer asserts, “the colonies could import European goods, with some noteworthy exceptions, from Great Britain only, and were prohibited from exporting some specifically enumerated products direct to any European country but Great Britain.” (24) Consequently, non-British products that were consumed in the colonies and the colonial products that were brought to Europe came within the English fiscal system, making an accurate regulation of the trade related to the British colonies. In 1754, the British government was in favor of a union of the British colonies of North America in order to assure more protection against French and Indians. Several colonists were in favor of this measure, such as Benjamin Franklin, who defended the idea of creating this kind of federation by act of Parliament; however, for the British government this implied also a taxation by the same institution, but there was a large number of people who opposed to this since the colonists did not have any representation within the English Parliament, and more taxes would suppose a huge dissatisfaction. Consequently, it can be seen that there were two sides in this sphere because many people were against Parliamentary taxes since “it was supposed to be an undoubted right of Englishmen, not to be taxed but by their consent given through their representatives” (Beer 31). While others, such as William Shirley of Massachusetts, defended “a parliamentary union coupled with parliamentary taxation of the colonies” (Beer 31).

During this period, the relationship between France and England was hostile and cold until 1756, when the war between these two Empires started. Thus, the British Empire wanted the protection of the thirteen colonies, but the mother country had to rely on the requisition system, which had “left the ultimate decision as to the extent of military support to the colonies themselves” (35). As this system was a decentralized one, and each colony could deny the official demand of soldiers, the best choice for the British Empire was to encourage the colonies to strive the uttermost. For this, the mother country proposed to give a Boundary Encouragement to the colonies in exchange for their services. It consisted essentially on giving money to the colonies; for instance, in 1756 the Empire decided to

distribute £115,000 within the Northern colonies in return for their past services (36). The next year, Virginia and North Carolina demanded financial aid to the British Empire. The Parliament decided to provide Virginia and the Carolinas with £50,000. These honoraria of 1756 and 1757 were the basis of a system, which main object was to fasten a body of colonial troops (37), and it was utilized by the Parliament during the following years of the war. Even so, in 1757 this system did not reach its main goal since the colonies failed when complaining the demands of the Parliament; Georgia, North Carolina, and New Hampshire were too poor; ergo, they could not do much. Rhode Island and Virginia could not afford the aid that was required. This failure was partly caused by the fear of each colony to do more than the others (40). Nevertheless, the next year (1758), the Parliament achieved the highest mark of colonial participation. In 1760 Canada became practically British due to the fall of Montreal. For that reason, the British Empire did not require so many troops as in the previous years; for example, Northern colonies were demanded to raise “two-thirds of their previous levies” (Beer 45). However, the colonies did receive lower honoraria and they were dissatisfied. Consequently, the Requisition System during the war was a complete fiasco since not all the colonies participated equally in the defense of the Empire; which can be closely connected to the fact that there was a lack of union within the colonies that was partly fault of the mother country.

At the end of the Seven Years’ War hardly any colonist in North America thought about Independence, but the consequences of this war would be decisive for the thirteen colonies. First of all, this war “had doubled the British national debt and driven taxation to unprecedented levels. The cost of colonial administration and defense had risen from £70,000 in 1748 to £350,000” (Jones 38). More money would be needed since the British Government had decided to establish a permanent army in order to avoid French attempts of recovering land and to protect them from Indian attacks. At this point, Grenville entrusted the colonies with the payment of the third of their own defense by asking them to search for new ways of rising money; however, this plan was unsuccessful and led Grenville to create a new program in America. He created a new Act that was passed in April 1764 and was called Grenville’s Sugar Act; it basically increased the duties on

several colonial imports and reduced the duty on foreign sugar. Grenville's program was not popular in America since there were many people suffering the postwar depression and new taxes combined with the deflationary effects of the Currency Act would lead many of them to economic ruin. For instance, the Sugar Acts would make illegal the trade between British colonies and French or Spanish West Indies, which means that the thirteen colonies would lose their best source of specie (Jones 39).

Moreover, these new controls seemed unacceptable for the colonists since, as it has been explained in the previous section, the preceding British lack of attention had allowed to the North American colonies a large measure of economic and political freedom and during the war, the British Empire had given them confidence in their military strength and their ability to afford their own affairs; hence, colonists were prepared for more freedom and less imperial control (39). It is essential not to forget the fact that American people were influenced by the revolutionary tradition imported from England itself. From 1730s onwards, the colonists of North America have been more and more pervaded by the extreme libertarian ideology proposed by Seventeenth century radicals, such as Harrington. They understood that government was oppressive by nature and only a constant vigilance could avoid the transgression on individual rights. Therefore, when Grenville created his new program, which seemed to corroborate the idea of the oppressive government, the colonists answered vigorously (39).

On the other hand, the colonial opposition stayed limited until Parliament voted the Stamp Act in 1765. This measure changed the duties on newspapers, broadsides, legal documents, commercial bills, almanacs, ships, and paper among others (Jones 40). Thus, it produced a generalized reaction. The reason for this widespread reaction is basically that the Stamp Act affected all the colonies, whereas the Sugar Act, previously mentioned, only concerned New England merchants, and readers should not forget that each of the thirteen colonies were extremely individualist. This new Act woke up hostilities within new influential groups, such as lawyers, printers, tavern-keepers, etc. Colonists created secret organizations that are known as 'Sons of Liberty' with the goal of combine the opposition.

In addition, in October 1765, it took place the first intercolonial meeting in New York; representatives of nine colonies wrote a Declaration of Rights and Grievances establishing a distinction between external and internal taxes; denying the Parliament authority to impose the later since the Stamp Act undermined the rights and liberties of all the colonists and claiming that only their own legislature could impose taxes upon them. Nevertheless, if the taxes were undeniably external, colonists would not question them (41). Americans decided to null the Stamp Act by mob action; they boycotted British goods by the policy of nonimportation, which provoked the paralysis of American trade and hence, the irritation of British merchants who demanded the annulment of the Stamp Act. In spring of 1766, the British government acceded to withdraw the Act; but they wrote a Declaratory Act in which it was asserted that the Parliament had the authority to create new laws (40).

Consequently, since this moment new duties, such as those who Chancellor of the Exchequer (Charles Townshend) tried to introduce on colonial imports of lead, paint, glass, paper, and tea were considered 'external'. He went further and established an 'American Board of Customs Commissioners' in Boston and enforced the Mutiny Act of 1765, which was created to solve the shortage of military accommodation that was required in colonial assemblies in order to supply British troops. Most of the colonies obeyed but New York refused; hence, its assembly was removed until the act was obeyed. Townshend's measures awoke the uproar in North America; John Dickinson, a moderate opponent of the British Empire, criticized the Mutiny Act asserting that it was an attempt of direct parliamentary taxation, and he also condemned the suppression of the New York assembly as a punch at colonial liberty. In February 1768 in the Massachusetts assembly it was written a circular letter which denounced Townshend duties for transgressing the principle "of not taxation without representation" (41), and in March of the same year, the colonists arranged a new economic boycott similar to the one that was carried out against the Stamp Act. In Boston, a group of soldiers provoked by a mob killed five Bostonians, and although they had shot under an excessive provocation, the anti-Imperial propagandists gave the impression that it had been a 'Boston Massacre'. This version was accepted by almost all the Americans of the time, which led to a momentary unity. At that point, followed three years of relatively

calm in which the anti-imperial movement was carried out discretely and the parliamentary taxation was a settled fact.

Notwithstanding, in 1773 the Tea Act was approved by the Parliament since the British government wanted to save the East India Company, to stop the contraband of tea, and to habituate colonists to pay their taxes. This Act provoked the union of middlemen and merchants who were against the monopoly conferred to East India Company. They organized an opposition and defended it by affirming that it was absolutely necessary for American people to maintain their liberty in the colonies and presenting it as a duty of every Colonist (Ladenburg 44). On November 1773, the Dartmouth, a ship which transported tea with its controversial cargo, arrived at Boston Harbor; it stayed there for weeks while Hutchinson declined to return the tea. However, colonists took matters into their own hands and before the end of the protest meeting several men, dressed as Indians, went to the harbor and took all the chests full of tea and threw them all into the sea (45). This rebellion provoked the anger of the mother country that did not understand why colonists refused to buy cheaper tea; the matter is that colonists were against any kind of British authority within the colonies. Consequently, the Parliament passed a series of laws, known as 'The Intolerable Acts' or 'The Coercive Acts', in order to punish the colonies and establish its authority. On June 1774, the Boston Harbor was closed until payment for the ruined tea was made. In addition, the government of Massachusetts was reorganized and the King designated the governor's council installing in this way more English authority within this colony (46). Consequently, the 'Boston Tea Party', as well as the response of the Empire would have marked a turning point in the history of the thirteen colonies.

After that, it took place the Continental Congress. The delegates agreed on the need for some action, but Galloway's Plan of Union, which defended the idea of bond all the colonies together by creating a constitution and a continental legislature in order to share power with the Parliament, was rejected. It supported 'Suffolk resolves', which proposed resistance to the Coercive Acts. During the winter 1774-1775 the colonial protests developed into an undeclared rebellion, and in April 1775 General Thomas Gage, new

governor of Massachusetts, sent 200 men to seize the arms that colonists had been collecting in Concord. The British were barred at Lexington and there was an exchange of fire between the two sides. After destroying the military stores, the British men returned to Boston being attacked constantly by American forces. Propagandists used these events to encourage patriot feeling (Jones 44). Thus, in May 1775, when the Second Continental Congress met at Philadelphia, they decided without hesitation that the colonies should be straightaway established into a state of defense. The members of the congress authorized a Continental Army of 20,000 men, and George Washington was designated “general and commander-in-chief of the army of the United Colonies” (45). It is essential to clarify that whereas the delegates were resolute to protect American rights, most of them hoped to do it within the Empire; this means, many of them feared the removal of British authority. Consequently, in July the congresses discarded any intention of separating from England and create independent states. In the same month, Washington took charge of the Continental Army that was trying to recover from the bloodiest battle of the Revolutionary War: the Battle of Bunker Hill. The British forces, under the command of General William Howe, had displaced the American defenders after three frontal assaults. The congress was averse to break with Great Britain; however, king George III showed that he was determined to subjugation and his intention of utilizing force if necessary. The Parliament created The Prohibitory Act declaring in this way that all the colonies involved in rebellion would be outside the protection of the Crown and set an embargo upon colonial trade (46). On the other hand, a large number of colonists were decided to independence as it can be seen in several pamphlets of this time. For instance, Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet called *Common Sense* in which he talked about the Crown attacking it directly and defending that the only alternatives American people had were independence or submission. It was published on January 1776 and it sold rapidly more than 120,000 copies. Hence, it can be affirmed that this sort of pamphlets were spread quickly, ergo many people could read them and became convinced that a rebellion was needed (46).

This reaction against the Empire came somehow from the British Empire itself. England had imported in the colonies a revolutionary tradition as well as the fact that

colonists were pervaded by an extreme libertarian ideology introduced by radicals like Whig (18th century) that was a party against absolute monarchies; or Sidney (17th century), who was contemporary of Locke and was against the Divine right of kings and their unlimited power; he defended the rights of citizens. He was executed for treason and during 18th century he was considered a 'martyr to liberty'. Radical pamphlets enjoyed a wide popularity and taught colonists that government was oppressive by its nature and it had a tendency of infringing individual rights (39). Consequently, when colonists suffer the oppression of the British Empire they raised up against the Empire and all the injustices they were suffering.

4. TEXT ANALYSIS

Heretofore, it has been explained the period before the creation of the United States and all the causes that led American colonizers to their decision of becoming independent from the British Empire. However, what has been shown up to this point is the contemporary idea of what happened in North America during this period. This section is going to deal with the documents written during this chaotic period. All the texts that are going to be analyzed were produced by American colonizers who lived the Despotism of King George III and the struggle that took place between 1775 and 1776. Nevertheless, there is an exception; the second text was written by a British soldier who fought for the Empire. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to show the causes that the colonizers argued for the independence and the turbulent period that took place in North America before the independence.

4.1 The War Begins: Massachusetts, April 1775

The first text is called “The War Begins: Massachusetts, April 1775”. It is a piece of the memorandum written by Paul Revere. This man was a member of Sons of Liberty and of Massachusetts Committee of Safety during American Revolution. He is known by his famous midnight ride (Martello 307). Revere was sent to Lexington (Massachusetts) to inform that the British troops were planning to march into the countryside in order to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who were staying at a house in Lexington, and probably, the British Army planned to destroy the colony stores of weapons established in Concord (The Paul Revere House; Martello 308). At this point, it is essential to bear in mind the situation of this time between the British Empire and the colonies. The previous year (1774), the Parliament had passed a law which object was “to enable the king to take the life of any citizen of this at his pleasure; not, however, without the pretended solemnity of judicial proceedings” (Phinney 5). Therefore, the governor, who was directly appointed by the king, was the one in charge of designating the sheriff and the justices of the Supreme

Court. Consequently, the king was commanding indirectly over Massachusetts among other colonies since the governor was “the creature of the king” (5). British troops were sent to America in order to secure that this measure was obeyed. However, this measure irritated colonizers since they considered that it was a violation of their rights; whence, they disapproved this new norm. The colonial opposition was a sort of declaration of war to the British crown and it provoked a fragile situation between loyalists and rebels. People from Lexington “manifested their hatred to oppression and their devotedness to the cause of liberty” by collecting weapons and storing them (Phinney 13). Meanwhile, British troops waited for instructions; they were supposed to protect the orders of the king and secure that they were accomplished.

Returning to the memorandum, Revere’s mission was not an effortless one since the route involved many risks as he explains throughout all the text. For instance, at the beginning of his journey, when he had almost arrived to Charlestown, he saw two officers and he managed to escape from them. There was a large number of officers within this route since after running away from the first officers, he just found “two officers as before” (Revere 2). These two new officers were not alone; they went around Revere with their guns and stopped him. He explains that he was threaten with guns in his breast and asked about his journey. Thus, from this information, it is possible to assert that the British officers already knew what was going on. They knew that several rebels had the mission to inform the others about the arrival of British officers. This idea can be observed in the next quotation: “I told him I knew better, I knew what they were after; that I had alarmed the country all the way up, that their boats were *caught* around, and I should have 500 men there soon” (2). At this point, the author reveals his purpose to the British. He did this in order to show that they were prepared to fight against British army if necessary and that he had people waiting for him. However, in the next line, readers could feel surprised since one of the officers affirms that “they had 1500 coming”; hence, the British troops were larger in number, or it might be a bluff in order to frighten Revere. Whatever the case may be, the British soldiers needed information, and it is clearly explained within the text when Revere asserts: “Pistol to my head, and said he was going to ask me some questions, if I did

not tell the truth, he would blow my brains out”(2). They made him numerous questions and he answered them all, after that, they left him with four more men. The officer that was on command said to him that they were going towards his friends, and that if he attempted to run they would blow his brains out (3). Therefore, once they had information about the rebels, the British soldiers were going to achieve their mission and they would not let Revere to stop them. By this moment the British troops had arrived because in the path they heard guns fired. Revere saw the rebels, who were about fifty or sixty people, and the one in command told them not to attack before the British did it (4). He did not participate in this battle, but he saw how “ the Ministerial Troops appeared in sight behind the Meeting House; they made a short halt, when a gun was fired” (4) and the chaos started.

Therefore, Revere saw the beginning of a battle that could probably be the beginning of the war of independence. This text does not say how it ended, but how it begun since Revere left the place. In addition, it is not clearly seen if the author accomplished his mission or not; it seems that he could not inform all the towns and villages in his journey, but it is likely that he had help and other rebels notified the rest of places. This memorandum can lead contemporary readers to think that American patriots were prepared to fight before the British arrived since, as it is showed in the text, they had planned a way to inform if they should be prepared for the fight. This segment also reflects the fact that the British militia won in number to that of the rebels. Therefore, the British army was not only larger in number, but it has experienced soldiers whereas rebels were citizens that had been collecting weapons to fight against the Empire. All of this gave the British Militia a clear advantage over the American colonists.

4.2 The British Retreat From Concord

The second text that is going to be analyzed in this section is a segment of the diary of Frederick MacKenzie. This part of the diary narrates the facts that took place between 18th and April 21st 1775. It is essential to take into account that Frederick Mackenzie was a

British soldier; hence, in this text readers will see the other point of view of the Revolution. The first day that is depicted is April 18th, and Mackenzie tells that a large number of soldiers were commanded to embark. He is pertinacious describing preparations of the troops as we can see: “The Companies of our Regiment (the 23rd) marched accordingly, and were the first, complete, at the place of parade [...] As there was no public officer attending to superintend the Embarkation, which it was evident would take up a good deal of time, our two Companies, with the approbation of the Officers of the Navy, embarked in the nearest boats” (MacKenzie 5). The following day they were commanded to go and help the brigade that went out the night before. The mission of the British troops was to ensure the performance of the arbitrary Parliament laws and to destroy the provincial stores in order to complicate the American rebellion (Phinney 10). Therefore, people were afraid of this situation because when the soldiers were marching towards Lexington they did not see people walking and mostly all the houses “were in general shut up” (MacKenzie 6). Thus, it can be said that people did not want to bump into the British soldiers probably because they were supporting the rebels or because British were said to be violent, as it will be explained later in the Declaration of Independence. When MacKenzie and his colleagues arrived near Lexington they heard shots fired; they saw rebels who were disseminated, so they seemed not to be more than fifty (7). However, when the soldiers moved they could see that there were more rebels than they thought. In this moment, a battle was taking place, the rebels endeavored to gain British flanks, but finally the rebels left. It is likely the fact that this battle is the same that the one depicted in the previous text since it took place in the same date and at the same place. Consequently, with these two points of view, the story can be built: the rebels realized that the British soldiers were going there and they sent Revere to inform the other places; hence, when the soldiers were asked to go next to Lexington, the American patriots were prepared to fight and the battle started. The British troops marched rapidly and silently to Lexington and were more numerous than the rebels who were waiting for them (Phinney 20). When the soldiers arrived they were asked to fire and the chaos of the battle started. In addition, Phinney asserts that the number of soldiers was much larger than the number of colonizers, which helped the British troops to win the battle as can be seen in the following quotation: “As soon as the Lexington Company had

dispersed and the firing ceased, the British troops [...] gave three huzzas in token of victory” (22). After that, they left the place and returned to Boston. Subsequently, the next question is how did they come back to Boston; and it is explained within this diary. The soldiers were coming back to Boston by walking, but it was not a peaceful journey. As in the area next to Lexington it was widely known that the soldiers were there, “numbers of armed men on foot and on horseback, were continually coming from all parts guided by the fire [...] we were fired at from all quarters, but particularly from the houses on the roadside, and the Adjacent Stone walls (8). This situation did not improve since when the soldiers were near Cambridge the fire against them increased. They were commanded by Lord Percy, who ordered them to return “by way of Charlestown, which was the shortest road” (9). Nevertheless, this situation remained. The rebels were firing against them and they did not allow the soldiers good opportunities of getting good shots since they were hiding. As it has been said, some shots came from the houses; therefore, the soldiers forced some and entered; however, they could not find any person inside. This was a complicated journey for the British who finally arrived to their destination. At the end of the day, several soldiers were wounded, killed or missing. Those who were absent probably were captured by the rebels as prisoners because both sides captured hostages. In addition, two days later, the place where the British soldiers were living was “surrounded by Rebels who had intercepted all communication with the country” (18); hence, it began another battle.

4.3 Response to Lord Dunmore’s Declaration

The following text was published in the *Virginia Gazette*, which was a periodical written, as its name indicates, in Virginia during this period. This article was published on 24th November of 1775, seventeen days after the Dunmore’s proclamation. This article can be divided into three different sections: the first one is an introduction of the article, the second one is a copy of the text of Dunmore’s proclamation, and the third part corresponds to the response that is made against this proclamation. In the first segment, Mr. Purdie introduces the proclamation and asserts that Lord Dunmore’s heart is full of “malice and

treachery against the people who were once under his government” (81); hence, the author is affirming somehow that colonies are not under the British power anymore and that people like Dunmore are trying to boycott them. The reason why colonists used newspapers was to warn people about what the British Empire was trying to do against colonizers (Quarles 499). He also claims that Dunmore had violated the law, justice and humanity; therefore, he prepares his audience to read a heartless proclamation. Within the proclamation, Dunmore explains that he is going to execute the Martial Law with the goal of pursuing “peace and good order” (Purdie 81). This law commanded all the people who were capable of using arms to swear their loyalty to the British crown; those who would not do it would be considered traitors and their properties would be confiscated. This law shows that King George was aware of the rebellion that was taking place in the colonies; and he wanted to separate the colonies; in this case, Virginia into two different sides: rebels and loyal. This was an intelligent strategy since there were colonists that did not want to take part in the rebellion, but who did not defend the laws that Parliament was imposing over the colonies. In addition, this proclamation provoked the distrust between slaves and masters since the British army accepted Negroes and servants who were capable of bearing arms. Thus, this proclamation offers a better life to those servants and negroes who lived in terrible circumstances in this colony, and it caused anxiety to those masters of the South since it could bring a “servile insurrection” in those places where Afro-Americans outnumbered white masters (Quarles 495). Furthermore, the slaves would help to fill “the ranks of military laborers for His Majesty’s forces” (496), which would benefit loyal colonists. Mr. Purdie defends the idea that Dunmore made that offer to the negroes in order to boycott the masters of the South and that those negroes who accepted this sort of deal would be “weak and wicked” (Purdie 83). In addition, it is essential to know that this newspaper did not only publish this letter against Dunmore’s proclamation, but several of them. They all highlighted the topic of slaves and they tried to convince people that the English ministry was a worst enemy to the Negroes than the masters (Quarles 499). Then, Purdie enumerates all the actions that Dunmore, as well as the Parliament, took against the colonists; for instance, he asks his readers why Dunmore did secretly and treacherously lay snares for the lives of their unwary brethren (Purdie 83). After giving a list of detrimental

actions that British people did against the colonists, the author request readers to judge by themselves. However, after that he explains that reconciliation is impossible because British government had insulted them and their understandings; hence, although he asks readers to think by themselves, he is also giving them the answer that he considered was the right one. He asserts that Dunmore tried to enslave them and that this fact was unacceptable. This point is quite ironic since in Virginia slavery was a legal issue. Moreover, Mr. Purdie comes back to the subject of slaves and defends that this declaration is “cruel to the negroes” (85) since those who are weak enough to fight in the British troops will suffer the anger of Americans. He threatens not only those Negroes fighting against rebels, but also their families by asserting that “they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans” (85). Consequently it can be asserted that in Virginia, there was an undeniable apprehension of this proclamation that could cause a slave insurrection (Quarles 496). Furthermore, he explains how the British government tried to enslave them by creating acts of parliament that colonists did not coincide and their freedom was limited by an “unlawful power” (Purdie 84); ergo, colonists were on their right of fighting against this unfair situation being this cause a just one. However, what Mr. Purdie asserts in this article is nothing new, several radicals and public figures had affirmed before in pamphlets that the plan of the Empire was to enslave the colonies, and that this “regular and systematic” plan has been developed for years (Bailyn 120). They petitioned several times in a respectful way to be listened by the Crown and also they wanted to “avoid the horrors of a civil war” (Purdie 84). Nevertheless, what they have obtained with this dutiful way of acting was to be more and more oppressed by the Empire. Consequently, what Purdie is trying to say is that colonists had tried to be respectful and just, but the Parliament and the king answered them with tyrannical laws; thus, again, he is trying to justify the rebel cause. Their rebellion is against the state, but against a state that is led by corrupted and arbitrary power and that violates the natural rights of the members of society. He also claims that colonists are not the rebels, that those who should be considered rebels are those who robbed their rights. At this point, it can be said that Purdie is trying to convince his readers that the rebellion is a noble cause and that they should not be afraid because they are fighting against those rebels that could not care less about natural rights of the colonists.

Finally, he claims that he has given “a faithful view of what” colonists should expect (86) and declares before God that he only wants Americans’ welfare. Consequently, he finished his writing by alluding religion (God) and affirming that he is a good man who wants the prosperity of America.

4.4 The Declaration of Independence

“The Declaration of Independence” is one of the most important documents as a consequence of the American Revolution against the British Empire. It was the political means to end with the oppression that American colonists were suffering. For this reason, the Declaration of Independence is an essential document for the history of the United States. It is a revolutionary document because it defends the common will of the colonies that wanted to become free. Nothing like that had happened until this moment. As it has been explained in the previous section, where the causes of independence are discussed, the Declaration of Independence was written in the continental Congress, and representatives of the thirteen colonies signed it the 4th of July of 1776 (Howard 914). As Eoyan claims, “the Declaration of Independence was-literally in its time and figuratively in later years—revolutionary” (1449). This is going to be clearly seen throughout all this analysis. First of all, the Declaration of Independence is divided into three sections: an introduction, a body, and finally a conclusion.

The introduction connects philosophical values with political practices expressing, in this way, the underlying values of the new American nation. In the first paragraph, it is shown the intention of this writing. In the second one, it can be clearly seen several philosophical values that belong to the European Enlightenment. The Declaration claims, “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”(Declaration of Independence 1456) Thus, in this section the

representatives are showing their understanding of the rights of American citizens and they are closely related to Locke's ideas that can be found in his second of *Two treatises on Government* (Seller et al. 51). This philosopher was against the divine right the kings had and he defended natural rights of human being as well as the exaltation of reason as the characteristic that guides man to reach happiness and perfection (30). Furthermore, the Enlightenment and the European authors who belong to this period did have a great influence not only in the writing of this declaration, but in the maturation of intellectual and cultural life in the colonies (30). These implications and principles that follow the tradition of the Enlightenment would be decisive for the subsequent events in American history. In addition, in this same paragraph, it is clarified the reason for the rebellious actions since, in this century, mostly all the nations were ruled by monarchies and American colonists were fighting against one trying to establish a different sort of government. However, American colonists wanted to maintain beneficial diplomatic relationships with other nations. Consequently, it is explained that government should be defeated only if they become despotic, not for trivial causes (Tyler 15). This is easily seen when it reveals that "when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security" (Declaration of Independence 1455). Also, at the end of this paragraph it is highlighted this idea when it asserts that "the history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States" (1455). Americans thought that the British Crown were enslaving the colonies and bringing them under arbitrary government; in other words, their rights were oppressed by the tyrannical king (Bailyn 119). Consequently, it can be said that this document seek the establishment of a republic; hence, they only wanted the colonial separation and creation of a new nation with good diplomatic relationships with other countries. In addition, Sellers et al. affirm that the Declaration of Independence is "designed in large part as propaganda for world consumption" since it offers an ingenious interpretation of the events in which the villain that damaged the colonies is the king of England (52).

The central section of this document enumerates the abuses the colonists had suffered. At this point, it is essential to bear in mind that until a year before of the creation of this document few Americans could affirm that they wanted Independence from the Empire; they changed their minds as the pressure of events forced them into an open and clear break with England (Sellers et al. 50). Before making this decision, the colonial leaders demanded their rights as British citizens and their rights as men; hence, directly or indirectly American colonizers were using the basis of Locke's ideas in their rebellion (51). Consequently, readers will see that Americans wanted to show in the Declaration of Independence how the British Empire was unjust and how it broke the natural rights of the colonies settled in North America. Bailyn asserts that the central section of this document explains the malign purposes of the British Empire that had tried to enslave the free men of the colonies (156). There are twenty-seven reasons listed in this text, which can be separated within three different sections (Tyler 11). The first twelve arguments explain the abuses they suffered due to the tyrannical authority imposed by King George III. The second argument talks about the way in which the king had tried to stop the colonial legislation. Within the fifth paragraph, it is explained how George III tried to restrain colonist actions when it is affirmed, "He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people"(Declaration of Independence 1455). Hitherto, almost all the colonial assemblies had been invalidated for months or weeks as a result of the attempts of their resistance against the British authority. Further on, in the seventh argument, the colonizers blame the British king for not allowing the population in the states by "obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands" (1455). George III limited emigration of non-British Europeans to the colonies, although it was never prohibited, except in the case of skilled artisan (Jones 19). In addition, in several cases, prisoners were released from jail and sent to North America. In spite of the colonial protests, more than thirty thousand felons were deported to North America during the eighteen-century (19). The second group of reasons attacks directly the Parliament, which helped to destroy colonist's natural rights. For example, in the first paragraph of this group (thirteenth within the whole Declaration) it is

said that the king had imposed several laws coming from the British Parliament that colonists considered deterrent, illegitimate, and coercive, such as the creation of the colonial board of Trade. It is also highlighted the fact that the Parliament had cut off “our Trade with all parts of the world” (Declaration of Independence 1456); this makes reference to the laws that did not permit the free commercial market between North America and other European countries, as well as the boycott that the Parliament carried out by closing the port of Boston. Moreover, the Parliament is accused for “suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever”(1456) and this is because the Parliament showed its authority until 1776 with actions such as revoking the Stamp Act and passing the Declaratory Act annulling in this way the Americans’ rights (Tyler 12). Within the last group, readers will see the particular actions that the king had carried through in order to abandon the colonies and the violence used in order to repress the rebellion. This can be observed in the twenty-fourth paragraph, when the Declaration reveals: “He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people” (Declaration of Independence 1456). Americans accused the British king of devastating American shore towns since after the previously mentioned Battle of Lexington; the British massacred Norfolk and Charlestown among others (M’Grath 114). In addition, they show the cruelty of George III within paragraph twenty-sixth, where they claim that “he has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.”(Declaration of Independence 1456) In this case, they are completely truthful accusing the king for his malevolence because he permitted the imprisonment of American colonists on ships where they were forced to work for the British army against their fellows. The last argument against Britain is closely related to slavery. They affirm that the king “has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”(1456) In Virginia, those slaves who fought in the side of the British Crown were given freedom; and that is the reason why it is said that the king favored “domestic insurrections”, which means slave

revolts within the Southern colonies. Furthermore, Royal governors aroused Indian attacks on those frontier settlements that were less developed and protected than others.

In the last section of the Declaration of Independence, which can be considered to be a conclusion, the Americans affirm that they have tried to use non-violent procedures in order to secure their right, but they have been answered by “repeater injury”. Therefore, they restate that the British king is a despotic and tyrant one and that it does not fit with their ideal of freedom. They thought that as George III was a tyrant, they could not be free as long as colonies were considered part of the British Empire. They also attack British people since they felt left by those that they considered their brethren as British did not offer their help; this is explained in the second paragraph of this last section when it is asserted, “Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. [...] We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity.”(1456) Consequently, the only one option that Americans had at this point was to become independent from the Empire as they clarified in the last part of this same paragraph; “We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.” In addition, “the representatives of the United States of America”(1457) claim that they are not tyrants and they are doing this because it is what American colonizers want; that is, giving somehow authority to all the people within the colonies and showing that the idea of Independence is in colonists’ thoughts. At the end, it is revealed the idea they have about their new nation; it should be a free and independent nation formed by independent states that would have “full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do” (1457). This substantially means that they wanted a nation with all the rights and duties any other nation has in this epoch. After this conclusion all the representatives of the colonies signed.

As it has been previously explained, the Declaration of Independence is divided into three different parts. The first one, which can be considered as an introduction, shows respect to other nations and affirms that any community that wants independence should present all the reasons they have. The violations of basic rights, such as life or freedom are heavy argument for the search of independence; however, they should be demonstrated (Armitage 30). Thereby, the second part is a catalogue in which all the damage and usurpations carried out by George III are presented (Sellers et al 52). Within the last section they accuse British people for abandon the colonists and declare the British colonies independent states. This text represents the thought and desires of American colonists but the audience it addresses is the rest of the world; the different nations of Europe. In the diplomatic language of this period, the term declaration was a formal announcement made by an official body that could be a general manifest known around the world (Armitage 31). In addition, it is essential to know that this declaration was not the only document written by the Continental Congress since before this, they wrote fifteen official documents (letters, proclamations, requests and discourses) with the objective of having influence on the opinions of other nations (31). This is probably because the colonies wanted good diplomatic relations with other nations after the independence. Moreover, several American representatives, such as Richard Henry Lee thought that any European nation (such as France or Spain) would not commerce or join them while they were considered subjects of the British Empire; hence, this declaration was necessary to establish new relationships with European nations that could be considered legitimate. They also thought that the accusations of rebellions would remain until they declared their independence. Consequently, the American colonizers tried to show the world that they were not anymore citizens of the British Empire and that they were willing to establish new diplomatic relations and becoming in this way a new powerful nation.

5. CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, the causes that led American colonizers to Independence have been presented and discussed. For this, it is essential to understand the way in which North America was colonized. The British Empire started to explore and colonize the New World at the end of the sixteenth Century. The colonization was carried out by private enterprises and individuals who embarked in a dangerous voyage with the promise of a better life. Though the British Empire established specific institutions in order to control the colonies, this control was substantially focused on economic aspects since the colonies had a high degree of autonomy in government as their Constitutions show. This is one of the causes that led the colonies in the direction of autonomy.

Another cause of the independence was the laws that Britain imposed the colonies. Before the Seven Years' War, the relationship between the Empire and the colonies was beneficial. The British government could impose taxes over the colonies legally, such as the 'Molasses Act', which had the objective of avoiding French importation and therefore, obstructing the development of French colonies. At the end of the Seven Year's War, the Empire had an enormous debt that had to be paid; for this, the British government decided to impose new taxes over the colonies, which were not approved by Americans. Thereafter, the Parliament started to establish new Acts and taxes that colonizers did not approve because these altered the political and economical liberty that the colonies have featured until this moment. Consequently, colonizers showed an intermittent opposition to these measures, which provoked the awakening of hostilities within colonizers and mob action, such as nonimportation. The Empire answered to this opposition with the creation of new acts reasserting that the Parliament had the right and power to create new laws. Americans considered that these measures were a punch at colonial liberty, and Radical propaganda against the Empire and the tyrannical actions of the king George III convinced colonizers for the need of Independence. Therefore, in 1775 the War of Independence started.

In addition, as it has been explained within this dissertation, the texts written in that period are essential to understand the development of American Revolution. Therefore, the texts analyzed helped people to perceive American Independence in a clearer way. The two first texts show the harsh reality of the War of Independence, from the point of view of both American and British sides. They describe the previous day of the battle that took place in April 1775 in Lexington. Revere explains how colonizers were organized and had a plan for noticing all towns that British army had arrived. He was part of different colonial groups, and some of them were established with the purpose of protecting the American colonizers. This is the case of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety that entrusted Revere with his midnight ride. Revere had to ride towards countryside in order to notify that British troops were about to go to Lexington in order to capture John Hancock and Samuel Adams, and probably British soldiers were planning to continue travelling to Concord with the purpose of destroying the ammunition stores of the colonists. On the other hand, Mackenzie's diary reveals the difficulties that soldiers found in their march. Colonizers were hidden in houses and forests and they shot soldiers from these secret places. Hence, colonizers were decided to fight in order to defend their rights and they did everything possible to win this war.

Furthermore, the third text is part of a periodical and it is clearly a propaganda document in which Mr. Purdie tries to persuade Americans to fight for their rights against the tyrannical Empire. He inserts the Dunmore's Proclamation in order to show the strategies the Empire was using so as to impose its power. This proclamation commanded people capable of using arms to swear their loyalty otherwise they would be considered rebels and all their properties would be confiscated. This separated the population of Virginia into two sides: loyalists and rebels. In addition, the proclamation offered a better life to those Negroes who fought against rebels, which provoked anxiety among the masters of this colony. Purdie, highlights all the detrimental actions that the Empire took against colonists in order to persuade his audience to fight against Britain. He also defends the idea that colonizers had always tried to be respectful and just, but the Parliament and the king answered them with tyrannical laws; thus, he is trying to justify the rebel cause. To sum up,

this text is a good instance of how propaganda worked at this time and how the Empire was trying to take control over the colonies whereas Americans fought for their rights.

The last text analyzed in this dissertation is the “Declaration of Independence”. The ‘Declaration’ exposes the reasons why Americans wanted to achieve Independence by enumerating a list of tyrannical actions carried out by the King and the Parliament. The entire document is highly influenced by the Enlightenment and its European writers, such as Locke, and the principles and implications of the Enlightenment would be decisive for the subsequent development of America. Furthermore, colonizers wanted to show with this document that they were looking for good diplomatic relations with other countries because since that moment they considered that they were an independent new nation. Therefore, the main cause of the American Revolution was basically the fact that the Empire, after the Seven Year’s War started to impose its power over the colonies that were accustomed to autonomy. Moreover, all the taxes and new acts that were approved by the Parliament in order to pay the British debt and establish the King authority, provoked the anger of colonists who thought that the Empire was violating their rights. Americans fought (by using mob actions) defending their principles and they received tyrannical responses, which were detrimental for them. As George III was not willing to yield, he sent British soldiers to control the colonies, which prompted the War of Independence. Hitherto, Americans did not think about Independence, they only wanted to come back to the autonomy that they had before the Seven Years’ War, but with the beginning of this war the idea of becoming Independent spread among all the colonies. At this point, it is essential to bear in mind the importance of propaganda since it was the way of spreading information and persuading Americans to fight against the totalitarian Empire. Finally, the Declaration of Independence was the document that meant a turning point in the history of North American colonies because, since this moment, it was created a new nation that is nowadays known as United States of America.

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