

“No Taxation . . .

. . . Without Representation!”

In Britain stamp duty was levied on newspapers, pamphlets, playing cards, property conveyances and other legal and business documents, and in 1764 the Prime Minister, George Grenville, suggested that stamp duty be applied in the American colonies as well. Although the colonies protested vigorously, the Stamp Act became law in 1765.

The effect was electric and astonished American loyalists, of whom there were many. The Act set light to a giant bonfire of resentment, which had been building up among the Americans. They were particularly aggrieved at not being treated like British citizens and having no members in the Westminster parliament. It was summed up in the slogan “No

“Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make unsound of judgement.”

Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*

taxation without representation.”

There were riots in Boston and elsewhere, some of them led by self-styled “Sons of Liberty.” Town meetings railed against the Act, while newspapers and pamphlets bristled with resentful articles against what one New Yorker called those who had “invited despotism to cross the ocean and fix her abode in this once happy land.” Patrick Henry harangued the Virginia assembly in defense of freedom (“Give me liberty or give me death!”), while Rhode Island declared the Act unconstitutional. Delegates from nine colonies met in New York and denied parliament’s right to tax them. The act was repealed in 1766, but the damage was done. **RC**

The Dictator

German becomes ruler of Denmark

The extraordinary career of Struensee—the German doctor who briefly made himself master of a country whose language he did not speak and whose people and customs he despised—is a classic tale of unbridled ambition and ruthless lust for power.

Despite—or because of—being the son of a theologian, Struensee embraced the egalitarian and atheist ideas of Rousseau at an early age. After becoming a physician he was brought to Denmark by an exiled political faction eager to regain their dominance over the schizophrenic young king, Christian VII, by having him appointed the king’s physician. Struensee treated the monarch’s malady with some success, establishing a ruthless dominance over the mad king, which he cemented by becoming the lover of the young queen, Caroline Matilda.

At first ruling through puppet politicians, Struensee soon dispensed with such intermediaries and became dictator of Denmark on December 5, 1770, propounding a frantic series of radical reforms, some progressive (the establishment of hospitals for orphans; the curtailing of capital punishment, and the abolition of torture); others eccentric—ruthlessly slashing the salaries of officials partly to pay for his own extravagant love of balls and masquerades.

Struensee’s rule deeply offended the powerful and conservative Danish aristocracy and a plot was hatched to arrest him, the queen, and the king’s keeper Brandt, an ally of Struensee.

In January 1771, after ten months of increasingly despotic personal rule, the trio were arrested in their beds at Christiansborg Castle on the morning after a masquerade ball. Ironically, in view of his outlawing of the death penalty and torture, Struensee and Brandt were sentenced to have their right hands cut off, and then to be beheaded. **NJ**

Boston Throws a Party

Rejection of the Tea Act shows deep opposition to the British regime

After the Stamp Act the British regime’s every action became suspect and the American colonies became ungovernable. Boston had a strong tradition of independence and the British government’s attempts to siphon off money from the city’s port trade were resented. In 1770 British customs house guards fired on a mob of attackers, and killed five of them in what became known as the “Boston Massacre.”

Three years later came one of the most famous events in American history. On November 5 a town meeting in Boston passed resolutions against the new Tea Act, which gave the East India Company the exclusive right to sell tea in America. The first tea ships arrived on November 28 and at a mass protest meeting on December 16 a man named John Rowe asked, “Who knows how tea will mingle with salt water?” From a group who had come prepared in disguise as American Indians the cry went up, “Boston Harbor a teapot tonight!” Shouting war cries and armed with pistols, hatchets, and axes, they led hundreds of Bostonians to the three British merchant ships anchored in the harbor. Swarming on board the *Dartmouth*, they hacked the tea chests open and threw all the tea into the water. They did the same thing on the *Eleanor* and the *Beaver*. By about nine o’clock in the evening the harbor was heaving with masses of tea leaves. No one was hurt and the triumphant Bostonians went on a victory march through the city. The news of the “tea party” spread swiftly, inspiring further resistance to the British. **RC**

📍 Politician Samuel Adams was an instigator of the Boston Tea Party, leading protestors onto one of the ships..

🖼️ An eighteenth-century print celebrates the patriotic impact of what was originally a dispute over customs duties.

