Timeline of the Revolution, 1780–1783 [1]

1780 | 1781 | 1782 | 1783

1780

The British take Charleston, South Carolina

> After a brief fight, the British took Charleston, capturing 5,400 men and four American ships in the harbor. It was the worst American defeat of the war.

A mutiny in the Continental Army

> When the value of Continental currency sank to a new low, Congress had problems supplying the American army. Great shortages of food led to a short-lived mutiny among some Connecticut soldiers at Washington's camp in New Jersey.

The treason [2] of Benedict Arnold

> American General Benedict Arnold, frustrated and ambitious, began dealing with British General Sir Henry Clinton. After he was promised the command at West Point by General Washington, Arnold told Clinton that he would give the strategic American fortification to the British. But when British Major John André, acting as messenger, was captured, Arnold fled to a British ship, revealing his involvement in the treasonous plan. André was executed as a spy, and Arnold was made a brigadier general in the British army.

1781

Congress creates a Department of Finance

> American finances were in such dire straits that Congress saw the need for a separate department of finance. Robert Morris was appointed superintendent of finance.

The Articles of Confederation are ratified [3]

> With the ratification [4] of the Articles of Confederation, under discussion since 1777, Congress assumed a new title, "The United States in Congress Assembled."

The Battle of Yorktown

> French and American forces joined at Yorktown, on land and at sea, and attacked British fortifications. Key British points were soon held by the Americans and French, and British General Cornwallis soon surrendered, giving up almost 8,000 men. With this defeat, Britain lost hope of winning the war in America.

1782

Peace negotiations begin in Paris

British, French, and American commissioners met in Paris to discuss peace. The United States sent Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay. By November, the commissioners had drafted a peace treaty. Its terms called for Great Britain to recognize American independence and provide for the evacuation of all British troops. Great Britain also gave up its territory between the Mississippi River and the Allegheny Mountains, doubling the size of the new nation.

1783

The Army complains

When a delegation of army officers complained to Congress about their unpaid salaries and pensions, Congress had no quick solution. An anonymous letter urged officers to unite and attempt one last appeal to Congress. If its attempt was ignored, the army was prepared to revolt against Congress. Washington, addressing the army in person at its headquarters in Newburgh, New York, convinced them to be patient, and not to dishonor themselves after their glorious victory. Visibly moved, the officers adopted resolutions to present to Congress, and pledged not to threaten violence or rebellion.

Congress ratifies the preliminary articles of peace

After Spain, France, and Britain successfully came to terms, the treaty between France, Britain, and America was put into effect, and warfare formally ceased. Congress ratified the Articles of Peace on April 15.

The Loyalists and British evacuate New York

New York City was the last Loyalist refuge in America. Starting in April, nearly 30,000 Loyalists, knowing that the British soon would leave New York, packed their belongings and sailed to Canada and England, followed shortly by the British army. In November, when the British sailed away, Washington entered the city and formally bade farewell to his officers. Soon after, he resigned his commission.

The American Army disbands

In June, most of Washington's army disbanded and headed for home just before the British evacuated New York. A small force remained until all the British had departed.

Congress is threatened

A group of soldiers from Pennsylvania marched on Congress, demanding their pay. Armed and angry, they surrounded Independence Hall. The members of Congress eventually were allowed to leave the building; they fled to Princeton, New Jersey.

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