



This is NewsLetter Issue No. One ~ For the year 2023

The League of Armed Neutrality

A number of European countries formed an alliance that was aligned neither with Great Britain nor with the fledgling United States of America. The League of Armed Neutrality was created to safeguard the alliance's members' ships attempting to carry on trade and commerce. Its title contains two words which describe the aims of the alliance. The word: *Neutrality* described the aim of the alliance to remain neutral between Great Britain and the revolting Colonies. The word: *Armed* revealed the alliance's claim to the right to be armed and to be able to use those armaments against anyone who attempted to restrict their ships' movements.

During the late summer of 1775, King George III of Great Britain made a request of the Russian tsarina, Empress Catherine II (*aka* the Great), for 20,000 Russian troops to assist Great Britain's forces in her war with the rebellious American colonies. Initially,

Catherine expressed an interest in supplying troops to the English as a paid mercenary force. But later the Empress, upon the advice of her advisors, decided that she could not accommodate the English king's request.

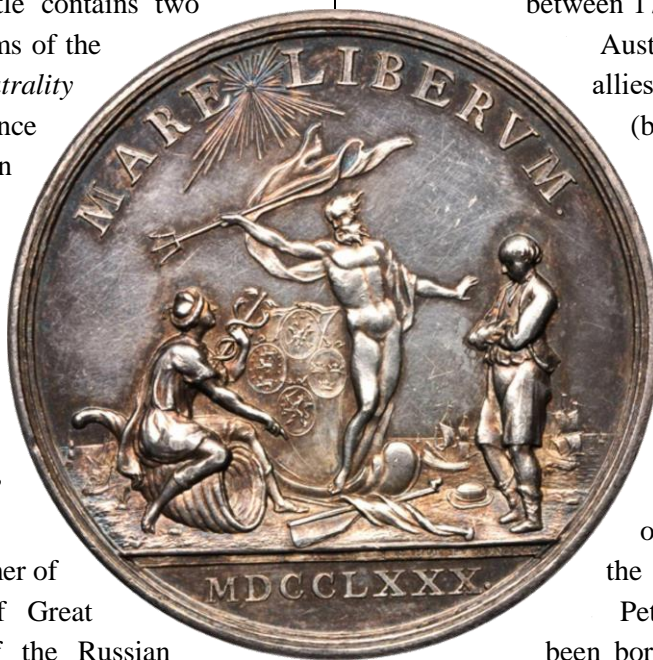
Russia had just emerged from an alliance, between 1758 and 1762, with France and

Austria against England and her allies in the Seven Years' War (better known in America as the

French and Indian War) in addition to a war with Turkey from 1768 to 1774. She had also, in 1774, quelled an internal conflict, known as the Pugachev Rebellion, in which a peasant, Emelian Pugachev (who claimed to be the dead Peter III) led a revolt of the common people against the long-distance control of St Petersburg. Catherine, who had

been born Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst of

Prussia, and renamed when she became the bride of Peter III, ended the rebellion by sending government troops, just returning from the war with Turkey, against



the rebels.

The German principalities of Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick had offered to supply troops, having been assured by the English ambassadors that they would be sent to Ireland to relieve the British troops maintaining the peace there. It was only after the Irish executive protested the intention of the English parliament, that it was decided that the German mercenaries should be sent to America to serve garrison duties there. The English were not so sure that the Germans could be trusted on the field of battle. The Hessians, as all of the mercenary troops from Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick would come to be known, were the second choice, though; the English parliament's first choice had been the Russians. When the refusal was received from Catherine, the offers from Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick were quickly accepted.

Although the matter was ended, the rumors of Russia aiding England continued to surface in America for a long time after England had lost hope in it. In a letter to Richard Henry Lee, dated 18 November, 1777 from his camp at White Marsh, General George Washington asked:

"Have you any late advices from Europe? Is there any good grounds for the report of Russians coming out?"

The British Cabinet had approved the Navy's practice of seizing any ship which it thought might be carrying goods (*i.e.* contraband) for the Americans, and

taking possession of the cargo. The practice infuriated the governments of the maritime countries of Europe because the British seized not only true contraband, but also practically anything else they found on board the ships. In effect, it was a sort of piracy, sanctioned by the government. Largely a result of that practice, as the American Revolutionary War progressed, Great Britain found herself running out of allies. The Netherlands, on

DE MAN IN 'T HEMBD, OF DE GEFNUIKTE HOOGMOED.



VERKLARING. 1. EEN MAN IN 'T HEMBD, IN VOLLE RAZERNY. 2. EEN AMERIKAN, DIE LACHENDE ZYNE DEURS EN KLEDEREN WEGDRAAGT. 3. EEN MUSKOVIERER DREIGENDE HEM TE SLAGEN. 4 EN 5. EEN DEEN EN ZWEED HEM DE ARMEN VASTHOUTENDE. 6. EEN HOLLANDER DIE HEM AAN DE KETTING LEGT. 7. EEN FRANSCHMAN HEM EEN ZOTSKAP OPZETTENDE. 8. EENIGE AFGETAKELDE KAPERS. 9. EEN VLOOT KOOPVAARDYSCHEPEN ONGESTOORD VARENDE. 10. EEN MAN DIE DIT STAMPVOETENDE AANZIET. 11. EENIGE VERSCHUERDE TRAKTATEN.

whom the British had relied at the start of the War, was, by the Autumn of 1779, actually engaged in transporting supplies for the Americans. Spain's loyalties to Great Britain were questionable, and will be noted later. Russia would not enter into any alliances with the British, and her neighbors on the Baltic Sea, Sweden and Denmark-Norway, likewise snubbed the British.

It quickly became apparent that the only allies that Great Britain could count on were the Hanoverian principalities of Germany and Portugal.

General George Washington wrote a letter to

the President of the Congress on 05 August, 1776, in which he stated:

"The Seizure of our Vessels by the Portuguese, is I fear, an event too true, their dependence upon the British Crown for aid against the Spaniards, must force them to comply with every thing required of them."

Spain had her own objectives that she hoped the American Revolution would facilitate. At the beginning of the War, Spain was somewhat neutral on the decision of with whom to side. The Treaty of Paris of 1763, closing the Seven Years War (*aka* the French and Indian War), had awarded to Spain the French regions west of the Mississippi River and the island of Cuba, while taking from her the Florida territory. Spain did not



particularly favor the British over the French, her traditional enemy, but she did favor opposing the British on account of Britain's alliances with Portugal, with whom Spain was presently on good terms, but desired to dominate.

As the American Revolutionary War unfolded, Spain maintained a neutral stance. At first, Spain's involvement in the American War was the furnishing of

money secretly to the colonies (through the War, Spain furnished the colonies with subsidies and loans to the amount of \$645,000). Open war with Great Britain was not favored by the Spanish government because of three factors: 1.) King Charles III feared that he would appear to be under the influence of his nephew, Louis XVI of France; 2.) the Spanish class of gentry disliked the French and were opposed to any alliance with that country; and 3.) it was justifiably feared that were the American colonies to gain their independence, they would next go after the Spanish territories in the New World. So rather than openly oppose Great Britain, Spain chose to attempt to subvert her, hoping in the end to regain Gibraltar, Minorca, Jamaica and the Florida territories.

Count Floridablanca, the Spanish foreign minister, made an offer to Great Britain to mediate that country's disputes with France; her price would be the

island of Gibraltar. But George III refused the offer, and so, on 12 April, 1779 Spain entered into a treaty with France, the *Convention of Aranjuez*, in which the two countries agreed to assist the Americans until Gibraltar would be won for Spain. Although Spain did not agree to recognize American independence, her diplomatic relations with Great Britain certainly were at an end. The Spanish/French alliance was a

favorable thing for Russia. It assured her that she could continue to maintain her trade route from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean without too much trouble.

John Jay, a delegate to the Continental Congress from New York, and later the minister to Spain, wrote to General Washington on the 25th of August, 1779 in which he stated that:

Britain refused the mediation of Spain at a Time when their Spirits were elated by their Successes in the West Indies, and the southern States; and by the accounts they received of Discord in Congress, Discontent among the People, and a Prospect of the Evils with which we

were threatened by the Depreciation of our Currency. Deceived by these illusory Gleams of Hope, they permitted their Counsels to be guided by their Pride. What Reason they may have to expect Succor from other Powers, is as yet a Secret. Mr. Gerard is decided in his opinion, that they will obtain none. The Conduct of France in establishing Peace between Russia and the Porte has won the Heart of the Empress; and the influence of Versailles at Constantinople, will probably give Duration to her Gratitude. The Emporer and Prussia are under similar obligations. The latter wishes us well, and the Finances of the former are too much exhausted to support the Expences of War without Subsidies from Britain, who at present cannot afford them. There is no Reason to suspect that the Peace of Germany will soon be interrupted. Britain may hire some Troops there, but it is not probable she will be able to do more. Portugal and the Dutch, while directed by their Interest, will not rashly raise their Hands to support a Nation, which like a Tower in an Earthquake, sliding from its Base, will crush every slender Prop that may be raised to prevent its Fall.

In his reply to Jay, dated 7 September, 1779 from West Point, General Washington conjectured on the possibility, though not probability, of an alliance

between Great Britain and Russia, Denmark, the Holy Roman Empire (i.e. Germany), Holland and Portugal.

It really appears impossible to reconcile the conduct Britain is pursuing, to any system of prudence or policy. For the reasons you assign, appearances are against her deriving aid from other powers; and if it is truly the case, that she has rejected the mediation of Spain, without having made allies, it will exceed all past instances of her infatuation. Notwithstanding appearances, I can hardly bring myself fully to believe that it is the case; or that there is so general a combination against the interests of Britain among the European powers, as will permit them to endanger the political ballance. I think it probable enough, that the conduct of France in the affairs of the Porte and Russia will make an impression on the Empress; but I doubt whether it will be sufficient to counterballance the powerful motives she has to support England; and the Porte has been perhaps too much weakened in the last war with Russia to be overfond of renewing it. The Emperor is also the natural ally of England notwithstanding the connexions of Blood between his family and that of France; and he may prefer reasons of National policy to those of private attachment. Tis true his finances may not be in the best state, though one campaign could hardly have exhausted them, but as Holland looks up to him for her chief protection, if he should be inclined to favor England, it may give her Councils a decided biass the same way. She can easily supply what is wanting in the Article of money; and by this aid, give sinews to that confederacy. Denmark is also the natural ally of England; and though there has lately been a family bickering, her political interest may outweigh private animosity. Her marine assistance would be considerable. Portugal too, though timid and cautious at present, if she was to see connexions formed by England able to give her countenance and security, would probably declare for her interests. Russia, Denmark, The Emperor, Holland, Portugal and England would form a respectable counterpoise to the opposite scale. Though all the maritime powers of Europe were interested in the independence of this Country, as it tended to diminish the overgrown power of Britain, yet they may be unwilling to see too great a preponderacy on the side of her rivals; and when the question changes itself from the separation of America to the ruin of England as a Naval power, I should not be surprised at a proportionable change in the sentiments of some of those

States which have been heretofore unconcerned Spectators or inclining to our side. I suggest these things rather as possible than probable; it is even to be expected that the decisive blow will be struck, before the interposition of the Allies England may acquire can have effect. But still as possible events, they ought to have their influence and prevent our relaxing in any meassures necessary for our safety, on the supposition of a speedy peace or removal of the War from the present Theatre in America.

An alliance was indeed made between a number of the countries that General Washington feared would join with Great Britain, but it was not with Great Britain that they joined. Instead, during the winter of 1779, they formed their own alliance in the form of a treaty which was given the name of the *League of Armed Neutrality*, declaring their neutrality in the conflict between Britain and her American colonies. The League was initially conceived by the Danes, but it was Catherine of Russia who announced it.

On 28 February 1780 Empress Catherine II announced the League of Armed Neutrality to the world. Her announcement shocked, in particular, Great Britain because George III and the British Parliament had believed that Russia would continue as an ally against the revolting Colonies.

Sweden, Finland and the union of Denmark and Norway (including the Duchies of Holstein and Schleswig) immediately joined the League: the union of Denmark-Norway on 9 July and Sweden on 1 August. At the time, the Kingdom of Norway included the Faroes, Greenland and Iceland. Denmark included the Danish Gold Coast (of Africa), the Danish West Indies in the Caribbean, and the Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean.

The purpose of the League of Armed Neutrality was to oppose the English assertion that she had the right to seize anything believed to be 'enemy' goods, regardless of whether or not they were being carried on enemy or neutral ships.

The principles of the treaty were issued by the League and the belligerent countries involved in the American War (*i.e.* Great Britain, Spain and France) were invited to accept them. Both Spain and France readily accepted the principles as they were presented. But Great Britain, as one would assume, refused to

accept them; rather she chose to simply ignore them.

Despite the fact that it took nearly the whole



duration of the war to accomplish, all of the principal European maritime countries eventually joined the League. The States General of the Netherlands voted to join the League on 18 November, 1780, and formally ratified the treaty on 04 January, 1781. Portugal, Britain's old ally, ratified the treaty on 24 July, 1782. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies joined the League on 21 February, 1783 (after the Treaty of Paris had already been signed). Though not maritime countries, Prussia and Austria also joined the League in 1782, perhaps simply to show the British where they stood.

Since the purpose of the League was to counter the British seizure of goods on their ships, there was no overt reason for the Americans to subscribe to, or otherwise accept, the principles. Nonetheless, the Empress Catherine sent a letter stating the League's principles to the Continental Congress. In September of 1780 the delegates assembled in the Second Continental Congress took into consideration the proposal sent by the Empress Catherine concerning neutrality on the world's seas. The report to the Congress by Samuel Adams was as follows:

Whereas her Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, animated with the clearest sentiments of Justice, equity and moderation, and a strict regard to the unquestionable rights of neutrality and the most perfect freedom of Commerce that can consist with such neutrality has notified both to the belligerent and neutral Powers, the following propositions to which his Most Christian Majesty, the Illustrious ally of these United States and his Catholic Majesty two of the Belligerent Powers, and most of the neutral maritime Powers in Europe have acceded, to wit:

1. That Neutral vessels may sail, without being liable to molestation from port to port and along the coasts of nations at war.
2. That the effects belonging to the subjects of powers at war should be free in neutral vessels, excepting only contraband.
3. That in ascertaining what shall be deemed *contraband* the Empress will hold herself bound by that which is declared in the 10 and 11 articles of her Treaty of Commerce with Great Britain, and extend the obligations contained in those articles to all the powers at war.
4. That to determine when a port shall be said to be *blocked up*, this term shall only be applied to that where a sufficient number of vessels belonging to the power that invests it are stationed so near as evidently to render the entrance into it hazardous.
5. That the principles above stated ought to serve as a rule in all proceedings whenever there is a question concerning the legality of captures.

The Congress of the United States of America willing to testify their moderation and regard to the rights of neutrality and freedom of commerce, as well as their respect for the powers and potentates who have adopted the propositions aforesaid have

Resolved, That all Neutral vessels have by the Law of Nations a right to navigate freely to and from the ports and on the coasts of powers at war, when not prohibited by treaty or municipal law.

That in the cases aforesaid the effects of belligerent powers, or belonging to their subjects shall be free in neutral vessels except always contraband. That the term contraband be confined to those articles expressly declared such by the ----- article of the Treaty of amity and Commerce of the 6th day of February 1778 between his Most Christian Majesty and these United States.

That with regard to ports or places blocked up or closely invested, none shall be considered as such but those which by a siege or blockade are so closely invested that an attempt cannot be made to enter such ports or places without evident danger.

That the above principles serve as a rule in all proceedings of justice in the United States on all questions of capture.

That all captains and commanders of armed vessels whether public and of war or private holding commissions from and under the United States of America in Congress assembled be and hereby are strictly enjoined and required to observe the propositions above stated as a rule of conduct and govern themselves accordingly, and that the Board of Admiralty in the Instructions which they may give, and the Maritime Courts or Courts of Admiralty of the several states, and the Court of Appeals in the Cases of Captures in their several proceedings and adjudications concerning the legality of captures determine and decide agreeably to the principles aforesaid.

Ordered that the Committee of Foreign affairs transmit copies of the above act to the Minister Plenipotentiary of these States at the Court of Versailles to be by him communicated to the Neutral Powers in Europe and others whom it may concern.

The delegates assembled in Congress discussed the proposal of Empress Catherine, and then voted whether or not to accept it. The vote was fourteen ‘yeas’ to eight ‘nays’ and therefore accepted. It was also resolved by the delegates assembled in Congress that copies of the resolution be transmitted to the ‘Ministers of the United States’ and to Monsieur de Marbois, the charges des affaires for the French King (*aka* his Most Christian Majesty).

During the session of 15 December, 1780, the delegates assembled in Congress considered a suggestion made by Arthur Lee that it might be advantageous to cultivate the friendship of the Court of Russia. Out of that discussion came the following resolution: *Resolve, that an Envoy be sent (for that purpose) as soon as possible to reside at the Court of Russia.* On 19 December, Francis Dana, a delegate from the state of Massachusetts Bay, was elected to serve as the minister to the Court of Russia. The commission given to Mr. Dana stated that in addition to cultivating the friendship between the United States and Russia, he was “*authorized in our name, and on behalf of the United States, to propose a treaty of amity and commerce between these United States and her said Imperial Majesty...*” The written instructions to Mr. Dana stated that “*The great object of your negotiation is to engage her imperial majesty to favour and support*

the sovereignty and independence of these United States...” It might be noted that during his two-year sojourn in Russia, Dana was neither received nor recognized in his official capacity. Catherine was said to have observed strict impartiality. Only after Great Britain acknowledged the independence of the United States did the Russian empress enter into any kind of formal dealings with the United States representatives.

In the Autumn of 1780, with no end in sight for the War, the parliament of Great Britain made one final effort to secure Russia as an ally. On 28 October, 1780 Sir James Harris was instructed by the British Cabinet to discover if the offer of some British colony to the Russian empress in exchange for an alliance and the promise of troops would be fruitful. Harris suggested the island of Minorca, having learned that a base in the Mediterranean was one thing that Catherine had wanted for some time. The British Cabinet made their proposal to the king on 03 January, 1781. But George III was not in favor of the idea of offering anything; he stated that he would never cede a possession which had not been conquered. As it turned out, Catherine, when informed of the scheme to gain a Russian alliance, responded that she was not interested in it anyways. She was then preoccupied with the Ottoman Empire, and did not wish to be bothered with the conflict between Great Britain and her colonies.



2023 Meeting Dates

First Quarterly Meeting	March 11	Bedford Hoss's
Second Quarterly Meeting	June 10	Creekside Inn
Third Quarterly Meeting	September 9	Bedford Hoss's
Fourth Quarterly Meeting	December 9	Creekside Inn

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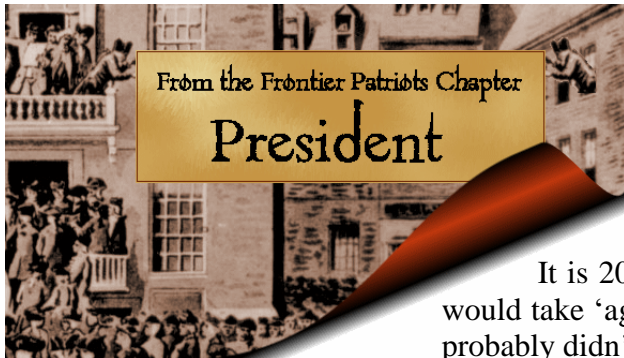
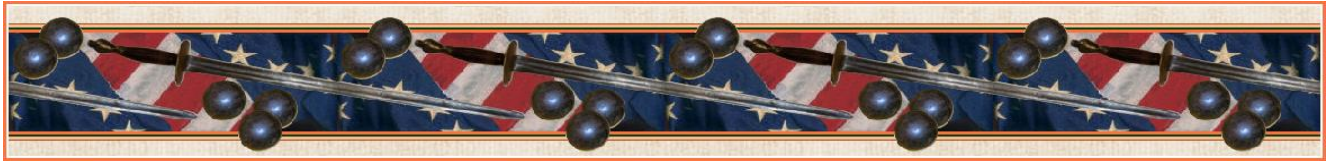
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The next meeting of the
Frontier Patriots Chapter
of the Sons of the American Revolution
will be held at Hoss's restaurant
at Business 220, Bedford, PA
on Saturday, 11 March 2023
starting at 12 Noon.

It is 2023 already. I bet ten years ago you thought that 2023 would take 'ages' to get here. On that morning in the year 2013 you probably didn't even think about this day in the year 2023 because it seemed that 2023 would be so far in the future. The point I am making is that the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America is coming EXTREMELY soon! It's not even ten years away. It's only a little over two years away! If we want to make it memorable, we need to get busy soon. Please send any ideas you have to my attention. The email address is at the end of this newsletter and if you get a hard copy instead, my address is on the envelope.



For those of you that receive this newsletter by US mail, if you have an email address, we would appreciate you informing us of it to use for future newsletters. Printing and mailing these newsletters is not that expensive, but it is time consuming. Please send to our Secretary Larry Smith at schmitt@motherbedford.com

Frontier Patriots Chapter website: <https://frontierpatriots.com>