

IDEAS 4 (Set 1)

Analysis: History - Necessary Revolution

SUMMARY/ABSTRACT:

There are some sophisticated and impressive ideas in this paper. Based on quality alone, this paper could score a five. However, a lack of opposing arguments in substantiation keeps this paper at a four.

CRITERION 1—QUALITY:

The ideas and content in this paper reveal a depth of understanding and a few nuances are introduced. One example of a depth of understanding is the argument that the colonists were enslaved (rather than made to feel secure as extended British citizens), and that “Britain took the colonies under their control, rather than providing them security.” (A way to make this kernel even *deeper* would be to link back to Locke and identify *why* “enslavement” was a violation of a natural right.) Also, the idea that the Boston Tea Party served as a declaration of war because of its intent (and therefore an appropriate war-like response is justified) is nuanced and fairly insightful. However, while there is some nuanced thought here, the main argument does not hinge on the true nuance of Locke’s language. A better incorporation of this would push the paper to a 6 in quality.

CRITERION 2—SUBSTANTIATION:

The main, driving reason this cannot be a 5 is that there is a clear opportunity to address opposing arguments (and refute them) that the writer nearly completely ignores. In fact, this prompt—which presents two critics’ stance on the Revolution and asks the writer to pick a side—cries out for a clear refutation of the opposing argument. There are missed opportunities in the introduction, and in each of the subarguments. The introduction could present a clearer background on Hobbes’ protection theory, and then prove either a) that the theory is not valid in of itself (i.e. disprove that people must give up their rights in return for protection) or b) that the British and American relationship does not serve as an example of this theory (argue that the British did not offer the Americans true protection). The second option is particularly tantalizing here and a clear missed opportunity. (For example: “Opponents argue that the American Revolution was a clear break of the social contract that must exist between mother countries and their colonies; in return for protection, the colonists must give up certain rights for the greater good and therefore any revolution would be morally unjustified. In this argument, wanting a voice in taxation and trade would not be a right that the colonists could expect. However, the British never offered true protection to the American colonists. Every law was made in order to serve the *British* populace, and did not exist to protect the lives as the colonists. Because this basic protection was never granted, the social contract did not exist and therefore, the Americans we justified in rebelling.”

There are also clear opportunities in each of the situational examples. What was the British rationale for The Stamp Act and The Navigation Act? Why might someone call the Boston Tea Party an unjust demonstration by the colonists, and why would that person be wrong? Any exploration of these ideas would add clear depth and persuasiveness to the overall ideas in the paper.

Essay: History - Necessary Revolution

The Necessary American Revolution

A revolution is defined as a rebellion or an uprising of a people against a government that they find unjust. This upheaval tends to occur when a social contract, an intangible, unwritten agreement between the citizens and the government, has been violated, causing outrage amongst the citizens. There were two prestigious philosophers that had differing theories concerning this social contract. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes believed that in return for protection, the people gave up their rights to the government. John Locke, on the other hand, believed, “Men have rights by their nature” that cannot be taken away regardless of their agreement with the government. Clearly, all humans’ inalienable rights cannot simply be seized by the government, and if someone attempts to expunge these rights, the people have “a liberty to kill the aggressor” (Locke). Natural rights are civil liberties that no one has the power to simply steal as part of an “agreement.”

The American Revolution was the rebellion of British colonies established in the United States against English Parliament. After the French and Indian War, the relationship between the Americans and the British went sour. Britain enforced restrictions on where the people could settle in America. Parliament was constantly creating taxes without their consent and forcing the colonists’ to pay them anyway. The Americans were fed up with Britain trying to strip them of their liberty. All of this injustice the Americans faced led to their desire to be liberated from Britain. Since Britain’s actions practically dehumanized Americans, they had the right to go against the government, therefore justifying the American Revolution. Hobbes’ was right that people must give up liberties to the government in exchange for protection; however, Locke’s theory that people have certain rights that cannot be taken away overpowers the agreement between the two parties. All people retain the “right to life and liberty,” (Locke) as Locke said in his social contract theory, “And hence it is that he who attempts to get another man into his absolute power does thereby put himself into a state of war with him” (Locke). Some historians believe that the colonists in America during the 18th century were in the wrong when they rebelled against Britain and started the American Revolution. Even though Britain did help the colonists’ get established in America, the colonists’ rebellion was indeed justified. No matter how much they may have aided the Americans, the Parliament had no right to strip them of their liberty. The three primary events that portray their just mutiny were: the Navigation Acts, the Stamp Act, and the Boston Tea Party.

The Navigation Acts were a clear example of the colonists’ validation behind the American Revolution because Britain was trying to oppress them by cutting off their ability to trade with other countries. These acts put restraints on who the colonists could trade with, limiting them to Great Britain. They were practically prohibited from trading with any other countries outside of their mother country. In the philosopher-economist Adam Smith’s book *Wealth of Nations*, he states that “To prohibit a great people, however, from making all that they can of every part of their own produce, or from employing their stock and their industry in the way that they judge most advantageous to themselves is a manifest violation of the most sacred right of mankind” (6). Britain deprived the Americans from taking full advantage of their “produce.” This deprivation of prosperity denied the Americans of an inalienable right:

liberty. In Locke's theory, if a government attempts to take "absolute power" (Locke) over a people, they are setting themselves up to be attacked. This was the case with Britain and the Americans. Britain overstepped the power that the colonists had given to them, and basically asked for all of the disobedience that followed in the colonies. In a forum with Berkeley, the Governor of Virginia, a London official asked, "What advantages or improvements do you observe that may be gained to your trade or navigation?"(5). Berkeley responded saying, "None, unless we had liberty to transport our pipe staves, timber, and corn to other places besides the King's dominions" (5). Britain's limits placed on the colonists' commercial relations with other countries did not better the economy or conditions in America. It was a selfish act to protect the affluence of Britain and prevent other European countries from gaining a prestige greater than their own. When the act was passed, the success of the colonies was not kept in mind. King George was only worried about the English economy. Since the mother country was no longer protecting the colonies, why would she expect the colonies to abide by her rule? Britain was no longer holding up their side of the contract, so the colonies were not obligated to respect the agreement any longer.

The Stamp Act was merely one event that demonstrated Britain's unjust acts that led to the American Revolution because Great Britain unjustly forced "taxation without representation" on the colonies. In the House of Commons' forum with Benjamin Franklin, he was asked if the colonies were "reimbursed by Parliament," and his answer was, "We were only reimbursed what, in your opinion, we had advanced beyond our proposition, or beyond what might reasonably be expected from us; and it was a very small part of what we spent"(5). During the Seven Years' War, the colonies spent millions and the Stamp Act was only stripping them of even more money that they would never be compensated for. Britain took advantage of them, supposedly paying them back when the colonies were not getting back nearly as much as what they had been forced to give to Britain. In the non-importation agreement in the book *The Constitutions of the Several Independent States of America*, the people stated, "His Majesty's American subjects are oppressed; and having taken under our most serious deliberation the state of the whole continent, find that the present unhappy situation of our affairs is occasioned by a ruinous system of colony administration, adopted by the British Ministry about the year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these colonies and with them, the British empire"(10). The Stamp Act was more of a burden on the colonies than anything else. It made them slaves to Europe and prevented them from creating a profit for their own country. Their production in America was simply being used to increase England's wealth, defeating their hope to be a prosperous nation. Britain took the colonies under their control, rather than just providing them with security. Since Great Britain had, once again, transgressed their control of the colonies, the Americans had every right to revolt. Therefore, all of their actions that followed after Britain's wrongdoings were justified.

The Boston Tea Party was the result of the growing fury of Americans, due to Britain's corrupt and unreasonable actions. Britain had held them down for so long, and they could not bear it anymore. Before the Boston Tea Party occurred, the Tarring and Feathering Committee wrote a letter to the men collecting taxes on tea stating that, "In the first place, we must tell you that Pennsylvanians are, to a man, passionately fond of freedom, the birthright of all Americans...sincerely believe no power has a right to tax them without their consent"(14). The Pennsylvanians, along with all other Americans, felt that they were entitled to a say in taxes imposed on them. They deserve their freedom and should not be subjugated by such an unruly government. Britain violated the natural rights of the Americans that all human beings

automatically have. The tax on tea without the colonists' consent was, therefore, Britain's declaration of war to the colonies. In a letter between two business associates, John Andrews and William Barrell, John Andrews says, "However it is the opinion of most people that we stand an equal chance now, whether troops are sent in consequence of it or not"(16). The colonies were no longer willing to let British Parliament control their lives. They felt their voice needed to be heard despite the consequences. They had no representation in Parliament which resulted in the constant injustice they faced. Their only option to gain back the inalienable rights they had been deprived of was to rebel against the Parliament who was guilty of massacring their liberty as human beings.

The American Revolution was more than justified; it was necessary. John Locke's social contract theory was that people have the right to rebel against a government that is not doing their job properly or attempting to take absolute power. Britain had failed to secure America; Britain tore them down by restricting them. In addition, Britain had attempted to Americans slaves to their mother country rather than an extension of their mother country. Clearly, the only way to prove their strength to the tyrannical Parliament was to rebel against them. The three key events that illustrate the Americans' rationale for rebelling are the Navigation Acts, the Stamp Act and the Boston Tea Party.