

nineteenth-century paintings of Revolutionary battles and events, and modern photographs of uniforms, arms, and other relics of the period. With the exception of the first chapter, which contains a brief sketch on England during the Revolutionary era and which was written by Dr. J. H. Plumb, Lecturer in History at Cambridge University, the exciting and colorful text is the work of Bruce Lancaster, free-lance author of another account of the Revolution, *From Lexington to Liberty*. Lancaster follows Plumb's chapter and his own short description of the American colonies on the eve of the revolt with a lucid narrative of the military fortunes of the American army from that tragic night of April 19, 1775, on Lexington Green to that happy day "in the trenches before Yorktown" on October 19, 1781. His narrative is broken only by a chapter recounting the events that led up to the Declaration of Independence in July, 1776, and by two special pictorial chapters, one illustrating the equipment, uniforms, weapons, and tactics of the participants and the other depicting the naval apparatus of the war.

Errors in fact and interpretation are few except in the chapter on events preceding the outbreak of hostilities, where, one suspects, the writer is less at home. It will come as a surprise to most Revolutionary historians to read that Massachusetts was a corporate colony (p. 54), that "few Royal governors were even second-raters" (p. 54), that George Mason was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses during the contest over the Stamp Act (p. 57), that the Crown instead of Parliament claimed the right to tax the colonies (p. 64), and that Governor Tryon was ever unpopular with eastern planters in North Carolina (p. 65). Objections may also be raised to the assertion that Negro slavery was "essential to tobacco production" in the southern colonies (p. 51). In addition, it might with some validity be argued that the title of *Revolution* is inappropriate inasmuch as the volume is concerned almost exclusively with military events and for the most part ignores constitutional, political, social, economic, and intellectual developments—which some would contend constituted the real Revolution. Still, these objections are minor and detract little from this otherwise excellent volume, which must certainly be the most handsome book ever published on the American Revolution. An index greatly enhances its value.

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The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by Participants. Two volumes. Edited by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1958. Vol. I: Pp. xxxi, 662. Vol. II: Pp. xviii, 663-1348. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$15.00 per set.)

"The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six" is a phrase frequently used to describe the mood of the revolutionary generation in American history. Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris have assigned this expression to their two-volume collection which goes a long way in conveying the meaning of that spirit to present-day readers. The men and women who participated in the stirring and dramatic events that created a

new nation tell the story in their own words. In the numerous accounts covering the period from the Boston Tea Party to the Peace of Paris in 1783, the Spirit of 'Seventy-Six reveals itself in various ways and forms and becomes definable. It was the force that led to American resistance against the greatest odds; it was the fierce determination of leaders to fight on despite numerous defeats; it was the indomitable will of a people who faced the tragedy of fighting a civil war as well as one to achieve independence.

Commager and Morris combed through a massive amount of published and manuscript material and selected approximately a thousand extracts which are joined together with an excellent narrative giving unity, force, and direction to the story of the American Revolution. The authors set the stage and then allow the actors to read the lines. The contemporary accounts read smoothly, thanks to corrections in spelling and punctuation. The blue pencil was used sparingly, however, thus preserving the real flavor of another era. In those trying years there was little time for formal and polished reports on military campaigns or on the problems of conducting a war; there were no war correspondents. The excerpts, which are mainly from informal diaries and journals or from letters, may be awkward or factually incorrect, but they reveal the thoughts and deeds of men and women who were making history.

Perhaps the greatest value of the collection is that it presents a picture of the American Revolution in its broadest scope: the political side, the military campaigns (with maps of key battles), the diplomatic maneuvers, the development of the American navy, and the changing economic and social conditions. Also, events in the enemy's camp are not overlooked. Again and again the reader is transported across the lines to British headquarters or across the waters to the Houses of Parliament to view what the British were planning or thinking. The accounts presented reinforce the impression that many British leaders lacked understanding of the American situation throughout the critical years.

The war was not won only by attacking the Redcoats; the home front was also an important battlefield. Here is told the story of the fight to control inflation, to solve the problem of financing the war, and to curtail the vicious "spirit of avarice" among the profiteers. Another interesting section, "Health, Hospitals, and Medicine," is fragmentary but does reveal the underdeveloped state of medical science in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Though there are no reliable statistics, Dr. Benjamin Rush was undoubtedly correct in saying that hospitals "robbed the United States of more citizens than the sword" (p. 815). And about a century later during the Civil War, the situation had little improved.

The volumes will hold the attention of all who are interested in the force of ideas and in the complexity of human nature. The student of history will refer many times to these documents which will answer some questions and will raise others about the revolutionary era. In addition, the bibliography of published and manuscript sources will be useful. The general reader will find himself reliving the exciting times through the words of those who embodied the "Spirit of 'Seventy-Six."