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# THE TREATY OF PARIS

When we celebrate the Bicentennial of the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, Americans should recite in unison: Blessed are the peacemakers who understand that in peace, as in war, "there is no substitute for victory." This most important, most successful, and most permanent treaty we ever signed was the result of our negotiators' resoluteness and perseverance in pursuing victory at the peace table rather than appeasement or compromise.

The 1783 Treaty of Paris ranks with the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution as one of the three great documents responsible for launching the Thirteen Colonies as a free and independent nation. Without the Treaty of Paris, the Declaration of Independence would have been merely a piece of campaign rhetoric and the Constitution would not have been written at all.

Dozens of other treaties have been solemnly signed in Paris by many nations. Most of those treaties have been consigned to the dustbins of history, and even their empires have passed away. But the Treaty of Paris' two-century lifespan perpetuates not only its no-compromise, hardline provisions, but the friendship of the warring nations that signed it.

When men have fought and bled for a cause, they deserve peacemakers who can match the commitment of those who made the supreme sacrifice. Unfortunately, the United States has had some bitter twentieth century experiences with negotiators who lacked the vision or the skill to harvest the fruits of victory, and so gave away at the peace table what brave American servicemen had won at the risk or cost of their lives.

In 1780-83, America was fortunate to have men who were equal to their mighty mission. Their task was to persuade England to accept our independence, to recognize our Thirteen Colonies as a sovereign nation, and to accede to our mastery over a mass of territory twice as large as the Thirteen Colonies.

It is fashionable today to say that peace or arms control should be our primary goal, and that compromise and conciliation are the best means to achieve it. The Treaty of

Paris proves that false. American independence as a nation of free people was the primary goal of our 1783 peacemakers, and they succeeded because they had the backbone to hold out for three years until they achieved their goal. They never tolerated compromise on any issue that mattered.

The obstacles to successful treaty negotiation faced by Peace Commissioners John Adams, John Jay, and Benjamin Franklin (who was five years older than President Reagan is now) were truly overwhelming. They were neophytes in the exotic salons peopled by European diplomats skilled in intrigue, deception, espionage, and special-interest scheming.

First was the problem of the British. Contrary to popular belief, the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown did not end our military problems with the British, much less our political ones. King George III refused to admit defeat, and British troops remained in New York City, Charleston, Savannah, Canada, and the West Indies.

Second was the problem of the Americans who were terribly weary of war, militarily weak, politically divided, and financially broke -- hardly elements to generate support for our negotiators 4,000 miles away. Third was the problem of the French who were promoting a "compromise" which would have let Britain keep Georgia, South Carolina and Maine, and would have left the British and Spanish in control of the area west of the Alleghanies and both banks of the Mississippi River.

By the Treaty of Paris, England recognized the United States as "free sovereign & independent states," and the King relinquished forever all claims to American property. The treaty ordained "a firm and perpetual peace" between England and the United States.

The Treaty established truly generous boundaries for the new nation: Canada on the north, the middle of the Mississippi River on the west, and Florida on the south. This vast area gave us room to grow and become a great nation without European states breathing down our necks in the Ohio Valley.

John Adams hailed the Treaty as "one of the most important political events that ever happened on this globe" and one that "has had and will have, the most important consequences." He was right. By the Treaty of Paris, we validated the Declaration of Independence, acquired a vast new territory, received international recognition as a sovereign nation, and established a lasting friendship with England.