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Seeds of Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois

Max M. Mintz
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“Three thousand miles across the ocean, in Paris, negotiators at the conference table dealt the Iroquois a blow more fatal than any they had ever suffered on the battlefield.” So begins the life of a new nation. The American Confederation began in 1782 with the successful negotiation of winner’s terms at the Piece of Paris. The British lost. The Indians lost.

Mintz, Professor Emeritus of History at Southern Connecticut State University and author of The Generals of Saratoga: John Burgoyne and Horatio Gates chronicles the massacres perpetrated by the Indians and settlers. He shows the advanced state of Native American culture and diplomatic prowess. As the British began losing the struggle for the colonies, they were unable or unwilling to supply the Indians with fighting and living supplies. “The war now took a new turn. The Indians would no longer serve as auxiliaries in a British force of professional soldiers fighting an American force of professional soldiers. They were to direct their main offensive against civilian centers, destroy private residences and take the lives of noncombatants of both sexes and all ages.”

Ironically, the first blow, of the same description, was struck by American forces. George Washington and Congress authorized several armies to wipe out the war making capabilities of the Indian Leagues of the upper Ohio valley. Indian leagues, such as the Great League of Peace and Power, contained mechanisms alien to colonial American thinking. Sechams were chosen by clan matrons from female heredity lines. Some historians speculate that internal politics of this league had an influence on the formation of the American Constitution.

Mintz concludes that the American Revolution was more than a struggle for independence. It was a struggle for land, Native American land. Mintz’s book is a valuable addition to American history.
HARRY WILLEMS (July / August 1999)

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