

**Spain's enemy was Britain, and that made Spain a friend to the American Revolution: The Enemy of my Enemy is My Friend**

Great Britain found itself vulnerable on several fronts when the American Colonists declared independence. The English and their Colonists were enemies at war. – At the same time, Spain was involved in its own shadow war against Great Britain. Only 13 years earlier, the British stole the Florida region from Spain, and the English navy was inferior to none. And France was *no friend* of Great Britain's superior naval forces. *France and Spain became our friends.*

Indeed, the British navy's only weakness was the numerically superior Spanish Armada. Spain's naval power stretched from Cape Horn in South America, through the Isthmus of Panama, up to Alaska and down to the Mississippi. Spain controlled the Caribbean islands as Cuba and Hispaniola, the Gulf of Mexico, and even eventually strategic New Orleans. In fact, Spain held more territory in the western Hemisphere than any other country in the world.

They got Louisiana from the French by the secret Fontainebleau treaty because the French would prefer *that* to having it fall into the hands of its mortal enemy, the British of course. The French navy was no match for the powerful Royal British Navy – even General George Washington himself noted that fact in a speech to Congress.

So the American Colonists found themselves aligned with both the French and the Spanish because of a common

enemy, Great Britain, and only Spain's vast network of ports gave it a decisive advantage over the British naval forces. But Spain was hesitant to support the American colonial revolution. Why? It could spill over to its own colonies. If *Spain's own* colonies revolted, then Britain could exploit that opportunity and invade Spanish ports in the Caribbean, like Spain's crown jewel, Havana, Cuba, while Spain was distracted elsewhere putting down civil unrest.

So Spain decided to take the initiative. It couldn't risk a British blockade of American ports. *The American Colonists might lose their revolution and make the British into a even greater threat to the Spanish.* Let's not forget, the British navy also has its own worries. Warships were needed to stay at home and defend the British Isles. The Spaniards had far more warships and could afford to deploy in more places.

*Without ever declaring war against the British until 1779,* the Spanish Navy slowly bled the British into submission. The expansion of war theatres placed tremendous stress on the British. As time would prove out, The British could not afford a long war with the more deeply entrenched Spanish. – In the end, Spain recovered Florida, and insisted American independence be part of any future peace treaty.

Thus, America and Spain had a common bond against the British, a common survival against a common threat. Each soberly looked at the other and found it convenient to admit, **“The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”**