

If you were to ask a colonial English official what they thought of the Sons of Liberty, he would, without a doubt, say that they were a terrorist organization. However, if you happened to ask a citizen of the thirteen colonies the same question, they would agree that the Sons of Liberty were Patriotic freedom-fighters. Were the Sons of Liberty patriots, or were they terrorists? There's no right answer to that question...it all depends on who you ask. I, personally, feel that the Sons of Liberty were Patriots.

The Sons of Liberty were initially established only to generate and organize public opinion against British rule such as the issue of taxation without representation. The colonists were getting taxed by the British, although the colonists were not allowed to represent themselves in Parliament in Britain. According to Todd Alan Kreamer in his paper titled, *Made Its Mark On Early America*, "With actual American representation in Parliament, there would be no need for seeking independence." Therefore, the British had no right to tax the colonists. Another problem that occurred was the Stamp Act. The colonists were indirectly taxed on many common items, even paper! When an item was bought, it would have to be stamped with an official seal to show that the tax was paid on the item. If a document was written on paper without that stamp, reading that document wouldn't even be considered. Yet another burden produced by the British, was the Townshend Acts. The purpose of these acts was to raise the taxes on the colonists. The British would not refrain from doing anything they could to extract more money from the colonists.

Secondly, The Sons of Liberty were not out to destroy Britain or to unnecessarily kill, but only to build America into an independent nation. They were generally passive in their actions. An example is the Boston Tea Party. Yes, I admit, they destroyed tea chests and dumped tea into the harbor. But did they kill anyone? No, they did not. Did they destroy the ships? No, they didn't do that either. All they wanted to do was to prove that they would not voluntarily let the British tax them, or take over. And they believed that the only way that Britain would listen to them, would be if they did something as extreme as the Boston Tea Party. Thomas J. Stukane stated: "[I think the Sons of Liberty were] mostly patriotic because they often tried to make change through legislative and open public demonstrations. There were factions in the group that did resort to terrorist means. However I would not label the Sons of Liberty as a terrorist organization." The Sons of Liberty were trying to protect their citizens and their new country. They went to the New World in order to escape from the British and form their own government; however the British kept trying to control the colonists.

The Sons of Liberty were especially passive if you compare their actions to terrorists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Currently, terrorists fly airplanes into buildings, blow up establishments, and cause hundreds of deaths at once. I understand that in the 1700's, they did not have that kind of technology. Except the Sons of Liberty did not cause the 1700's equivalent of such destruction.

In contrast, Britain felt it was the right thing to do to extend their control and laws to the colonists. The British thought the Sons of Liberty were insurgents because they were subversive and sabotaged their shipments. The colonists had the right to tax their own people and collect funds to help build their own country. A king that was over 3,000 miles away did not have the right to tax the colonists. In this situation, there is a fine line between being a revolutionary and a terrorist. The British didn't pay attention to what the colonists said; all they paid attention to was their money. That caused the colonists to perform extreme actions so that they could draw the attention of the British. Although the colonists did not do this because of pure anger or hate, they did it for a purpose – to help their new country become independent - not to terrorize the British.

In summary, it is my opinion that the actions of the colonials were clearly patriotic in purpose and intended to protect their country that they felt was under siege. The Sons of Liberty were in no way terrorists, but were, in fact, exactly what America needed to begin to build a strong political foundation with self-rule.