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”Free Blacks in Nineteenth Century Binghamton”

In her recent history of the free black community of nineteenth-century Susquehanna County, PA, Debra Adleman wrote, “Things that have been forgotten or denied or have never been known or acknowledged, still exist, and when they are retrieved and reintegrated they give new and clearer meaning to the present.”^[1] Adleman addressed the absence of blacks in the county’s recorded history, despite the significant role that blacks played in the nineteenth century. Similarly, the history of nineteenth-century Binghamton has paid very little attention to the black community, as demonstrated in the infrequent references made in local newspapers, local history books, and historical documents. Analyses of census records, letters, newspapers, oral histories, and nineteenth-century black community studies in the North reveal that although small, the black community of Binghamton flourished. This essay examines the lives of blacks in Binghamton from 1800 to 1860, with emphasis on free blacks of the mid-nineteenth century. Although facing the burden of racism and societal restrictions, the black community of Binghamton thrived, taking advantage of limited opportunities in the workforce, politics, education, and land ownership to build a strong foundation for subsequent generations.

An analysis of the nineteenth-century black community in Binghamton reveals a group of men and women who were not simply “helpless victims of social and political circumstances,” but a group who quickly rose above their previous repressive status, many being former slaves.^[2] According to the 1855 census records, twenty percent of black residents were born in slave states, including Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware.^[3] Although we cannot conclude that all blacks born in slave states were former slaves, there is no doubt that many had been, especially since sixty-five percent of blacks in the South were enslaved in the mid-nineteenth century.^[4] The Underground Railroad provided a means by which these blacks could escape and find refuge in the North. It was only until the revised Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 that blacks faced an additional obstacle in the way of freedom. The Fugitive Slave Act made it unlawful for free citizens to assist escaped slaves, and granted slaveholders the right to capture runaway slaves in free states.^[5] Therefore, blacks who had escaped from slave states after 1850 did so with the realization that the process would be even harder than before. Assistance from black and white abolitionists, and other sympathizers, became less frequent after 1850.^[6]

Despite the anti-slavery movement, which was in full swing by the mid-nineteenth century, blacks still faced the reality that escaping from slavery did not guarantee long-term freedom. In *Exploring a Common Past*, Historian Dwight T. Pitcaithley describes the challenge faced by escaped slaves, stating, “Professional slave catchers seized black men and women, often on the street or at their work place, and hastened them south after giving evidence that this person was indeed a fugitive slave to the justice of the peace or court.”^[7] In many situations such evidence was forged, yet many escaped slaves were still forced to return to their masters, even after enduring the difficult flight to freedom.^[8]

Each year prior to the Civil War, thousands of slaves escaped from the South, the majority of which attempted to find refuge in the North and parts of Canada.^[9] Many of these blacks migrated to various parts of upstate New York, including Elmira, Rochester, Buffalo and Binghamton.^[10] Moreover, a significant number of former slaves from the North, who had acquired their freedom by the mid-nineteenth century, also relocated to Binghamton. This paper will discuss their migration to the latter and the legacy created by these early families, who were actively involved in the educational, political and economic areas of society. For both escaped slaves from the South and former slaves from the North, Binghamton became a place of refuge and a stepping-stone by which they were able to thrive throughout the nineteenth century.

Prior to the early nineteenth century, Binghamton was widely known as Chenango Point.^[11] The village was renamed after William Bingham, a wealthy English banker and resident of Philadelphia, who had acquired a large portion of land on both sides of the Susquehanna River after the American Revolution.^[12] Bingham envisioned a new village that would encourage migration to the area and serve as a competition with other towns in New York State. ^[13] William Bingham hired Joshua Whitney, a local merchant, to work as his land agent and help accomplish Bingham’s initial goals. With the responsibility of contracting the first street plan of the village, Whitney worked diligently to increase migration to the area until his sudden death in 1798.^[14] His son, Joshua Whitney, immediately assumed his father’s responsibilities and under his direction, the first courthouse was built in 1802.^[15] By 1840, the village had experienced widespread growth with the construction of a second courthouse, the development of the Erie and Chenango canals, and a population of two thousand. ^[16]

After the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, New York state residents fought to open several other canals, a period that local historian Gerald Smith refers to as “canal fever.”^[17] These residents pushed for legislation that would authorize the construction of canals in several areas of the state, which eventually led to the development of the Chenango Canal by 1837.^[18] James and Lois Horton’s *In Hope of*

Liberty addresses the significant role that the Erie Canal played in the development of the west during the early nineteenth century:

The remarkably rapid population growth on the western frontier during the 1820s was fueled by commercial opportunities stimulated by the opening of the Erie canal in 1825...cities like Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Buffalo acted as business outposts for the development of the surrounding territory.... [Free states] attracted a growing number of African Americans, both free blacks and runaway slaves, and a white population of decidedly divided opinion about the institution of slavery.[19]

Similar to other northern cities, Binghamton experienced widespread economic and demographic growth as a result of the Erie Canal. Additionally, the Chenango Canal proved vital to the success of Binghamton.[20] It attracted widespread migration to the area, which led to the development of a diverse population.[21]

During the 1840s, a significant number of immigrants from Ireland and Germany settled in Broome County, motivated by various job opportunities that were available after the construction of the canals.[22] The Chenango Canal, which was ninety-five miles long and forty-six feet wide, provided a connection between Binghamton and Utica, and contributed significantly to the industrial growth of the area.[23] This industrial growth provided new residents with occupational opportunities in manufacturing and production. This became one of the main “pull factors” for both blacks and whites, which led to the arrival of nearly twelve thousand new residents between the early nineteenth century and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.[24]

The nineteenth-century white population of Binghamton prospered in education and labor force participation. Members of the white community succeeded educationally, with ninety-eight percent of the white population capable of reading and writing, according to the 1855 census records.[25] New residents took advantage of the educational opportunities available in Binghamton through public schools, private academies, and local churches. In fact, the early education system in Binghamton was unable to accommodate the growing number of immigrant children in need of schooling, leading to the growth of private academies to fill the gap.[26] The white community also contributed greatly to the move towards the Industrial Age.

In *The Valley of Opportunity*, Gerald Smith describes the role that white residents played in the growth of Binghamton, stating, “These immigrants provided the region with a valuable source of labor for the growing industrial base.”[27] According to the 1855 New York State Census, a significant number of whites in Broome County worked in factories and as railroad men and merchants.[28] Others worked in a wide range of fields including carpentry and cooperage. The members of Binghamton’s white

community were also ethnically diverse, with ninety-one percent of the residents born outside of New York and eight percent born outside of the United States. [29]

By the mid-nineteenth century, the black community comprised of 1.4 percent of the general population. These blacks migrated to Binghamton, motivated by the same “pull factors” that drew many white immigrants to the area. Unlike their white counterparts, however, some blacks were escaped slaves seeking freedom in the North. Others were blacks from free states, including New York, who had relocated to Binghamton. In fact, there were also black residents who were born slaves in the Binghamton area. One such example is demonstrated through the life of Tom “Old Bay” Crocker, who was born a slave in 1820 to the prominent Crocker family of Union, the town that encompasses the village of Endicott and Johnson City.[30] According to local historians, Crocker’s wife, Margaret Cruiser, may have been an escaped slave who worked for the Gates family of Maine, only minutes away from Binghamton.[31] Blacks in Binghamton, whether born in the North or South, utilized their prior experiences and struggles as a discriminated minority to pave a future for themselves and subsequent generations.

The lives of Thomas Crocker and Margaret Cruiser help paint a picture of the nineteenth-century black population as a whole. Census records reveal that twenty percent of black residents were born in Broome County and had remained in the area for a significant number of years. Additionally, twenty-five percent of the black population came from the state of Pennsylvania. Although we cannot be entirely certain of the motivations behind the majority of these blacks to leave one free state for another, it is clear that Binghamton possessed many job opportunities for these men and women. This trend of migration was demonstrated through the life of one black resident, David Davis, who relocated to Binghamton in 1835.[32] Davis was born in Pennsylvania in 1815 and resided in Susquehanna County, PA until 1835.[33] He was married to an unknown woman in 1841 at the Presbyterian Church of Montrose, Pennsylvania, suggesting that his wife could have been a resident of Montrose. [34]

At least one of Davis’ intentions for relocating to Binghamton can be reasonably inferred from a surviving letter, written by Dr. Robert H. Rose, a successful landowner from nineteenth-century Pennsylvania.[35] Rose became well-known for his black farming communities in Silver Lake Township, Pennsylvania, in which escaped slaves would work as common laborers in return for land and equipment.[36] Records indicate that Davis worked for Rose at some point during the early nineteenth century.[37] Although Broome County census records indicate that Davis relocated to Binghamton in 1835, Rose’s letter, written in April of 1838 discusses Davis’ journey to Binghamton and possible motivations for his relocation. Rose explains that Davis and four other black men stole one of his wagons filled with

many items, including grain, on their way to Binghamton.[\[38\]](#) Rose sent one of his workers in search of Davis and his acquaintances to acquire his items, only to find out that they were already sold.[\[39\]](#) It is clear that Rose was very displeased by Davis' actions and stated that he wanted "nothing to do" with Davis.[\[40\]](#)

There are no surviving letters or written documents from Davis detailing his version of the events, however, Broome County census records and Robert H. Rose's descriptions support the argument that Davis found more job opportunities in Binghamton. As a former laborer for Rose, Davis was one of the disgruntled blacks at the black farming communities in Pennsylvania. Author Debra Adleman believes that this was a result of the similarity between slavery and the work on Rose's farm—blacks still felt oppressed as laborers and sought better occupations that did not resemble slavery.[\[41\]](#) Although there are no indications that Davis was a former slave, this does demonstrate that blacks did not find Rose's offer very appealing.

Despite the questionable circumstances under which Davis left Pennsylvania, these accounts also demonstrate that there were more opportunities for blacks in Binghamton in the early nineteenth century in comparison to nearby towns. Davis and his acquaintances most likely viewed Binghamton as one of the centers of commerce, in which they would be able to make a profit from the stolen items. Rose's letter reveals that they successfully sold the items within weeks of arriving in Binghamton. Census records reveal that Davis eventually acquired a job as a "carman" and remained in Binghamton for at least twenty years after his initial relocation.[\[42\]](#)

The atmosphere of nineteenth-century Binghamton was one of racism and numerous societal restrictions towards the black community. Binghamton's earlier history reveals an acceptance towards the institution of slavery and racist attitudes, as verified through local newspapers of the nineteenth century. The *Broome Republican*, which was widely published in Broome County, portrayed blacks as dangerous to the larger white community. The following passage describes an alleged assault against a white girl in 1831:

On Friday evening last, a negro man, belonging to Mr. Rogers of this county, attempted to commit violence upon a deaf and dumb girl by the name of Dodd. She lived with her mother, a widow woman, who was very infirm and upwards of 80 years of age. The two, and a very small negro girl, constituted the whole family. While the monster was endeavoring to accomplish his purpose upon the daughter, the mother attempted to drive him away with by striking him with an axe.[\[43\]](#)

In describing this alleged assault, The *Broome Republican* dehumanized this black man in way that was inconsistent with its descriptions of other crimes, including murders that were committed by white assailants.

By 1799, the laws of New York State indicated a gradual move towards the emancipation of black slaves, however, it was only until 1827 that all black slaves lawfully obtained complete emancipation.^[44] The abolition of slavery in New York State did not dispel the widespread feelings of racism towards the black community.^[45] In *The Meaning of Slavery in the North*, Professor Thomas O'Connor discussed the observations of French visitor, Alexis de Tocqueville, who found that racial prejudice appeared stronger in the North than in the South.^[46] Other historians including Dan Georgakas argue that the free states of the North were "full partners in the viability of the slave society of the South."^[47] Despite the fact that New York was one of the most sought-after free states of the nineteenth century, these historians and others maintain the view that the atmosphere of nineteenth-century free states was one of comparable racism with the atmosphere in the South. Although blacks were able to live in freedom because of the earlier abolition of slavery in the North, they were not exempt from some of the same struggles facing their counterparts in the South.

Blacks in various areas of New York State, including Binghamton, faced societal restrictions in the opportunities available in education, land ownership, political involvement, and the labor force. Despite the fact that these blacks were either born in the Binghamton area or relocated after their newly found freedom, they faced a challenge of earning a living.^[48] Many nineteenth-century occupations were off-limit to black residents. In the occupations that they were able to find, blacks often faced employers with racial prejudices. Blacks in manufacturing for example, faced discrimination, not because they lacked the necessary skills, but because of the racist attitudes that most northern industrialists maintained during this period.^[49] Therefore, many blacks in Binghamton undoubtedly faced the same challenges in obtaining a job in nineteenth-century factories, and even in the development of railroads and the earlier canals. Although we cannot know for sure, it is unlikely that the blacks in nineteenth-century Binghamton held prominent positions in these industries, especially during this period in which the North was transitioning from the previous acceptance of slavery to its abolition by the mid- nineteenth century.

Restrictions in the political arena also posed a challenge to blacks in nineteenth-century Binghamton. Similar to other areas of the country, black men were not legally allowed to vote until the ratification of the fifteenth amendment in 1870. The amendment acknowledged the right of citizens to vote, regardless of their "race, color or previous condition of servitude."^[50] Even after its ratification, many blacks were still prohibited from actually voting until the 1960s. The blacks of nineteenth-century Binghamton were no exception to the rule, and despite the fact that many were literate, they were unable to vote during the mid-nineteenth century. In various parts of New York State, blacks were allowed to vote until 1821, when property

requirements for voters led to separate racial standards for voting.^[51] Consequently, after 1821, blacks were barred from voting and holding public offices, and had very little say in the political decisions of the community in which they resided. Furthermore, they were not allowed to participate in the state's militias, which had excluded blacks and Indians since 1785.^[52]

In the same manner, blacks during this period faced challenges in education. Prior to the antebellum era, few schools in which blacks could obtain an education existed in the North and South.^[53] Although very little information is available detailing the educational opportunities of blacks in Binghamton prior to the Civil War, there is no doubt that the opportunities were few. In fact, the schools that were available for blacks in the North during this period were generally "housed in crowded, inferior buildings staffed by less than qualified teachers of either race, and restricted to their curricula offerings."^[54] Blacks who sought an education in New York State prior to the Civil War had to overcome many stumbling blocks, and had to deal with these less-than-perfect circumstances.

Similarly, blacks who intended to own land in the nineteenth century faced many challenges and much racism. According to writer and historian John Wood Sweet, "Many northerners...resisted any social or symbolic empowerment of free blacks."^[55] Therefore, nineteenth-century blacks intending to own land had to break through the barrier of racism in a white society that did not want to see them succeed. Additionally, many blacks held menial jobs that were unable to provide the necessary income to purchase land. In most cases, blacks were paid less than white workers, even for the same duties.^[56] The average nineteenth-century black family faced the challenge of providing the basic necessities for themselves and their families.^[57] Therefore, the very decision to own land was a momentous one that came with many consequences and sacrifices. It is not surprising that black landowners during this period were rare.

The societal restrictions that blacks faced in the nineteenth century reveal the strength of the black community of Binghamton, which flourished in spite of these factors. Blacks took advantage of the limited occupational opportunities to help improve themselves, the lives of their family members, and their community as a whole. The occupational structure of the black community in Binghamton resembled that of other black communities in various cities and towns in the North. There were very few blacks in the North who held professional occupations such as lawyers, teachers and doctors.^[58] In fact, there were no doctors, teachers or lawyers listed in the local census records of 1855.^[59]

Since most nineteenth-century black women did not hold occupations outside of the duties as housewives, an analysis of the occupations held by nineteenth century black

men seems more appropriate. The majority of black men in Binghamton and many other parts of the North were unskilled and therefore obtained “lower class” jobs as laborers, coachmen, whitewashers and servants.[60] Others were skilled and entrepreneurial, and held occupations such as barber, machinist, carpenter, and mason.[61] However, the occupational restrictions facing black men of the nineteenth century “practically guaranteed that many free blacks would become poor, dependent and perhaps, criminal.”[62] Yet, these societal handicaps did not deter blacks from their full participation in the workforce and many endured long, hard hours for the sake of their families.[63]

Societal restrictions and racist attitudes did not dissuade the black community from making use of the limited educational opportunities that were available. According to the 1855 Census, 62.7 percent of Binghamton’s black population could read and write, despite the limited educational opportunities that were available. Blacks took advantage of these limited opportunities and fully participated in the struggle towards literacy. They utilized the few schools and other educational programs through local churches that were available to blacks. Local black churches, in particular, played a major role in the education of free blacks in Binghamton and other areas of the North. In addition to serving as a training ground for leaders, a place where unskilled blacks could obtain positions of religious influence, and a haven from white racism, the church also served as place where free blacks and their children could obtain an education in a welcoming environment.[64]

Additionally, Binghamton’s black men and women may have participated in local school reform efforts in spite of their minority status. In their analysis of nineteenth-century northern black communities, historians Ernestine K. Enomoto and David L. Angus state, “Being freedmen and freedwomen rather than slaves, the educational demands of northern African Americans were for public education that would include them in common school reform efforts.”[65] Enomoto and Angus further explain that blacks in the North generally utilized innovative means such as joining together to make private arrangements for schooling and even hiring their own teachers when possible.[66] Consequently, a significant percentage of blacks in Binghamton were literate, with the rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing. As common in other nineteenth-century black communities in the North, illiteracy was higher among older adults, and older black women were less likely to be literate than older black men.[67]

An analysis of the black community of Binghamton also reveals a group of men and women who were politically involved despite their societal restrictions. As previously stated, blacks were not legally allowed to vote until 1870, and it was unheard of for blacks to hold public offices. According to census records, however, twenty-seven percent of adult black men were still registered as voters, even though it is unlikely that they actually did vote.[68] Despite the voting restrictions, blacks still played a

vital role in politics, namely activism towards ending slavery in the South. Black religious leaders in particular, played an active role in political activism. Henry Johnson, a traveling preacher who ministered through Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church in Binghamton, fought for the emancipation of enslaved blacks in the South, and the progress of free blacks in the North.[\[69\]](#) Dr. Robert H. Rose attributed the dissatisfaction of his black workers to Henry Johnson, who may have encouraged black to reject a life of hard labor.[\[70\]](#) This was characteristic of Johnson, who like other black religious leaders, utilized his influence for both local reform among the black community as a whole. Through the active participation in the Underground Railroad and Anti-Slavery societies, blacks in Binghamton, like blacks in other northern cities, contributed to both local and national reform.[\[71\]](#)

The willingness of blacks to openly promote the abolition of slavery demonstrates significant courage and unity in the fight for the freedom of their enslaved counterparts. It is also noteworthy because black abolitionists during this period endangered themselves and families, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Free blacks in Binghamton and other parts of the North played a vital role in aiding escaped slaves from the South. They formed Anti-Slavery societies, Vigilance committees and filled the positions of officers when needed.[\[72\]](#) It is also worth mentioning that according to oral tradition, famous author, Frederick Douglass published the *North Star* from the local A.M.E. Zion Church in Binghamton in 1872, as part of his national abolitionist movement.[\[73\]](#) This indicates that the atmosphere of the nineteenth-century black community in Binghamton was one that was conducive to political reform.

Although nineteenth-century blacks were restricted from holding public office in Binghamton and other parts of New York State, the experiences of Thomas “Old Bay” Crocker reveal that blacks were certainly willing to do so despite the restrictions. In 1872, Thomas Crocker, a former slave from the Binghamton area, was elected mayor under unusual circumstances. Prominent capitalist and seemingly unopposed mayoral candidate Sherman Phelps was the only name on the ballot for mayor that year.[\[74\]](#) However, the general community opposed his election as mayor and at the “eleventh hour” formed a write-in campaign for the election of Thomas Crocker, who worked as a laborer.[\[75\]](#) Phelps was immediately defeated and Crocker briefly served as mayor.

Even though the election of Crocker was motivated by a common dislike of Phelps, it reveals the community’s recognition of Crocker as a viable candidate and his willingness to serve despite the negative atmosphere. The actual circumstances regarding Crocker’s dismissal are unknown, but it can be reasonably assumed that despite the community’s dislike of Phelps, a black mayor in nineteenth century Binghamton was intolerable. There is no record that Crocker attempted to hold any

public offices after this experience. Instead, he resumed his former occupation until 1880, when he acquired a job as “bag picker” while suffering from rheumatism.[\[76\]](#)

The black community of Binghamton also owned a substantial amount of land despite financial and societal restrictions. Census records reveal that 15.2 percent of the black population of Binghamton owned land.[\[77\]](#) Though small, this reveals the strong motivations of blacks who fought against the obstacles to own land for themselves and their families. More specifically, more than twenty-five percent of black men in Binghamton were landowners.[\[78\]](#) In various free states, skilled black workers were more likely to own land; not all black landowners however, were skilled workers.[\[79\]](#) James and Lois Horton describes this trend of property ownership among black skilled workers in the North:

Although most black workers could find employment only at the bottom of the occupational ladder, about one quarter of those whose occupations were recorded in the census filled the middle occupational ranks of free black society...[While] property holding was not strictly distributed according to occupational position, and most held no property, workers in this middling group held more property than semiskilled or unskilled workers.[\[80\]](#)

The Hortons’ statement indicates that most black landowners in the North were generally skilled. Local census records also reveal that the same trend applied to free black landowners in nineteenth-century Binghamton. However, one’s occupation certainly did not determine whether or not that individual owned property. Black landowners in Binghamton held diverse occupations ranging from common laborers to masons.[\[81\]](#)

Two examples of black landowners in nineteenth-century Binghamton are Lloyd Wilson, one of the youngest black landowners, and Jane Potter, the oldest and only female landowner listed in the 1855 census records.[\[82\]](#) Wilson was a barber from Pennsylvania, who relocated to Binghamton in 1851.[\[83\]](#) Wilson was registered as an unmarried voter in 1855 at the age of twenty-seven and able to read or write.[\[84\]](#) Although very little is known about Wilson and his motivations for relocating to Binghamton, his life reveals the motivation of many black men in Binghamton to own land. Wilson was able to acquire land within four years of his arrival to the area and he did so as a barber.

The life of Jane Potter is another example of a black landowner in nineteenth century Binghamton. Black landowners varied in occupation, education and age. In contrast to Wilson, Potter was an uneducated sixty-five year old widow from Orange County, NY, who had relocated to Binghamton in 1817. Although she may have obtained the land after her husband’s death, Potter’s ownership of land during this period attests to

the importance placed on land ownership by both black men and women of the nineteenth century. It is also baffling, yet remarkable that blacks with menial jobs during this period were able to purchase land, given the economic challenges in providing for themselves and their families. The experiences of Wilson, Potter, and numerous other black owners of nineteenth century Binghamton reveal the motivations and great lengths that blacks went to obtain property.

The active participation of blacks in the workforce, education, politics, and land ownership during the antebellum era contributed greatly to the development of a solid foundation for the subsequent generations of blacks in Binghamton. The black community of Broome County has grown rapidly from a little over one percent of the population in 1855 to twenty-one percent in 2003.^[85] Although this growth can be attributed to many economic factors surrounding the migration of blacks into the area, the current extensive opportunities available to blacks in education, politics, land ownership, and the workforce can be attributed to the foundation built by these nineteenth-century free blacks. The decision made by these free blacks to take advantage of the few occupational opportunities, utilize innovative means to obtain literacy, own land, and fully participate in both social and political activism served as a foundation and model for subsequent generations.

The apparent absence of blacks in Binghamton's history does not indicate their absence from the growth and success of the Binghamton community as a whole. As Debra Adleman concluded in her research of Susquehanna County's black community, "Things that have been forgotten or denied or have never been known or acknowledged, still exist..."^[86] Whether or not the black community of nineteenth-century Binghamton receive accolades for their endurance and significant contribution to Binghamton's early history, it does not change the reality that they *did* endure many challenges in the fight for a better life for following generations. Their active involvement in social and political activism served as a catalyst for the emergence of a racially diverse community.

This portrait of the nineteenth-century black community of Binghamton transcends the frequently accepted stereotype that free blacks were simply helpless victims of racist societal restrictions. In actuality, these men and women did not allow the societal restrictions to keep them in a repressive state of any kind—they took advantage of every opportunity available and utilized their creative skills to obtain opportunities that were not readily available to them. As Adleman accurately stated, "When they [forgotten things] are retrieved and reintegrated they give new and clearer meaning to the present."^[87] This portrayal of free blacks in nineteenth-century Binghamton gives a clearer understanding of their struggles, but most significantly their successes, which contributed, greatly to twenty-first century Binghamton.

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Gaddi Goren October 28, 2005
Latin America and the United States

U.S. Influence in Latin America

Throughout this semester we have examined the persuasive role that the United States has played in Latin America. The U.S. has taken the position in Latin America to not only dictate what is acceptable by other governments, but has also managed to profit at the expense of the native inhabitants. A central aspect of American policy was whether leaders of Latin American countries were willing to allow the U.S. companies to exist without restrictions. American presidents have also set the precedent of working alongside ruthless rulers, so long as they agree to American doctrine. Latin America was primarily viewed as the backyard of the U.S. and therefore Americans believed that they were allowed the freedom to utilize and control more vulnerable governments for U.S. benefits. Reflecting on the American experience in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, makes clear that Americans enacted and enforced policies that promoted American interests and the elites while simultaneously controlling Latin American governments.

The situation in Guatemala under Jacobo Arbenz in the early 1950s was one of tremendous rebellion against American guidelines by establishing economic restrictions on American companies that sought great privilege and wealth. Arbenz also began integrating Communist sympathies into his policies, something the American government viewed as especially threatening. Historian Piero Gleijeses presents in *Shattered Hope* how the American government, along with several Latin American governments who relied on Washington for sovereignty, sought to destroy the Arbenz administration as soon as it began going against American regulations.

Arbenz detested the fact that his own people were constantly being forced to live in extreme poverty while American companies prospered. He took the brave and bold step in fighting the powerful and forceful UFCO. Between the months of May 1951 to March 1952, there had been unpleasant disputes over the controversial issue of labor contracts. Not surprisingly 3, 746 workers were fired during those months of tension, and of course the UFCO declined the Arbenz government's offer to intercede since it would only weaken their position.^[1]

Therefore in March 1953 Arbenz took the courageous decision and confiscated 234, 000 acres of uncultivated land at Tiquiste and another 173, 000 acres of the plantation

in Bananera. [2] As a reaction to Arbenz expropriating their land, UFCO claimed to have been discriminated against by the Guatemalan government due to all the confiscated land. Many scholars believe that the U.S. government and big corporations of the time generally worked together in deciding what policies would help both the government and business. Thus, American companies would seek Washington as support to insure the prosperity of their businesses. However, this time the Latin American ruler, Arbenz, challenged the American imperialist and as a result this led to the upheaval of an American company in Guatemala, leading to reduced American authority in the country.

During these years America felt immensely threatened by the spread of Communism that was believed to be sweeping Latin America and the rest of the world. It is well known that Arbenz was sympathetic to communism and even felt closely aligned to the PGT. The Washington administration saw this potentially harmful for their dominance. *Newsweek* published accounts that the PGT had armed soldiers throughout Guatemala. [3] Also *U.S. News* wrote that even though Arbenz was not a communist in practice, he took orders from communists. [4] These communist worries and clashes with the Americans led to the Caracas Conference where it was made clear that even though Arbenz would oppose American intervention, no other Latin American country was willing to go against the Americans in support of Guatemala.

The Caracas Conference was supposed to distinguish those nations that would oppose American dominance from those that would go along with whatever Washington ordered. The Guatemalan administration believed that “Caracas would demonstrate to the Americans... that Latin America stood behind Guatemala, firm in defense of the principle of nonintervention”. [5] However, the conclusion of the meeting was that the Americans prevailed by bullying and bribing Latin American leaders for their support and votes. Washington told Arbenz that he must loosen his communist connections and reduce the pace of his agrarian reforms. Ultimately, the Americans were successful when seventeen countries voted their favor and only one against. However, Arbenz efforts to halt American aggression in his country can be seen as admirable in the face of a powering force like Secretary John Foster Dulles.

The relationship that existed between the Dominican Republic and the U.S. during the 1930s and 40s can be seen as only benefiting one side, Washington policies. It has also been American decree under the Good Neighbor Policy enacted in 1933 to unarmed intervention in Latin American, even when it was well known that leaders of governments committed massacres and oppressed their own people on a daily basis. After reading *The Dictator Next Door* by Eric Roorda, shows evidence that some powerful Americans, although not all, needed Rafael Trujillo to rule the Dominican Republic in order to preserve internal interests, despite thousands of lives being lost as a result. Some scholars reflecting back on Trujillo’s rule believe that he was left in

power for so long for U.S. security reasons during both WWII and the Cold War, yet Roorda writes off this defense for Trujillo as being relatively inefficient.

The manner in which the American government reacted to the Haitian massacre carried out by Trujillo in 1937 and the relationship that developed between the two governments that followed is ironic. One would think that in order to stop annihilation of the Haitians, the Americans would have sought it fit to intervene, yet they did not. Therefore, as a way for Trujillo to show his goodwill to the world and take away attention from the Haitian incident, Roosevelt enthusiastically suggested that he take on Jewish refugees. Roosevelt also praised Trujillo and Haitian president Stenio Vincent for coming to terms on a peace agreement and strongly believes that this is the “established practice of this hemisphere”, completely disregarding the massacre that had occurred. [6] Trujillo then realized that in order to continue having amiable relations with the U.S. he should resort to appeasing them on some issues and reassuring them of his loyalty.

A key reason as to why the Americans saw it necessary to have Trujillo as an ally was because of the global political situation. Trujillo was described as a “Little Mussolini” or a “Miniature Hitler”; therefore following the war it was imperative to make sure that the world knew he was not aligned with the Axis powers. [7] Another motive for supporting this dictator was because he was vehemently anti-communist. [8] Also since Trujillo was trained by the U.S. Marines he had many “friends” in authoritative positions, many of whom supported his reign. America was able to maintain a stronghold in Central America by ensuring good relations with Trujillo. Washington could also enforce many policies on other small Latin American countries by using the Dominican Republic as a way to generate support throughout the Americas.

When discussing Cuba in the early twentieth century, it is crucial to understand that Cubans were divided on issues of whether America should be involved in developing independence. Many members of Creole elite, many of whom were on good terms with the Americans, were in favor of complete annexation. However, people like Juan Marti, a Creole elite who had lived in New York for some time was strongly opposed to such an act and endorsed the idea of Cuba Libre, an idea in which all Cubans were equal, regardless of race. [9] This was something that was later illegal due to its tampering of American involvement in Cuban politics. Following the Spanish-American war, America managed to gain control of the island and as a result began to demonstrate its influence on social, political, and economic issues.

When discussing American influence in Cuba it is quite evident that American customs were quickly absorbed into Cuban life. For instance, the great interest that Cubans began to show in baseball during the early twentieth century is a clear indication that the previous national sport of bull fighting was being replaced by this

new “Yankee” game. [10]Also, the numerous Protestant missionaries that went to Cuba and tried to replace the Catholic presence shows how the Americans were attempting to infiltrate the people from within and hoping to “Americanize” the island. However, the ultimate sign that a nation has fully conquered a people is through education. In Cuba it was extremely popular for Cubans to study in American universities. Also with the financial support of John D. Rockefeller American missionaries were able to organize a boarding school in El Cristo where they would receive a Christian education. [11]

As a result of educating the Cuban elite, America was simultaneously building support from those who would later control Cuban politics. As is often the circumstance, few white elites tend to govern over the majority of the population who happen to be of African or mixed decent. Economically, it is not startling to note that as the U.S. became more dominant on the island so did American interest in investing in industries and land by raising capital to exploit sugar laborers on plantations. Even though slavery was made illegal in the 1880s, cheap wage for African workers was still a common practice. Cubans became reliant on American industry for jobs, leading to the requirement of English in order to obtain jobs. U.S. presence in Cuba was a result of Cuban elites urging the Americans to be involved as a way to stop any threat to their economical prestige. From the American perspective, it was just another way to reveal its already established supremacy in Latin America.

In these three countries, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba it appears that America tried to be involved in other countries politics so that it could give off a “good neighbor” image. Nonetheless, there have been some positive results of American intervention. Such as in the Dominican Republic, there were massive improvements on national infrastructures such as transportation and communication due to high American investment. In Cuba, the States were able to promote social, educational, and political stability (although it was on American terms not Cuban). However, it is important to grasp the notion that America truly believed that it was Washington’s duty to occupy and infiltrate into other governments in it was for national purposes. There was minimal concern for how it directly affected the lives of Latin American people or those economies, so long as America flourished.

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The Jewish Experience under the Military Dictators in Chile and Argentina during 1970s and 1980s

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Latin America and the United States

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December 9, 2005

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank and acknowledge my parents, Rabbi Goren and Peppy Goren, as well as Nurith Yelenkivez and Juana Nuger who shared with me personal details about their lives under an oppressive military regime. Without their help and honesty I never would have been able to undergo such a project.

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The Jewish Experience under the Military Dictators in Chile and Argentina during 1970s and 1980s

Introduction:

When understanding the political changes that took place in Chile and Argentina during the 1970s it is interesting to observe the role that the Jewish minority played in developing these important transformations in governments. What motivated me to engage in such a project are my Jewish Chilean background and the fact that my family lived in Chile during the years of the junta and witnessed the overthrow of the democratically elected Salvador Allende and the coming power of General Augusto Pinochet. After having grown up listening to tales about life under Pinochet, I decided to further explore the topic and realized that right next door in Argentina similar yet contrasting politics were simultaneously going on. I had always heard of the horrors many Jews experienced in Argentina during the military regime that lasted from 1976-83, however it was never completely clear if they were sought after because they were Jews or because of their alleged political involvement.

After analyzing several articles and reading several primary sources by Argentine Jews as well as interviewing Juana Nuger, whose son was kidnapped in 1978, I concluded that Jews were persecuted far worse than their Christian peers. Even though many of them were active members of Leftist parties, Jews were reported as having received a more agonizing treatment in the notorious clandestine cells. In Chile, the majority of the Jews and Pinochet had a relationship that was seen as showing reciprocal respect. There were Jews active in Pinochet's army and even contributed to the bombing of La

Moneda on September 11, 1973 when Allende's government was overtaken. Jewish individuals in Chile were only targeted by the secret police if they were against the government or held Leftist beliefs, not for any religious or ethnic reasons. After Allende was elected president of Chile in 1970, 8,000 of the 30,000 Chilean Jews fled to Israel or Canada in fear of their property being confiscated by the government. [1] This is seen in the article "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Chile" by Beth Weis who believes Jews are sometimes exiled under a Communist government because of their suspected treason. She believes that in the past, Jews have been labeled as enemies of the state by ruling communist governments. Therefore, it is not surprising that some Jews in Chile were fearful of the Allende government and many left almost immediately. [2] However, in 1973 after Pinochet took over many Jews felt it was safe to return. It is important to note that even though many Jews prospered and supported Pinochet, there were people like Nurith Yelenkiviez (a family friend in Chile) who vehemently opposed the military coup. When comparing and contrasting the Jewish experience in Chile and Argentina during those years there are undoubtedly several similarities that need to be addressed. However, it is crucial to demonstrate that being Jewish in Chile was never a threat to one's safety; whereas in Argentina being Jewish did in many cases directly effect the way the military treated the suspect, which in most circumstances meant more brutal and inhuman torturing.

Nazism and anti-Semitism prior to 1970s:

In order to better comprehend the relationship between Jews and the right-wing government of Pinochet, it is important to have a clearer understanding of Chilean Nazism and anti-Semitism ideology that was established before the coup of September 11, 1973 and how that related to Pinochet's government. In the southern region of Chile there had been a German community that has been known to have maintained its traditional German customs. Even though most people from that community do not have German surnames, their heritage is still important to them. These Germans helped influence the way Jews were to be perceived throughout Chile in later years and helped set the groundwork for future anti-Semitism that did from time to time occur.

In 1932 with the rise of Nazism, a Chilean-born named Jorge González von Marees with German ancestry created a Chilean Nazi party known as Vanguardia Popular Socialista (VPS). [3] Gonzalez von Marees was blatantly open with anti-Semitism and his disapproval of President Alessandri accepting of European Jewish refugees in the late 1930s. Although President Alessandri did set specific limitations as to where Jews could live and what professions were open to them. [4] On the 5th of September 1938 a historic event took place when Gonzalez von Marees along with fellow young Nazis

staged a *Putsch* which led to the storming of the University of Chile and eventually an altercation between the Chilean police and Nazis. Fifty-five members of the VPS died as well as one policeman. Something that is very significant that resulted from that event is that even to this day, there is a commemoration to those fifty-five Nazi “martyrs” in the Santiago General Cemetery and a plaque across the street from La Moneda.[5] To Pinochet, Nazi memorials were not seen as a major concern and ultimately did not alter his policies towards Jews. This was demonstrated by his appointment of ex-VPS member Onofre Jarpa to Minister of Interior in 1982 as well as his warm relations with General Jose Berdichewsky Scher who was a Jew and head of the Air Force.[6] Pinochet was more worried about defeating the communist threat than he was with Nazism which he viewed as obsolete. He even stated that “Hitlerism has disappeared”, but “Stalinism had not.”[7] This shows that although anti-Semitism did exist in Chile and even within members of his cabinet, Pinochet was not convinced to ever suspect Jews of treason based on their religion, but only on their politics. This is an example of Pinochet’s policies that greatly differed the military regime of Chile from that of Argentina.

Prior to the military takeover in March 1976 Argentina already had a well known reputation of having leaders that were vehemently anti-Semitic. In the 1930s and 40s when Jews were fleeing Europe and seeking refuge in South America, many countries including Argentina denied Jews entrance. The head of the Immigration Department in Argentina during those years was Dr. Santiago M. Perltá, who was notorious for his anti-Jewish sentiments. At the height of Jewish atrocities in 1943 Perltá wrote a book called *La Accion del Pueblo Judio en Argentina* which has been characterized as being “the most vicious anti-Semitic tract ever published in the Republic of Argentina.”[8] In his book he used classic Nazi doctrine about Jews and depicted them as if they were filthy members of a mystical brotherhood that was in pursuit of conquering the world (this idea dates back to the Protocols of Zion, Russian anti-Semitic propaganda) and describes “the Argentine people as the victims of the Jews.”[9] However, men like Perltá were not the only anti-Semites to reach high political positions in the years preceding the “Dirty War” of the 1970s.

In the 1960s Argentine Jews were again discriminated against under the military rule of Juan Carlos Ongán. He was known for his Nazi sympathies and his acceptance of the prevalent anti-Semitic ideologies among men that held positions of authority. He ordered his son-in-law, Enrique Horacio Green, and the head of police in Buenos Aires to call upon organized anti-Semitic groups to complete a “purification” of the moral climate throughout the city.[10] Also, in 1971 there was a popular pamphlet circulating

amongst army officers called “Plan Andinia” which charged international Jewry and Zionist of plotting a takeover of southern Argentina.[11] This idea relates back to the fear that Perla had about Jews conquering their beloved country and infiltrating it with their Jewish ideas.

In the subsequent years leading to military coup in 1976 there was a clandestine group called the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (AAA) that was responsible for the murders of several Jews and instigating anti-Jewish outbursts throughout Argentina. This organization flourished under the rule of Isabel Perón during the years 1974-76 under the guidance of a long time friend and Minister of Welfare José López Rega.[12]

Therefore, it is not surprising that due to Argentina’s anti-Semitic past, Jews would once again in 1976 find themselves in the middle of the struggles between the Left and the Right. In Chile, anti-Semitism did exist but was repudiated immediately by Pinochet. However, in Argentina the military leaders saw the Jewish minority and their alleged political involvement as a direct threat to their rule and viewed it more acceptable to seek and treat Jews differently than other detainees.

Jewish Experience in Chile:

When the junta in Chile successfully overthrew the communist government on September 11, 1973 there was a sense of relief among the majority of the Jewish communities. My father, Rabbi Uri Goren, who lived during the coup, felt that “the junta gave me back a feeling of security at the time and in many ways a feeling of being liberated. We had an army that was defending freedom, even if freedom happened at a price.”[13] Since he was a member of the upper middle class, the removal of Allende’s government affirmed that his family’s possessions and apartment would no longer be danger of being confiscated. As a Jew, Rabbi Goren was at ease with the new government. He was even thankful that the *golpe* had occurred because it would ameliorate his standard of living. [14] My mother, Peppy Goren, who also experienced the political changes that occurred, agrees with Rabbi Goren that Pinochet was beneficiary for Chile and the Jews.[15] Her family had moved to Argentina in 1972 due to the lack of available food and the threat that the communist party posed to those who were not affiliated with the Left. Peppy distinctly remembers one night when trucks of people came to her neighborhood seizing their homes. Eventually her family returned to Chile in December 1973 when her father believed it was safe to return under the new military government. She can clearly remember being overjoyed that she could once again be in Chile, living the way she had prior to 1970.[16] As happy as Peppy and Uri Goren may have been under Pinochet due to their social-economic status, there were Jews in Chile who did not fare so well under the Pinochet regime.

Being Jewish in Chile did not warrant the secret police to suspect that one was involved in actions against the government. However, not all Jews in Chile were from the middle class, nor did the lives of all Jews improve once the right-wing government took over. There were Jews who were active in the communist movement such as Volodia Teitelbaum (distinct relative of mine) who was leader of the Chilean Communist Party and Senator, and Oscar Weiss who was editor of the communist government newspaper. Both men, along with other Jews endured kidnapping and torturing by Pinochet due to their Leftist ideologies. When interviewing close family friend Nurith Yelenkiviez, I asked her if being Jewish impacted her experience under the military regime, she responded by stating that the regime “produced many negative changes in my life, but it was not because I was Jewish, but rather because I had distinct ideas.” [17] Throughout our conversation via email, she stressed the point that the persecutions carried out by the secret police were for one’s political ideas, and were not based on someone’s religious beliefs.

Another example of a Jewish Chilean whose life was worsened by military regime is seen by Marjorie Agosín’s accounts in *Always from Somewhere Else*. [18] In this book she goes into detail about her life growing up in Chile and America and the hardships her family had to endure. In a section of her book, Agosín describes the distress she experienced under Pinochet. She writes that “[T]he years of the military dictatorship robbed us speech and the possibility of wonder.” [19] It is interesting to observe the contrasting experiences and ideas shared by my parents and Agosín. She goes on to state that the dictatorship forced her to flee the country and to grow up far away from her family and friends. In contrast with my family who felt safe in Chile only when Pinochet had gained power, people like Agosín and Yelenkiviez revealed a feeling of despair once the military regime had taken over and many of their rights were revoked and limited.

It is important to realize that although Pinochet may have viewed the Jews in a favorable light, it is not accurate to state that he was advantageous for all the Jews. As seen with people like Nurith Yelenkiviez and Marjorie Agosín not all Jews were thriving under Pinochet. Many opposed his rule, especially those with Leftist ideas. It was only those Jews who were part of the middle class who were pro-Pinochet. Nonetheless it is crucial to recognize that most Jews in Chile were an integral part of the middle-upper class. By interviewing and reading about Chilean Jews who prospered and suffered one is able to understand that Pinochet and his government were by no means anti-Semitic, but rather opposed anyone who threatened his rule.

When discussing what ordinary life was like for the majority of Jews during the reign of Pinochet I found that very little seemed to have changed in their daily Jewish lives. Peppy Goren spoke of returning to the Jewish country club, going to synagogue, and celebrating all Jewish holidays as if there had never been a coup.[20] Rabbi Goren, who was very active in the Jewish community, told me that “as a Jew my life truly changed nothing since the junta and Pinochet.”[21] Even Nurith Yelenkiviez asserts that as far as being Jewish, her life was not altered either. When comparing the social differences and fears that existed between the Jews of Chile and Argentina one must realize that in Argentina Jews had a different experience strictly due to their religion and alleged political alliances. In Chile, Jews were not suspected of communist ties simply because they were Jewish. This is evident by the efforts made by Pinochet to not only show his support for the Jewish communities, but placing several Jews with high governmental positions.

An interesting and important aspect Pinochet’s relationship with the Jews is that during the Jewish High Holidays he would make sure to pay a visit to all the synagogues in Santiago.[22] Peppy Goren remembers clearly that during the Yom Kippur services the leaders of the junta would come for about twenty to thirty minutes and stay for a special service prepared just for them. Jewish communities arranged for a special service for the dictator so that any fears Jews may have had about Pinochet’s intentions would be eradicated. It was also a public demonstration supporting for his government. When speaking to her more extensively about the synagogue visits she explained that “it was really a very nice gesture from them, and as well as to assure us that have nothing against Jews.”[23] Rabbi Goren reaffirms the idea that Pinochet visited the synagogues as a sign of his respect for Judaism and the Jewish people.[24] His reverence to the Jewish communities did not only stop at the synagogues.

Within the Chilean government and army Jews took on numerous prestigious occupations. Luis Fleishman writes about Sergio Melnick who was an Orthodox Jew and an important consultant of Pinochet on economic issues.[25] Also, along with leading American Jewish economist Milton Friedman, their ideas and innovations led to a prospering Chilean economy, even so to this day. Also, the Minister of Justice and close friend of Pinochet was a Jew named Miguel Schweitzer Speisky. His son, Miguel Schweitzer Walters, also achieved prominence within the government when he was appointed ambassador to England as well as Minister of External Affairs.[26] Then there was General José Berdichewsky Scher, who also happened to speak fluent Yiddish, was a key participant in the bombing of the capital that helped pave the way for Pinochet’s government. In the mid 1970s General Berdichewsky Scher was given the

diplomatic responsibility of ambassador to Israel. This was a position that Pinochet viewed as very important. Not only did the Israel and Chile have good relations due to their military arrangements and exchange of weapons, but both countries were very reliant on the American government for financial support, additional aid, and steady trading partners. .

It is very impressive the impact and influence Jews had in the Pinochet regime when compared to Argentina where Jews were not given the opportunity to actively participate in government nor live without fear. Pinochet did not discriminate against hiring Jews or for that matter anyone based on religious background. However, alternatively in Argentina, Jews were not found in any governmental posts during the military rule of 1976-83. According to Jacobo Timmerman, Argentine military governments did not and would not place any Jew in positions of authority, nor would Jews be given the right to serve in state radios or programs.[27]

Jewish Experience in Argentina:

After engaging in extensive research, reading testimonies of Jewish prisoners, and interviewing Juana Nuger whose son Heron is classified as a *desaparecido*, I was able to progressively gain a more accurate understanding of how the Jews were perceived by the military. A reoccurring theme among the stories of the survivors was the “special” treatment that they received while under investigation. Several torturing methods used in Argentina greatly resemble those of the Nazis. It is not surprising, given Argentina’s record on anti-Semitism that a ruling body of government would act against the Jews if given the opportunity to do so. Jacobo Timmerman, is the author of an autobiographical book called *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, in which he retells his experiences while being sentenced to the infamous clandestine cells.[28] He goes into detail about certain events in which the investigators acted in a more ruthless manner when his Jewish identity was revealed. He also discusses how it was common for the military to use Nazi symbols as a way to intimidate Jewish prisoners. Similar experiences are also seen in the “*Comisión Israeli por los Desaparecidos Judíos en Argentina*” which is an Israeli sponsored Commission that successfully gathered detailed interviews of family members of *los desaparecidos* who lived through those scary years in Argentina. It also has several editorials by experts about the military’s involvement in discriminating against Jews. Fortunately, there is a copious amount of primary sources and personal accounts that will help present a vivid portrayal of the coercion the Jews in Argentina had to undergo during those years.

When reading Timmerman’s description of the clandestine cells he specifically notes that although it was unpleasant for non-Jews and Jews alike, he is graphic in portraying

the maltreatment of Jewish prisoners and their relationship with the investigators. Timmerman was held in three different secret locations and two legal prisons throughout 1976-83. The Argentine government insists that he was not arrested for being a journalist or a Jew, yet they never gave a specific reason for his detainment. It is ironic because Timmerman did firmly believe in the need to combat terrorism within the boundaries of Argentine law. However, he could never properly explain that to the military. He also thinks a major reason for his kidnapping was because he was a passionate Jew and Zionist; something that made the military become wary of his activities.

Timmerman elucidates that there are two explanations as to the treatment of the Jews, one being from the Argentine government and the other from the Jewish community. The current and past military government of course denies having discriminated against Jews and asserts that episodes of torture or violations of Jewish girls were isolated affairs.[29] The Jewish community on the other hand believes that the “isolated episodes” far surpassed the government’s claims and that Jews, like Timmerman, were arrested without a formal accusation.[30] He also writes that during the years 1974-78 he remembers hearing that Jewish girls in these undisclosed cells experienced twice as much sexual abuse and rape as non-Jewish women.[31]

Jacobo Timmerman also addresses certain tribulations that were allocated only for the Jews. For instance, he remembers being interrogated in a room that hung pictures of Hitler and swastikas. He also recalls the special tortures invented for Jews, the reduced food for Jewish prisoners, poor treatment towards Rabbis who would visit, and the constant insults he received when officers would shout at him in a furious yet self-gratifying way –“Jew!”[32] When describing the officers who dealt with the Jews he writes, “[T]orturing a Jewish prisoner always yielded a moment of entertainment to the Argentine security forces, a certain pleasurable, leisurely moment.”[33] He also recounts the story of a seventy year old man at the prison of Coti Martínez who was beaten senselessly by policemen because he was suspected of being Jewish. When they discovered that he was wearing a cross they accused him of trying to hide his Jewish identity. When Timmerman later meet him in the cell they shared, he pondered on the idea that this man, although a practicing Catholic, was beaten on the belief that he is a Jew.[34] As descriptive as Timmerman’s work is in portraying the way Jews were targeted and humiliated by the military, his story is neither unique nor original given that other Jews found themselves in similar situations.

The Israeli government arranged a special commission whose task was to seek and document the stories from relatives of Jews in Argentina whose loved ones were taken

by the Argentine government and were never to return. The *“Comisión Israeli por los Desaparecidos Judíos en Argentina,”* was able to put together a collection of interviews of Argentine Jews whose family members were victims of the right-wing military regime. This commission’s goal is to secure the authenticity of the stories and ensure they do not go forgotten. This commission also worked on accumulating information about the Argentine government’s actions on kidnapping and torturing Jews. In an article put together called *“El terrorismo de estado en 1976-1983 sobre el trasfondo de la política argentina en el siglo XX”* by Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, there is a detailed analysis of the situation that many Jews found themselves in since they were perceived by those in power as the unwanted and menacing minority. Another comprehensive article that helps in grasping how Jews were subjugated to extreme torment can be seen in *“Informe sobre la situación de los detenidos-desaparecidos judíos durante el genocidio perpetrado en Argentina”* by Maris Braylan, Daniel Feierstein, Miguel Galante, and Adrian Jmelniczky. After reading numerous first hand accounts, as well as these articles, one can understand the mistreatment that many Jews suffered as a result of their religious background. This will undoubtedly verify that the Argentine military regime discriminated and targeted Jews, even those who were not associated with Leftist activities.

Among the extensive list of interviews provided by the *“Comisión Israeli por los Desaparecidos Judíos en Argentina,”* is the testimony by Nora Strejilevich who was kidnapped at the age of twenty-six on July 16th, 1977 and released four days later. [35] As fortunate as she is to be alive, her relatives Gerardo Strejilevich, Graciela Barroca, and Hugo Strejilevich did not bear the same fate and were eventually categorized as *desaparecidos*. [36] During her interview, she states that the reason for her interrogation was that she was Jewish and her anticipated one year trip to Israel to work. She was intensely questioned about her planned voyage to leave the country and go to Israel. Her first thought when the military appeared in her house was that she would probably end up dead or forever missing. Strejilevich had heard rumors of people disappearing and never returning.

When she was taken away on that dreadful day, she had a book in her bag called *“Oh Jerusalem,”* which only provoked the officers to further ask her about the Jewish agency and their Zionist activities. The officers assumed that Zionist organizations were somehow involved in Leftist plots against the government. Upon entering the detainment center, she recalls being shouted at *“judía de mierda, vamos a hacer jamón con vos y aunque no haya hecho nada las vas a pagar por judía.”* [37] Strejilevich also remembers overhearing the guards discuss about two different torturing cells, one

which was specially designed for the Jews in order to forcefully collect information. When she was finally let free, the officers ordered her to believe that she had not visited anywhere, heard anything, and that nothing happened, otherwise her family would undergo severe consequences. She had done nothing illegal, yet was treated like a criminal.

This is not the only case which accounts for Jews receiving harsher treatments while under military custody. Marcelo Weisz Gustavo was kidnapped on February 16, 1978 at the age of twenty-six; he was never again to be seen by anyone. He was taken to the prison called “*El Turco Julian*” which was notorious for its open anti-Semitism and its extreme torturing of Jewish inmates.[38] When asked about the punishments and torturing of Jews at this particular camp, his mother, Ruth Paradise de Weisz answered, “*cualquier tipo de tortura es terrible pero eso tipo de tortura...imaginense.*”[39] There is also the story of Fernando Ruben Brodsky who was twenty three years old when he was taken away on August 14, 1979. His family is convinced that he was kidnapped because he was Jewish. Sara Silberg de Brodsky, Fernando’s mother, states that her son was given more torture than normal because he was a Jew. Once while talking to Fernando on the phone, she recalls him describing that while under interrogation the soldiers would ask him about certain aspects of Judaism that he was not able to answer, and as a punishment for his ignorance he was further castigated.

An Argentine Jewish woman by the name of Juana Nuger, whom I personally interviewed, told me the story of her disabled son Heron who was taken away in front of her. He was kidnapped due to his Leftist activities that he and his brother were involved in.[40] She believes that although being Jewish may have factored in on his abduction, it was not the sole reason. According to Juana, many Jews, such as her son, were participants in Leftist politics; therefore, as a result many innocent Jews were also seen as being a threat and were deemed automatically an enemy of Argentina. This led to fear amongst Jewish communities because anyone could be marked as a potential enemy. While singling out an already disliked minority group, the Argentine government attempted to categorize all Jews under one branch of politics. Juana believes that since the Red Scare was sweeping the world, and Jews were often been unfairly connected to communism, it was a scary time being a Jew in any country that viewed Leftist thinking as threatening, as was the case in Argentina.[41]

These testimonies by Jewish sources give credibility to the accusation that the military government throughout the years 1976-83 openly discriminated against Jews. A few explanations given as to why Jews in Argentina were heavily discriminated by the

military is because of the abundance of anti-Semitic beliefs in Argentinean society, a predisposition that Jews posed a threat to their power, and simply because the Jews were not seen as being genuinely Argentinean. Therefore, targeting Jews whether involved with Leftist politics or not could be favorable in order to dismiss any disruption to their dictatorship. According to Sergio Starlik, the military investigators were watchful about the activities of Jewish organizations, sports clubs, synagogues, and the overall Jewish community in Argentina. [42] One must wonder why Chile, a country also ruled by a right-wing military leader who loathed communists, did not see Jews as a threat, while in Argentina, where Jews consisted of only one percent of the country's population, ten percent of the people who disappeared were Jews. [43]

In the Israeli government supported-article *"El Terrorismo de estado en 1976-1983 sobre el transcurso de la política argentina en el siglo XX,"* by Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, there is additional evidence that Jews were subjugated to more excruciating treatment once taken captive by military forces. The article describes how Jews were sentenced to "special treatment", something that other victims who were mentioned earlier also verify. The article also states that during these "special" torturing sessions, the Argentine officers would sing Nazi songs in order to aggravate the Jewish prisoners. Also, something that I found most striking in this account is that Jewish prisoners were viewed by their Argentine capturers as *"la encarnación del mal."* [44] The torture was a dehumanizing experience for the Jews under arrest. This is interesting because it shows that the officers would purposely treat Jews differently since they were believed to have innate evil characteristics, something that an "authentic" Christian Argentinean would not possess. This was their method for attempting to dehumanize Jewish prisoners.

Maris Braylan, Daniel Feierstein, Miguel Galante, and Adrian Jmelniczky in 1998 commenced a project whose goal was to document the situation of Jewish detainees, including those who disappeared. This article *"Informe sobre la situación de los detenidos-desaparecidos judíos durante el genocidio perpetrado en Argentina,"* contains further information about the explicit "special" treatment Jews received. Apart from the never-ending humiliation and torture, people like Eduardo Saiegh who was taken away on October 1980, remembers being placed in an isolated room, and having his legs chained and being told that *"[U]sted ya no se llama más como se llama, ojo, nunca pronuncie su nombre. Se llama Z-65."* [45] This was something that very much paralleled Nazi techniques in concentration camps. José Siderman, who was kidnapped on March 1976, is another victim who is mentioned in this article and provides further credence to the horrors that he and other Jews experienced while under detainment. He

states that *“durante las torturas , era llamado contantemente ‘judio bstardo’ y ‘judio de meirda’ y que me iban a matar porque era judio.”*[46] Years later in 1996, Siderman was triumphant in wining a legal battle against Argentina in which the country was forced to pay him six million U.S. dollars due to the suffering he survived.

Other examples in this in-depth project which portray Jews being mistreated are the first hand account of Pedro Miguel Vanrall, and the confession of a former Argentine officer. When Pedro Miguel Vanrell reflects upon his horrid memories about being detained, he goes into detail about a particular cruel practice. His guards used to paint swastikas on their bodies using aerosol, then send them to the showers at which time the guards would have the opportunity to hit and harass them with ease.[47] However, the most graphic description presented is that by Daniel Edurado Fernandez, a soldier who used to partake in torturing of Jews. He affirms the notion that Jews went through extreme physical abuse by stating, *“contra los judios se aplicaba todo tipo de torturas pero en especial una sumamente sádica y cruel: el ‘rectoscopio’, que consistia en un tubo que se introducía en el ano de las victimas, o en la vagina de las mujeres, y dentro del tubo se largaba una rata.”*[48] After the analyzing the torturing methods that Fernandez describes, and reading numerous testimonies, there is no doubt that Jews were targeted because of their suspected Leftist involvement, (which in some cases was true, but not always) and blatant anti-Semitism that thrived throughout the Argentina military, government, and society.

Conclusion:

It is very surprising that the two military governments of Chile and Argentina, which were both supported by the U.S. government, stringently anti-communist, and merciless in hunting down their opponents, would treat the Jewish people and communities in such contrasting manners. One would think that such similar governments in structure would have comparable opinions about the Jews, yet they did not. Pinochet, who did not tolerate Leftists, had no problem in placing secular or religious Jews in high governmental jobs, despite Jewish reputation for having Liberal ideologies. It would have been rather easy for Pinochet to accuse all Chilean Jews of sympathizing with communism since the leader of the Chilean Communist Party was in fact a Jew. Nonetheless he did not, since the Jews did not threaten to his power. He was even able to gain support among most Jews since the majority belonged to the privileged middle-upper class, who felt their lives at risk under the Allende government. However, even those Jews who were not in favor of Pinochet did not feel their lives worsen because they were Jews, but rather for political beliefs.

The Jews of Argentina, on the other hand were not granted the freedom of being accepted as Argentinean citizens because of their religious background. All Jews were suspected of working with Leftists to try and take over the government. While under Argentine investigation, Jews were given a “special” treatment, which included being humiliated by forcing them to pay homage to portraits of Hitler. Also, according to survivors like Jacobo Timmerman, Jewish women received far worse sexual abuse than did Christian women. The Jewish communities as an entity were forced to stand on guard and be cautious of the military.

The military in Argentina forced the Jews to live in daily fear due to their religion. Their alleged political beliefs were not the only causes for arrests, but their ethnicity also instigated the military to harass and bully the Jews to such extremity, as the testimonies make clear. They were an insignificant portion of the population, yet seemed to be over represented among those who were questioned and given brutal treatment. Anti-Semitism had long been a part of Argentine governments, and the ruling powers of 1976-83 did not and see any reason to alter past policies on the Jews. In Chile, Pinochet made a strong push to renounce any anti-Semitism that may have existed within government ministers. He made an effort to demonstrate his support for Jewish communities by visiting them on the High Holidays. He even demonstrated his good will to the Jewish people by being very supportive and admiring of the State of Israel. One can observe that although the political regimes of Chile and Argentina may have been similar in structure, their two very contrasting manners in regarding the Jewish minority is something that is bewildering and astonishing.

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called what you used to be called, listen, never pronounce your name. Now you will be called Z-65.”

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[48] Israel. *Informe sobre la situacion de los detenidos-desaparecidos judios durante el geocidio perpetrado en Argentina.* The translation is “ towards the Jews we applied all types of tortures but especially sadistic and cruel: the recto scope, which would consist of a tube would be placed inside the anus of the victims, or in the vagina of the women, and inside the tube a rat would be put inside.”

“A Revolutionary Masquerade: The Chronicles of James Rivington”

By Kara Pierce

London, England 1760— James Rivington, a young journalist, gave up his dull job as a bookseller, boarded a ship, and sailed to a new country in order to begin a new life.[1] That same year he established a bookstore in Philadelphia, only to pick up and move to New York in 1761 where he would build his own printing press.[2] Though his life in England may have been ordinary, this journalist would soon become one of the most controversial printers of the American Revolution. Although he was not known as a literary man, his newspaper would eventually become the talk of the city from the average person on the street, to General George Washington himself.[3]

Printers and journalists played a key role during the revolutionary period in America. Printers not only published advertisements and announcements, but also discussed the important events and highly debated topics of the times. However, the American Revolution would create a political situation where printers could no longer publish all the events in an unbiased manner. James Rivington, for instance, used his newspaper, *Rivington's New-Yorkgazetteer; orTheConnecticut, New-Jersey, Hudson's-River, and Quebecweeklyadvertiser*, and presses to cater to the Loyalists and their beliefs. By leading the life of a true Loyalist and printing one of the most infamous Loyalist newspapers during the American Revolution, James Rivington was able to secretly live a separate life as a Patriot spy for General George Washington. However, Rivington's life illustrates a much more significant picture than a simple story of espionage. James Rivington's life is a representative, but unique, case of the crucial problem of allegiance during the politically unstable revolutionary period.

In order to fully understand how and why this English-born journalist would eventually join many others in the common act of espionage during the war for Independence, several key issues need to be examined. *Rivington's New-Yorkgazetteer...* began circulation in 1773. Rivington's original publications were aimed at all readers regardless of their political tendencies. The goal of this newspaper was to present non-biased information to Loyalists and Whigs alike.[4] However, as the war loomed closer, Rivington's paper gradually began to favor the Loyalists and their causes. To understand the life of James Rivington key issues such as the precedents of printing in the colonies (which would later raise questions about his paper); the development of the *Rivington's Gazette* over time; the development of the strong disdain for Rivington

and his vile paper; the actions brought against him; and most importantly, his duplicity must be examined.

The Precedent: The Zenger Trial and its Effect on Publishing

The Zenger Trial of 1735 is not directly related to the American Revolution, or for that matter, James Rivington. However, the ruling in this case and the opinion of the jury helps to set the scene and provide a context for the future tribulations of Rivington. The Zenger trial addresses the legality and the concepts of libel and sedition in the New York colony.

John Peter Zenger was charged with seditious libel for publishing comments in a newspaper that were critical and unfavorable about the governor of the colony, William Cosby. [5] Zenger's attorney argued that Zenger could not be charged with libel because all of what he printed was the truth. However, under the existing libel law, the truth of a statement was no defense; in fact, the more truthful the statement, the greater the libel. [6] The jury, whose only role traditionally was to determine whether the comments were actually made, strayed from these traditional laws, and defied the explicit order of the judge. [7] The jury acquitted Zenger because they believed that the truthfulness of a statement should be a valid defense against a charge of libel. Whether the public agreed or disagreed with a person's view was immaterial. The key to this ruling, however, is that the jury agreed with Zenger and his published comments, while the judge ruled that he was indeed guilty of libel as current laws established. [8] The jury, along with Zenger did not like the way Governor Cosby had been running the colony of New York. In effect, the ruling of the Zenger trial was clearly a political ruling. Would the jury have agreed with Zenger if they had been admirers of Governor Cosby? Would they have been so quick to disregard the law if they had been offended by what Zenger published? The jury ruled that the validity of remarks was a defense for libel, but there is no way of determining what is true and what is not. The political party that is in power at the time the crime is committed limits this defense to libel. These are important questions and concepts to keep in mind as the case of James Rivington and his controversial newspaper is examined.

The Paper: Rivington's Gazette and its Changing Purpose

Rivington's New-York gazetteer; or The Connecticut, New-Jersey, Hudson's-River, and Quebec weekly advertiser was the first paper created by James Rivington when he left his bookstore in Philadelphia and came to New York. From his small press at the foot of Wall Street, he created a neutral paper that was widely read by many. [9] So many

citizens were attracted to Mr. Rivington's newspaper based on its claim of neutrality and non-biased expressions.[10] In fact, on May 5, 1774, Rivington published the first issue of *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer* with the heading that read "Open and Uninfluenced".[11]

As the years passed and the war drew closer, Rivington slowly began to change the tone of his paper. Isaiah Thomas, printer of the Patriot newspaper *The Massachusetts Spy*, who originally stated that, "Rivington, for some time, conducted his *Gazetteer* with such moderation and impartiality as did him honor" began to perceive a new found partiality.[12] But, it was not Rivington alone who began to express his Loyalist beliefs. As the beginning of the Revolution drew near, the political climate in New York had drastically changed. At this time, citizens began to take their political positions as either Loyalists or Patriots. However, average citizens could get away with quietly abstaining from the political realm, and not declaring which side they favored. Rivington, being a printer, could not just ignore the political turmoil developing around him. He could not continue to publish his previously unbiased newspaper. It was clear to more people than Thomas, that Rivington had chosen to favor the Loyalist cause as his paper began being released under the new title, *The Loyal Gazette*, and after receiving a sanction from King George III, he ultimately changed the title of the paper to *The Royal Gazette*. He made it no secret that he was loyal to the king; on every front page one could read his title as "Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty".[13] However, it is not surprising that Rivington chose to be Loyal, since survival in the now British occupied city would not be an easy task. So, with his newly declared political views, he began to print his controversial paper.

The material that Rivington began to print in his now Loyalist paper was no longer the simple advertisements and editorials that he originally printed in his "unbiased" gazetteer. For instance, in the edition of the *Gazetteer* released on August 11, 1774, there were several unflattering remarks printed about the Patriot journal printer John Holt and his publication, *The New-York Journal*:

"...when it is obvious to the meanest capacity, that a News-paper is wholly employed in prosecuting party designs, tending to inflame the minds of the people against government, and by means thereof to introduce anarchy and confusion; the printer of such a paper, justly renders himself abhorrent to all good men, and may well be considered a pest to society." [14]

Rivington even printed that Holt's paper was, "...a receptacle for every inflammatory piece that is published throughout the continent." [15]

The next day, Rivington received a rather cordial letter from Holt himself. Holt implored, as a fellow printer, that Rivington disclose the name of the author of the remarks. [16] Holt also expressed his disapproval of Rivington's actions, "...Mean while I would just hint to you—that I do not think your publishing such an abusive Piece of Scurrility against me, is justified either by the Nature of the Printing Business, or any Part of my Conduct towards you—on the Contrary, I have refused to publish several Things merely because they contained Reflections upon you, tho' much less exceptionable than these..." [17] However, Holt may have made himself out to look far more innocent than he actually was. Holt was the printer of one of the most popular, widely read patriot newspapers. So it is with no surprise that these two men would take to their presses to insult one another. Ashbel Green recalled from his youth that these two men would incessantly hurl insults at one another and make statements in their respective papers against the other, whether the statements were true or not. [18] But, the scope of individuals Rivington infuriated was not limited to fellow printers.

Major-General Charles Lee could only describe Rivington's paper using one word, "insulting." [19] Lee was never personally attacked in Rivington's paper; however, being a leader in the patriot cause, Lee had a problem with Rivington's overall message and ideals. Lee proposes in a letter written to Benjamin Rush, "...that the miscreant Rivington is suffer'd to heap insult upon insult on the Congress with impunity." [20] Lee even stresses that Rivington, "...has now advertis'd tea to be sold—for God's sake..." [21] After the Boston Tea Party, for Patriots, selling, consuming, or purchasing tea was out of the question for member of the Patriot cause. But, Rivington was already a clearly established Loyalist. Lee's statement indicates that he had no concern for Rivington's Loyalist beliefs or political freedom.

Although Major-General Lee spoke of Rivington being a fearless printer who would print without regard, Rivington would eventually pay for his partisan publications. In a broadside released to the public on November 16, 1774, a letter from ten citizens of Baltimore, Maryland, that was sent to Rivington on November 5, 1774, stated that although they had been encouragers of Rivington's *Gazetteer*, they no longer wanted to receive the *Gazetteer*. [22] They expressed their sincere unhappiness about reading that his paper now contained political comments regarding the unfortunate dispute between England and the Colonies. [23] In the same broadside, a second letter was published from thirty-one more citizens of Baltimore, Maryland. The citizens who wrote the second letter reacted more harshly towards Rivington himself stating that, "Scarce a paragraph in your papers, but betrays the most notorious partiality, and evinces that the printer is a tool." [24] Rivington was losing patron after patron and ending subscriptions that had

been established since the first issue was published. At first, it began as only losing money and patrons, but Rivington would soon lose far more than he could possibly conceive when he began publishing his Loyalist views.

The Growing Disdain: Effigies and Parodies

As word of Rivington's work spread, he continued to gain enemies. He lost the respect he had originally gained as a fellow publisher from men like Isaiah Thomas, but the attention he gained would quickly monopolize all of Rivington's time and attention. Satires, effigies, and mockeries of Rivington began to appear in the writings from popular poets to addresses to the Continental Congress.

Most likely at the request of the Sons of Liberty, a popular poet of the American Revolution, Phillip Morin Freneau, created a mock speech that was to be made by James Rivington at his "execution." [25] Freneau created such passages to convince other Tories that Loyalism was the wrong path to take and that this infamous printer wished he had seen the error of his ways sooner:

*The more I think the more I stand appal'd
At the dread guilt in which my soul's entrall'd
My neighbours wrongs now stare me in the face,
And bring to view the terrors of that place,
Where conscience tells me I am doom'd to dwell,
With Pluto the prime minister of Hell,
That tree on which my body hang'd will be,
Which they once call'd by name of Liberty,
A growing monument will there remain,*

Of my past, present, and my future shame. [26]

The Sons of Liberty also had an effigy of Rivington hanging by his neck from a tree created to be posted along with this poem (see Figure 1). This false execution on April 13, 1775, was eventually hung around many towns. [27] A separate passage of the poem indicates that the effigy was created as a means for the Sons of Liberty to warn other Loyalists that if they continued to cause trouble for the Patriots they, too, would end up hanging like their dear printer Rivington.

Rivington's response to this action was not surprising. It was not characteristic of Rivington to take a mockery like this seriously. He took this effigy as a compliment—he must be someone of great importance for the Sons of Liberty to go through all that trouble to fake his death. In fact, on April 20, 1775, Rivington reprinted this effigy in his newspaper for all his readers to see. [28]

Rivington would soon be sorry for taking this publication so lightly. But, why should not Rivington have been able to print his beliefs and his reactions to this effigy without fear of retaliation? The Zenger trial of 1735 made it perfectly clear that people were allowed to express their own feelings and beliefs both verbally and in writing.[29] Rivington should not have been an exception to this presumption. As an established Loyalist, Rivington had no choice but to publish the Loyalist thoughts of the time. He could no longer be politically neutral in his publications in order to satisfy all readers. Why then were people allowed to disregard the precedents of the Zenger trial? The answer is simple: people, like the Sons of Liberty, did not agree with Rivington's views. In the Zenger trial, the jury was sympathetic to Zenger and his beliefs; apparently, this ruling was only pertinent when the people agreed with the "libel."

John Peter Zenger had warning that his references to Governor Cosby were not going to be taken lightly; he was put on trial, a non-violent way of telling him that he will soon be put to justice. Rivington, unlike Zenger, was not given such a warning. He had already been the victim of verbal abuse, but he and his property would soon fall victim to physical abuse.

The Violence: Punished at Last

Shortly after Rivington happily published his effigy in the Gazette, the attacks on himself and his property began. Though not the only perpetrator, Isaac Sears would be the ring-leader in the several attacks mounted against Rivington. In the previously mentioned letter to Benjamin Rush, Charles Lee suggests that someone should do something about this "miscreant." [30] Although he continued to project his nonchalant Loyalist façade as the attacks began to worsen, Rivington eventually began to breakdown and acknowledge the danger he was in.

Rivington would actually make the already dangerous situation worse when he published a letter in his Gazette signed as "A Merchant of New York." [31] This was an especially dangerous move, being that the letter was directed at Mr. Isaac Sears, one of the leaders of the Sons of Liberty. On August 18, 1774, Rivington published this antagonistic letter:

He would appear as a leading man amongst us, without perceiving that he is enlisted under a *party* as a *tool* of the lowest order; a *political cracker*, sent abroad to *alarm* and *terrify*, sure to do *mischief* to the cause he means to support, and generally finishing his career in an *explosion* that often bespatters his friends. [32]

Sears was completely and utterly insulted by this letter and refused to let this opportunity pass without responding. Sear states that he, "...was therefore greatly

surprised at the illiberal and Unprovoked abuse..." [33] Although Sears was surprised by this publication he would use this opportunity to warn Rivington that he was being closely followed by the Sons of Liberty. Sears warns, "...You cannot hope such treatment will pass unnoticed..I shall be glad to Know without dilay my abuser, the merchant of new york or shall Consider you the Author and do my self justice." [34] Rivington must have taken pleasure in the fact that he infuriated Sears because he did not delay in publishing this letter that was meant to be private. But, being a cordial man, Rivington acknowledged the letter and continued the correspondences letting Sears know that he would not disclose the name of "The Merchant of New York." Rivington, having been a publisher for many years believed that, "...it is not necessary that I should now be told what belongs to the liberty of the press..." [35] He also makes Sears aware that he is conscious of his rights and refuses to let the political chaos deprive him of those rights stating, "...Conscious of having done nothing but what is warranted by my profession, I make no hesitation in refusing to deliver up any author...and I am ready to defend the freedom of the press, whenever attacked in my person." [36] The correspondences then became more aggressive as Sears began to throw the insults back at Rivington; at the same time, he also states that he is against riots and discord, even though he has no problem telling Rivington what he thinks of him: As to myself, I believe you to be either an ignorant impudent pretender to what you do not understand, or a base Servile Tool, ready to do the dirty work of any Knave who will purchase you...therefore almost below resentments as such I shall Know and Esteem you. [37]

Rivington published this response in his Gazetteer followed by a mocking response that may have been the final straw for Isaac Sears. In this letter, Rivington refers to Sears as "Sire" and jokes about the previous letter sent by Sears. Rivington continued to provoke Sears by responding, "With respect to your offer of friendship and esteem in the close of your letter, in consequence of a fancied similarity which you have discovered in our dispositions, I must beg leave to decline them." [38]

These letters are evidence of the coming atrocities that would be committed by the Sons of Liberties towards Rivington. It is proof that the Zenger ruling can only truly be enforced in a stable political climate, where there are an equal number of supporters and opponents. Rivington had every right to publish the letter of "A Merchant of New

York.”_[39] However, it would not be long before Mr. Isaac Sears would do just as he threatened, and more.

The violence of the American Revolution had begun in April of 1775, with major battles at Lexington and Concord. A month after the violence of the war broke out the attacks on Rivington began. By this time, he was allowing such insulting and offensive matters in his Gazette that the Sons of Liberty could no longer control their anger._[40] On May 10, 1775, the Sons of Liberty gathered and mobbed Rivington’s home and press._[41] As they “Breathed destruction to all the friends of Order who they called Tories,” they attempted to mob Myles Cooper’s property as well._[42] Cooper and Rivington fled to a nearby harbor. Though they were attacked by sailors on the way to the harbor, they were able to safely board the British man-of-war *Kingfisher*._[43] Though his press was mobbed, it was still able to function with the help of his assistants, and his paper was still able to be printed and circulated._[44]

While on board the *Kingfisher*, Rivington took time to reflect on what had just occurred and wrote a letter to the Continental Congress._[45] Even though he was beginning to question his safety, he still had to project his Loyalism to his readers and followers. By writing this petition to Congress, he would be acknowledging that he was in the wrong and seeking protection. In order to prevent this from happening, he wrote the petition in the second person, never using the word “I.” By utilizing this tactic, his readers would never find out that the petition was in fact written by him, which protected his political image as a Loyalist.

Two days after the attack made on Rivington’s home and office, the Committee-Chamber of New York released a notice to the public about Rivington. On May 12, 1775, people around the city read that, “Whereas the Friends of Liberty in the different confederated Colonies on this Continent have taken great and just Offense at the several Publications from Mr. *Rivington’s* Press; and his Person and Property are thereby much endangered...And the Citizens are requested by this, Committee to abstain from all violences to his Person and Property...”_[46] Rivington responded to the committee’s request. He signed an agreement with the Committee, composed a statement regarding it, and hung it around town for everyone to see:

Having already signed the Association, recommended by the General Committee of New-York, voluntarily and freely;---for the further Satisfaction of the respectable Public, I hereby declare, That it is my unalterable Resolution rigidly to conform myself to the said Association; and I humbly intreat the Pardon of those whom I have offended by any ill judged Publications._[47]

Isaac Sears, not satisfied with this attempt at apology, took his revenge a step further. On November 23, 1775, Sears accomplished what he had set out to do when he first wrote to Rivington.[48] Eyewitness Thomas Jones claimed that no notice was taken of the large number of people gathered in front of his press because it was in a public location.[49] Jones watched as Isaac Sears, Alexander McDougal, Peter R. Livingston, John Smith, Joshua Hett Smith, and other principal leaders of the New York mobility entered Rivington's press, demolished his printing apparatus, destroyed parts of his types, and carried off the remainder of his types.[50] On that fateful day, approximately two hundred men entered Rivington's house and burned it to the ground.[51] All the types that were stolen by the Sons of Liberty were later melted down and used to make bullets.[52] Rivington, realizing that his life was truly in danger, packed up and took his family back to England, out of the reach of the Sons of Liberty.

The Espionage: Rivington Returns

In 1777, Rivington returned to New York to begin printing and circulating his *Gazetteer*. [53] However, the *Gazetteer* would no longer carry the "Loyal" title of the paper he published before he fled to England. He now published his paper with the authority of the King of England. He had been granted a Royal commission as printer to the King and received a payment of one hundred pounds per year. [54]

The question of when exactly Rivington was propositioned and agreed to become a spy is not clear. This is a question that historians still do not have an universally accepted answer to, but it is highly debated given the other factual evidence that is available.

Although knowing Rivington's past is critical to understanding why he became a spy, it is also key to examine his life as a spy. Historians may not know when he became a spy, but they certainly do know how he was able to live a life as a Patriot spy.

George Washington Parke Custis, step-grandson of General George Washington, proposes, in his memoirs, that if anyone was to be suspected of espionage, Rivington would be the last man suspected, "...and had suspicion arose, the king's printer would probably have been the last man suspected, for during the whole of his connection with the secret service his *Royal Gazette* literally piled abuse of every sort upon the American general an the cause of America." [55] Although Rivington would be the last man suspected of being a spy, he had the perfect means if he were to spy on the British for General Washington. For when he returned from England in 1777 and rebuilt his press, he added a coffee shop to his printing complex. [56] This shop quickly became a popular meeting place for high-ranking officers of the British military. The secrets he

heard in his coffee shop would eventually be passed on to George Washington, whom he was very well acquainted with.

It was not terribly secret that Rivington was corresponding with Washington. In a letter from William Hooper to James Iredell, Hooper clearly tells Iredell that, "...Rivington has been very useful to Gen. Washington by furnishing him with intelligence." [57] But Washington had a very interesting relationship with James Rivington, other than being the general whom he reported to. The most interesting example of their relationship is reflected in a letter sent from Washington to George Clinton on June 14, 1783, explaining the outrages that have been committed in West Chester County. [58] This would seem like an average letter, except for the fact that a final paragraph that was intended to mock Rivington was crossed off:

Perhaps the amusement contained in them will be increased by so conspicuous a proof the returning politeness of one of your subjects who has been a man of no small notoriety *during the whole Rebellion*, and who has been so remarkably distinguished for his regard to veracity, that his humble protestation of attachment can not at this time be disputed. [59]

Reading this letter, we can surmise that Washington did not trust the reader of this letter to keep his thoughts about Rivington to himself. Rivington was a very useful individual to Washington, and he could not risk this information getting passed on. Rivington may have been one of Washington's most precious resources during the conflict; however, he was not Washington's only spy. This network was complex and well organized.

Washington had many spies, including Rivington, Culper, and Culper Jr. [60] In order for this network to be successful, the General needed methods to be able to communicate with his spies. Many safeguards were created to protect any letters from being able to be read if intercepted. One of the most interesting techniques used by Washington and his spies was the utilization of "invisible" or "white" ink. In a letter to Benjamin Tallmadge on July 25, 1779, Washington describes this unique technology:

Sir: All the white Ink I now have (indeed all that there is any prospect of getting soon) is sent in Phila No. 1. by Colo. Webb. the liquid in No. 2 is the Counterpart which renders the other visible by wetting the paper with a fine brush after the first has been used and is dry. [61]

Washington also requests that Tallmadge make no reference that this material came from him, being that others were also employing this technique, such as Governor Tryon. [62] This ink made it unlikely that any interceptor would be able to read the secret material; however, Washington must have been quite paranoid about

interception, as he created a much more complex safeguard that would prevent anyone who intercepted these documents from reading them.

A series of codes was created in order to disguise the letters, places, dates, people, and other words that General Washington's secret material contained (see Figure 2).^[63] For instance, if George Washington was writing a letter to Rivington, it would be addressed to 726 and would be signed 711. Anyone who was supposed to read these letters would obviously know the code, outsiders would remain clueless. However, the main means of correspondence between Rivington and Washington was through books. Rivington, being a bookseller, had access to a large sum of books and was able to utilize this resource in order to pass information on to General Washington. According to Benson J. Lossing, he would write his messages on thin pieces of paper and bind them within the cover of a book that he would then sell to the other spies of Washington.^[64] These spies would then deliver the messages to Washington himself without any knowledge of the message it contained. It is these measures of communication and secrecy that allowed General Washington to exploit his resources without being suspected or caught.

The Historical Debate: When and Why

Due to all of this evidence and more, there is little debate between historians as to whether or not James Rivington was a spy for General George Washington. The debates come into play when trying to figure out when he became a spy and why he became a spy; as he had been such a model Loyalist.

Catherine Snell Crary, a historian who has published on the life of Rivington, proposes that Rivington did not pledge his allegiance to the Patriots until 1780.^[65] General Washington's grandson George Washington Parke Custis states that Rivington became a "turncoat" around 1776.^[66] Philip Ranlet, a historian of Loyalism in New York, suggests that Rivington joined the patriot spy network in 1778 with use of a significant piece of evidence.^[67] On October 24, 1778, Gouverneur Morris informed the Continental Congress that he had:

...received application from a person in the city of New York, to know whether, in the opinion of the delegates of that State, he may, with safety to his person and property, continue in that city upon the evacuation thereof by the British troops.^[68]

Morris also told the Congress that this man could provide useful intelligence and to grant his request. Congress acquiesced to this request, and Rivington became a spy for General Washington. Crary's analysis of Rivington's life and the date of his changing allegiance is too late to be accurate without significant documentation, which she does

not provide. Most of the evidence, such as his desire to project the greatest Loyalist attitudes, the attacks upon him, his return to New York, his Royal commission, and his apologies to the public, all occurred before this date. There would be no need for him to seek protection from the Patriots at this time, whereas by October 17, 1777, after the defeat of General John Burgoyne at Saratoga, the presence of the British military was beginning to decline in New York. Rivington would undoubtedly need protection from Patriot mobs as he continued to lose the safety he had been privy to when the British occupied the city. She insists that Rivington was still Loyal to the British crown in 1778 because of a letter written to Richard Cumberland that contains clear loyalist sentiments.[69] However, she refutes her own argument in a later section of her essay. She says, "Whatever the time of Rivington's about face, he played his Tory part to the end." [70] This statement clearly refutes her Cumberland evidence—who is to say that this letter was not simply a cover up? Crary also tries to corroborate this date with the use of the recollections of Allan McLane who discusses an account of Rivington's duality.[71] However, she does not provide any evidence that proves this is the first occasion in which he spied for Washington. It is likely that Crary's date represents the time when people began to suspect that Rivington was a spy. Her essay even supports this assumption. Crary, on several occasions, discusses that materials accusing Rivington of espionage began being printed around the 1780s.[72] For instance, Crary states that the *Salem Gazette* printed that it was an "undoubted fact" that Rivington was a spy on December 25, 1783.[73] Whereas Crary's date is too late to be accurate, Custis's date is far too early to be accurate. His proposition that Rivington became a Patriot spy in 1776 is absurd. Rivington could not have possibly become a Patriot spy at this time because he was not even in the country. By January of 1776, Rivington was already on his way back to England and did not return to New York until 1777. There is no evidence documenting anyone communicating with Rivington in England from the colonies, so this type of arrangement could not have been made at this time. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact day or year that Rivington became a spy, the reasons behind his change of allegiance are more clear. Ranlet proposes a reasonable theory as to why Rivington chose to become a spy. Ranlet believes that Rivington was disgusted with the blundering British generals, but he could not express his aversion to the generals due to censorship.[74] If he could not express himself with writing, he would express himself by becoming a spy. This is certainly a possibility being that he was commissioned by the King; therefore, he would not be able to speak poorly of the British army. Speaking unfavorably about the British would have also been an ill advised decision, since he most likely would have been brought up on charges of libel by

Governor Tryon. Although most governors never accused citizens of seditious libel, since in most political climates the accused would end up being acquitted by the jury, Rivington would not be able to easily win a case of libel against him. If the jury was composed of Tories, he would have been found guilty. If the jury was made up of Patriots, even though he was insulting the British army and not the Patriot army, he would have been found guilty.

Crary's theories behind Rivington's decision to become a Patriot spy also seem to be misleading. Crary states that Rivington was experiencing financial difficulties by 1779, and so he took the job so he could make enough money to take care of his eight children.[75] This theory can be refuted by the testimony of Custis. Custis states that any spy for his grandfather "was a dog cheap bargain." [76] Although this could mean that no matter what it cost to employ Rivington he was worth it. However, for all the risks Rivington would have to take in order to spy for Washington, it would be illogical for him to risk so much for the sole purpose of money. It is also generally accepted that due to the poor payment for spying, there were no spies that worked just for the sole purpose of monetary compensation.

Although Ranlet's proposal is certainly possible, the most obvious and the most probable reason is that of protection. As in his letter sent to Congress by Gouverneur Morris, it is clear that Rivington was seeking protection from the Patriot mobs after the British presence was diminishing in the city. This letter, which is the most convincing piece of evidence we have, does not ask for monetary compensation or any other luxuries. The letter simply requests protections, and it requests it more than once. This protection would also benefit him once the war was over; he would be able to remain in his residence without worry of attack.

James Rivington remained in New York until July 4, 1802, when he died at the age of 78.[77] Although Rivington's story is not as well known as those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or John Adams, it is a story that exhibits several important aspects of the Revolution. Rivington's story illustrates the importance of the press, the ideals that regulated the press, the politicization of the colonies during the Revolution, the civil war within the Revolution, and the necessity to preserve one's life. James Rivington may not have been the most important character of the Revolution, but he will always be remembered as the man who saved his own life and the lives of his family by living simultaneously as a Tory and a spy.

- [1]Stan Klos, *Virtual American Biographies: James Rivington*, 15 October 2005, <http://www.famousamericans.net/jamesrivington/> (7 November 2005).
- [2]George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*, ed. Benson J. Lossing, (New York, 1860).
- [3]John Weeks Moore, *Moore's Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous Gatherings, in the Form of Disconnected Notes Relative to Printers, Printing, Publishing, and Editing of Books, Newspapers, Magazines...* (Concord, New Hampshire: 1886), 204.
- [4]Claude Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution*, (New York: 1902) 12-13.
- [5]Kermit L. Hall, Paul Finkelman, James W. Ely Jr, *American Legal History*, (New York: 2005) 75-77.
- [6]Ibid, 75.
- [7]Ibid, 75.
- [8]Ibid, 76.
- [9]Custis, *Recollections*, 293.
- [10]Catherine Snell Crary, *The Price of Loyalty: Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era*(New York: 1973) 328.
- [11]*Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, #55 (May 5, 1774).
- [12]Catherine Snell Crary, "The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1959), 61-72.
- [13]*The Royal Gazette*, #147 (December 13, 1777).
- [14]*Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, #69 (August 11, 1774).
- [15]Ibid.
- [16]Broadside, John Holt, Letter to Mr. Rivington, 12 Aug. 1774.
- [17]Ibid.
- [18]Ashbel Green, *The Life of Ashbel Green*, ed. Joseph H. Jones (New York, 1849) 44.
- [19]New York, New York Historical Society, *Lee Papers*, (New York, 1872) 143-144.
- [20]Ibid, 144.
- [21]Ibid.
- [22]Broadside, "To the Public," New York: November 16, 1774.
- [23]Ibid.
- [24]Ibid.
- [25]Broadside, Phillip Morin Freneau, "The Last Words, Dying Speech, and Confession of J---s R-----g---n, P---t-r..." (New York: 1775).
- [26]Ibid.
- [27]Ibid.

- [28] *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, #105 (April 20, 1775).
- [29] Hall, *American Legal History*, 75-77.
- [30] New York Historical Society, *Lee Papers*, 143-144.
- [31] *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, #70 (August 18, 1774).
- [32] *Ibid.*
- [33] *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, #72 (September 2, 1774).
- [34] *Ibid.*
- [35] *Ibid.*
- [36] *Ibid.*
- [37] *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, #73 (September 8, 1774).
- [38] *Ibid.*
- [39] It is a common belief that the letter written by "A Merchant of New York" was actually written by Rivington himself and he used the name New York Merchant as a pseudonym.
- [40] Morton Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies on Long Island and In New York*, (New York: 1939) 5.
- [41] *Ibid.*
- [42] Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, (Knoxville: 1986) 59. Myles Cooper was the current president of King's College.
- [43] *Ibid.*
- [44] Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*, 5.
- [45] Peter Force, *American Archives: Consisting of A Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs*, Vol. 2 Fourth Series (Washington: 1833) 836.
- [46] Broadside, Henry Remsen, *Committee of Correspondence* (New York: 1775).
- [47] Broadside, James Rivington, *To the Public* (New York: 1775).
- [48] Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*, 5.
- [49] Thomas Jones, *Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution: History of New York during the Revolutionary War*, (New York: 1968) 66.
- [50] *Ibid.*
- [51] *Ibid.*
- [52] Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*, 6.
- [53] *Ibid.*
- [54] *Ibid.*
- [55] Custis, *Recollections*, 295.
- [56] Crary, *The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington*, 68.

- [57]Griffith J. McRee, *Lifeand correspondence of JamesIredell: one of the associatejustices of the SupremeCourt of the UnitedStates*, (New York: 1949) 84. James Iredell was a lawyer in North Carolina, who eventually became a Supreme Court Justice. William Hooper was also a lawyer in North Carolina who was appointed as a Federal judge, but only served one year due to illness.
- [58]George Washington, *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799*, (Washington: 1931) Vol. 27, 9.
- [59]Ibid.
- [60]The name Samuel Culper was a code name used to identify one of General George Washington's spies, Benjamin Tallmadge. Culper Jr. was the code name used to identify another figure in his network of spies, Robert Townsend.
- [61]Washington., *The writings of George Washington*, 483.
- [62]Ibid. William Tryon was the Governor of New York State during this time period.
- [63]Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*, 218.
- [64]Custis, *Recollections*, 297n.
- [65]Crary. *The Price of Loyalty*, 328.
- [66]Custis, *Recollections*, 294.
- [67]Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, 85.
- [68]Gouverneur Morris, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, Vol. 12, (Washington: 1904-1937) 1061. Gouverneur Morris was a representative of Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention, and later became a leading member in the Continental Congress. He also coordinated a majority of Washington's military defense strategies.
- [69]Crary. *The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington*, 70.
- [70]Ibid, 71.
- [71]Ibid, 69. Allan McLane was a Captain in General George Washington's Continental Army. He was also a key attribute to Washington's victory at Yorktown.
- [72]Crary. *The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington*, 65.
- [73]Ibid.
- [74]Ranlet. *The New York Loyalists*, 85.
- [75]Crary, *The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington*, 68, 71.
- [76]Custis, *Recollections*, 299.
- [77]Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*,7.