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## **Towson Journal of Historical Studies, 2023 Edition**

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## Note from the Editors

We are excited to present the 21st edition of the *Towson Journal of Historical Studies* to our readers. This represents the unbroken and continuous publishing of the journal since 2003. The editorial board, authors, faculty reviewers, and faculty advisors worked together for months to complete this year's edition, and we would like to thank all of you for your continuous support and interest. The journal received an unusually high volume of submissions this year, which demonstrates that TJHS remains the most attractive outlet for publishing academic articles in our College of Liberal Arts. We thank the students and faculty for their work and enthusiasm in bringing this year's edition to life.

In this 21st edition, six authors contributed papers exploring the many facets of international conflict and nation-building by recovering the roles of those who have been historically neglected in these conversations. The crisis in Russian and Ukraine continues to attract the interest of authors to provide historical explanations, some of which look back to the world wars. We begin in the aftermath of the second world war as Marjorie Perry recounts the struggle for East and West Berlin and the creation of the Berlin Wall. Madeleine Mason recounts the burdens of Soviet women under collectivization. Next we find ourselves in World War II as Michael Fowler discusses the work of the women in Britain and the United States' code-breaking programs, and their invaluable contributions to the war effort and towards advancing women in scientific fields. Selena Funk then takes us across enemy lines to discuss the role of women as collaborators and perpetrators of violence during the Holocaust. Beyond Europe and the United States, Noah Ulrich critically examines the Meiji Restoration and how it set the stage for the Japanese Empire. Finally, returning to the United States, Sabrina Sutter discusses the conspiracy theory that inspired many during the American Revolution, including Thomas Jefferson.

These articles are a testament to the level of academic research and writing completed by undergraduate students here at Towson University. We would like to thank each of our authors for their submission and cooperation with us during the editing process, and we commend them for their hard work and patience.

We would like to extend our gratitude to our faculty advisor, Dr. Oluwatoyin Oduntan and Dr. Ronn Pineo. We celebrate the retirement of Dr. Ronn Pineo who has guided the journal over most of its existence. We wish him a restful and productive new life. Thank you both for your guidance and expertise throughout the creation of this edition. Finally, we thank all of the faculty reviewers who volunteered their time to review each of the submissions and provide substantial feedback. Your contributions and enthusiasm in supporting the journal are greatly appreciated.

We hope you enjoy the following Feature Articles—. It has been a pleasure to publish them.

### **Towson Journal of Historical Studies Editorial Board**

Sabrina Sutter, Phillip Spain, Marjorie Perry, Noah Ulrich, Hailey Quinlin, Alexandra Downey,  
Larissa Demidenko, Catherine Geiger

## **Feature Articles**

# Khrushchev and Berlin – How the Wall Came to Be Built

Marjorie Perry

Unlikely though it may seem, the June 1961 Miss Universe Pageant generated yet another Cold War provocation. The winner was twenty-four-year-old Marlene Schmidt, an electrical engineer representing the Federated Republic of Germany with an attention-grabbing backstory. Less than a year before her triumph, she had escaped the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) through Berlin. Excited about the \$5000 cash prizes and the mink coat she had won, she reported she only earned \$53 a week at the research lab where she worked prior to her escape to the West. With yet another reason for the world to focus on the East German refugee issue, Walter Ulbricht, the First Secretary of the Socialist Unity (Communist) Party was quick to accuse the Americans of manipulating the beauty contest to create a “Soviet zone Cinderella” to emphasize the GDR’s refugee problem.<sup>1</sup>

The ever-escalating number of Germans escaping the East through the open city of Berlin was a factor in the construction of the Berlin Wall, but even without that complication the city was the focus of the Cold War. The proximity of competing capitalist and communist systems within one city created a natural hotbed of controversy. Since the end of World War II, Berlin had been occupied by the Soviet Union, the United States, France, and Great Britain. While the four countries had been successful allies in defeating Hitler, the ensuing years had seen the rise of intense rivalries. Though Berlin was of consequence to all the former allies, to Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Soviet Union, Berlin was preternaturally important. This paper examines how and why Khrushchev became the guardian of the border and the protector of Soviet influence in East Germany. The Soviet leader was bound to East Germany by history, guilt, pride, philosophy, and by a need to defeat the West. In East Germany, he saw the chance to defeat capitalism in his front yard. He held the West in check despite the growing desperation in the East German state while the former Allies squabbled over the real estate that was Berlin.

What became the Berlin crisis could be traced back to the Yalta Conference or the Potsdam Agreement, but more immediate emphasis should be given to May 2, 1945. That was the day the Soviet troops entered Berlin. The American Army was also in Germany and close to the German capital but held back at Eisenhower’s behest to allow the Soviet Army the honor of capturing Berlin. Josef Stalin, ever mindful of his Leninist roots, believed Lenin’s statement “whoever controls Berlin controls Germany and whoever controls Germany controls Europe,” and took advantage of American restraint by pushing ahead to occupy Berlin.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet unwillingness to share was immediately apparent, and there was undisguised animosity between Soviet troops and their erstwhile allies. However, based on the amount of Soviet suffering at the hands of the Germans and their common Allied goal to demilitarize, denazify, and democratize Germany, the Allies stepped

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth* (New York: Berkley Books, 2011), 287-289.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Gelb, *The Berlin Wall, Kennedy: Khrushchev and a Showdown in the Heart of Europe* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc, 1986), 22.

back from open confrontation. As early as May, the Soviets were demanding that Americans abandon territory they were “illegally occupying.” Tired of Soviet intransigence, the Americans seized their zone on July 5, 1945. According to Norman Gelb, “... frustrations in dealing with the Soviets in Germany gradually accumulated and they centered around Berlin.”<sup>3</sup>

The Potsdam Accords set the parameters for the division of Germany into four zones of occupation, and “divided the city-state of Berlin into four occupation sectors that had a separate status although they were in the middle of the Soviet occupation zone.”<sup>4</sup> According to Khrushchev in his memoirs, Stalin assumed that a strong Communist Party would reassert itself in post-war Germany and the entire working class would unite to support their government. Khrushchev believed that Stalin underestimated the “reactionary” forces still active in Germany and the active efforts made by the United States, Britain, and France to rebuild capitalism and keep Germany from becoming an ally of the Soviet Union. To Stalin’s regret, the western allies succeeded to a great extent in their zones.<sup>5</sup>

The agreement made at Potsdam also authorized the Soviet Union to take reparations from their sector only, and Khrushchev reports that Stalin stripped the countryside of everything of value. The war had wreaked utter devastation in the Soviet Union and Stalin felt entitled to take anything of value. Khrushchev recounts tales of factories dismantled and shipped east, and damaged equipment taken even though it was probably useless. The metal buildings they shipped to Siberia for use in rebuilding structures simply cracked and fell apart in the extreme cold. Khrushchev continues that he was unsure if Stalin intended to build a Socialist state in the Soviet sector, so complete was the pillage of German assets.<sup>6</sup>

Stalin was working under the impression that the Allied occupation and the partition of Germany were only temporary and within two to three years, the Americans would withdraw from all of Europe. He hoped an Allied evacuation would leave him free to socialize a reunited Germany. He continued to harass Western operations: buzzing civilian airliners landing in Berlin, restricting civilian train access, attempting to intimidate military and civilian personnel, and behaving as if Berlin was their city exclusively. American military and diplomatic leaders briefly flirted with going home. Instead, they amplified efforts to improve conditions in their sectors, pouring American dollars into the economy and infrastructure. Stalin’s hostile environment, his concerted effort to use “time and sustained pressure” to send the Americans scurrying home failed.<sup>7</sup>

Stalin next turned his attention to creating the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Installing a puppet dictator, so colorless and dogmatic that he had survived Stalin’s wartime purges of German Communists in Moscow, Walter Ulbricht was the perfect clone to do his bidding. Ulbricht merged the German Communist Party with the Social Democrats to create the Socialist Unity Party, and successfully quelled resistance to Stalin’s heavy-handed approach to East Germany. At this time, in the words of Khrushchev came “the struggle for the hearts and minds of

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<sup>3</sup>Gelb, *Berlin Wall*, 26.

<sup>4</sup>W. R. Smyser, *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall: A Hell of a Lot Better than a War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 7.

<sup>5</sup>Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Volume 3, Stateman, [1953-1964]*, ed. Sergei Khrushchev, trans. George Shriver (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 557.

<sup>6</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 558.

<sup>7</sup>Gelb, *Berlin Wall*, 32.

the German people, above all the working class.” Khrushchev recounts Soviet efforts to provide for the population materially and improve their standard of living.<sup>8</sup> However, East Germany lagged far behind the American-sponsored West Germany in economic growth and improved living conditions.

Hoping to force the Allies out of Berlin, Stalin took another page from the book of Lenin and “prodded the capitalist world with the tip of a bayonet.”<sup>9</sup> Since Berlin was located 90 miles inside of the GDR, Stalin instituted a blockade cutting off water, power, and food to the city.<sup>10</sup> Because ground access to the city was not guaranteed although air corridors were established by treaty, Stalin hoped to starve the Allies out of West Berlin.<sup>11</sup> He might have succeeded but for the American Zone military commander, General Lucius Clay. With all the Allied governments refusing military intervention, Clay started the airlift that carried everything needed by the city and continued with governmental approval from June 1948 through May 1949. Stalin was forced to capitulate. The stand-off had strengthened Allied resolve to remain in Berlin and this resolve kicked off the official Cold War.

Berlin continued in the four-zone configuration, but the impossibility of the arrangement was apparent to all those involved. Stalin died in 1953, and as Khrushchev assumed power he tried to relax some of Stalin’s policies both within the Soviet Union and among the Eastern Bloc Soviet satellites. Khrushchev hoped to remove the veneer of Stalinism and “reactivate the ideas of Lenin.”<sup>12</sup> He planned to replace Ulbricht with a less Stalinist chief as building socialism was not going well in the GDR, and East Germans were unhappy with Soviet industrialization and collectivization. The regime was repressive, the standard of living was low, and there were shortages of food and consumer goods. A revolt in 1953 affecting both East Berlin and the entire Soviet zone was put down by Soviet troops and tanks. Interestingly, Gelb puts the death toll at 800 East Germans, but in his memoirs Khrushchev says no guns were fired. Ultimately, Ulbricht was left in place as Moscow felt only he could keep the East Germans in line and on the socialist path.

Due to continuing European difficulties with the Soviet Union, the Western countries formed a mutual defense alliance called the North American Treaty Organization (NATO). Construed as a direct threat to the Soviet position in Europe, in response Khrushchev established the Warsaw Pact comprising his Eastern Bloc allies in 1955. Vyacheslav Molotov, the Stalinist foreign minister, advocated excluding both East Germany and Albania from the Pact as it was unlikely the USSR would go to war in defense of either country. Khrushchev overruled him, saying “it would be a signal to our Western opponents...(to)take Albania and the GRD for your own, the choice of timing remains up to you.”<sup>13</sup> Khrushchev’s commitment to East Germany and to the difficult situation in East Berlin remained deep.

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<sup>8</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*. 558.

<sup>9</sup>Khrushchev, Nikita, *Khrushchev Remembers, The Last Testament*, ed. and trans. Strobe Talbott, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), 191.

<sup>10</sup>Neil Carmichael, “A Brief History of the Berlin Crisis of 1961,” National Declassification Center, National Records and Archives Administration, (U.S. Archives, 2011) Short essay: Not Copyright. 1

<sup>11</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 11.

<sup>12</sup>Khrushchev, *Remembers*, 193.

<sup>13</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 395.

In the 1950s, as Khrushchev continued to consolidate his power within the Kremlin, he recognized East Germany's strategic value. While he understood the great risks of nuclear war, he believed the competition between capitalism and communism must be fought on an ideological and economic basis. The GDR was the stage most visible to the West, and the Soviets appreciated East Germany as an additional physical buffer between East and West.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Germany was the home of Karl Marx and the perfect theater for the triumph of communism over capitalism in Khrushchev's mind. Another factor that strengthened Moscow's resolve was the booming economic success of adjacent West Germany. The war was still a recent memory, and the Soviets still feared a reconstituted, remilitarized (ing), and perhaps revenge-seeking West Germany so close to the Soviet homeland.

In the mid-1950s an East German refugee problem started to manifest itself, as unhappy East Germans sought freedom "through the gap in the Iron Curtain that then existed through the open door into West Berlin."<sup>15</sup> East German workers suffered low wages with long hours, shortages of necessities, long lines, and forced collectivization. They were aware of better conditions just a stone's throw away in West Berlin. *Grenzgangers*, numbering around 50,000, were East Berlin commuters with West Berlin jobs. They profited not only from higher wages, but a favorable rate of exchange as well, as west-marks were worth more than east-marks.<sup>16</sup>

The emigrants originated from all over East Germany and represented all professions from the lowliest farm laborers to the most skilled engineers. The entire faculty of the law school of the University of Leipzig as well as thousands of teachers, doctors, dentists, and scientists left East Germany. Many of the refugees were young and skilled- exactly the people East Germany needed to build socialism. Almost 200,000 refugees left in 1960 alone, including "four thousand card-carrying members of Ulbricht's Socialist Unity party."<sup>17</sup> The exodus of so many workers, especially highly trained specialists, exacerbated the East German economic woes.

As Khrushchev pointed out in his Memoirs, emigrating was not a scary proposition as the workers were still in Germany, their destination had the same culture and language, and West Germany's explosive growth guaranteed employment opportunities.<sup>18</sup> Ulbricht came to Khrushchev incessantly about East German issues, particularly the economic shortfall and refugee exodus. Khrushchev had ended reparations in 1954 and bolstered Soviet aid to East Germany in the form of money, food, and consumer goods, as well as increasing his vocal public support for Ulbricht and his regime.<sup>19</sup> Privately, Khrushchev suggested that Ulbricht soften his autocratic control and slow the push for collectivization, but Ulbricht would not abandon his hardline tactics. He preferred to blame all East Germany's difficulties on the open border in East Berlin and the American-sponsored prosperity of nearby West Germany. Khrushchev agreed the East-West divide in Germany was a unique difficulty, and referred to West Berlin as a "ticking time bomb." Khrushchev continued, "a quick, concrete

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<sup>14</sup>Hope M. Harrison, "Soviet-East German Relations after World War II," *Problems of Post Communism* 42, no 5 (1995).

<sup>15</sup>John T. Burrige, *Kennedy and Khrushchev: The New Frontier in Berlin*, (New Castle on Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2011), 25.

<sup>16</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 12.

<sup>17</sup>Gelb, *Berlin Wall*, 68.

<sup>18</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 568.

<sup>19</sup>Harrison, "Soviet-East German," 6.

solution was required. Since we couldn't solve the problem through economic competition, the path of political initiative remained.”<sup>20</sup>

Khrushchev linked the political and the diplomatic, and was confident in his abilities in each sphere. Buoyed by his consolidation of political power in Moscow in 1957, Khrushchev prepared to push the issues in Berlin. On November 10, 1958, in a speech to the Soviet-Polish friendship meeting, Khrushchev delivered an ultimatum to the “Western Powers to agree to withdraw from West Berlin and make it a free demilitarized city. He further threatened to turn over to a thuggish East Germany complete control of all lines of communication with West Berlin; the Western Powers would have access only by permission of the obstinate East German government.”<sup>21</sup> Notes from the East German Ambassador to Moscow, Johannes Koenig, indicate Khrushchev understood “hard conflicts with the Western Powers will arise” but that both the Presidium and Koenig believed “the Western Powers will not want to conduct a war for the sake of Berlin.”<sup>22</sup> Khrushchev followed up the speech with written ultimatums giving the Allies a six-month period to comply or he would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany.

Khrushchev theorized even a separate peace treaty between the GDR and the USSR would change the status of East Germany in important ways. The treaty would end the occupation zones agreed to at Potsdam and solve the question of access to West Berlin. Any country wishing to access Berlin would be forced to recognize the East German regime because they would need authorization to cross ninety miles of GDR countryside between the Allied zones and Berlin. Importantly, Ulbricht could finally solve his problem with fleeing workers.<sup>23</sup> West Berlin would be a “free city” although access would only be available with East German consent. To the Soviet leader, ending the war by treaty would end their international legal issues with the West. In a letter to President John F. Kennedy dated in 1961, Khrushchev was still justifying his call for an Allied peace treaty, “We cannot escape the fact that there has been a second world war and the problems we have inherited from the last war – first and foremost the conclusion of a German peace treaty – require their solution.”<sup>24</sup>

The six-month period came and went with little to no action on either side. The Soviets withdrew the deadline and met with the United States, France, and the United Kingdom's foreign ministers. No progress was made as the Western Powers affirmed their commitment to maintaining the status quo in Berlin. As a result of the conference an invitation to visit the United States was issued to Khrushchev that he happily accepted. Khrushchev visited the United States in the summer of 1959 and, among other activities, spent time with Eisenhower at Camp David and at his farm in Gettysburg.<sup>25</sup> In his characteristic mode of the carrot and stick diplomacy, Khrushchev dangled the idea of disarmament and “peaceful co-existence.” A four-power summit was scheduled for Paris for the summer of 1960.

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<sup>20</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 568.

<sup>21</sup>Carmichael, “Berlin Crisis”

<sup>22</sup>Johannes Koenig, “Comments on the Preparation of the Steps of the Soviet Government Concerning a Change in the Status of West Berlin”, 4 December 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive.

<sup>23</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 568.

<sup>24</sup>“Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, 29 September 1961.” *The Kennedy -Khrushchev Letters*, ed. Thomas Fensch (The Woodlands: New Century Books, 2001), 51-52.

<sup>25</sup>Gelb, *Berlin*, 48.

In the interim, the Soviets shot down an American spy plane piloted by Gary Powers over Soviet territory on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Norman Gelb reports Khrushchev was under pressure in Moscow due to a lack of progress with Berlin and the provocation of the Powers incident. He was advised by his Presidium to complain about the U-2 flight but to use the summit to improve relations with the United States, but Khrushchev disregarded their instructions. He feared loss of face as the West was not prepared to provide accommodations in Berlin. As a way out, he demanded Eisenhower apologize, and when the American president refused Khrushchev declined to participate, ending the summit before it began.<sup>26</sup>

With the American elections about to occur, Khrushchev decided to bide his time. While both candidates espoused anti-Soviet sentiments in their campaigns, Khrushchev hoped Kennedy would win. He had dealt with Nixon in the Kitchen Cabinet debate and believed he was virulently anti-Soviet. In addition, when Khrushchev was visiting the United States, Nixon made disparaging statements to the press. Khrushchev even complained to Eisenhower “this is, to say the least, a rather tactless way for your vice-president to treat a guest.”<sup>27</sup> While expressing a preference for Adlai Stevenson in his memoirs, and despite Kennedy’s patrician background, Khrushchev believed Kennedy would be more amenable toward improved Soviet-American relations. Although the Soviet Union had decided to release the captive U-2 pilot, Khrushchev made sure the release did not occur until after the election so as not to aid Nixon’s cause. When he met Kennedy in Vienna in June 1961, he relayed the story of how he helped Kennedy win.<sup>28</sup>

Khrushchev watched developments in the United States with extreme interest. He felt the younger Kennedy would be more flexible than the previous administration and he hoped for a softening of American resolve to hold Berlin. They began a correspondence almost immediately, and Khrushchev was quick to admonish the American president after the Bay of Pigs fiasco early in Kennedy’s tenure. In a telegram dated April 18, 1961, Khrushchev did not accept the U.S. repudiation of responsibility for the armed militia attack on Cuba. Still, on May 16th he proposed a summit to discuss Laos, disarmament, and West Berlin, stating “we propose a peaceful settlement, which proceeds from the actually existing situation, and which is directed toward the liquidation of a dangerous source of tension in the very heart of Europe. We seek only that finally the line should be drawn under the Second World War.”<sup>29</sup> The summit was scheduled for June 3-4, 1961, and had no formal agenda although Khrushchev hinted that he wanted to discuss disarmament.

Kennedy had been preparing since early February even before the summit was suggested. His advisers stressed he was as tough as Khrushchev and just as unyielding. He was told Khrushchev meant to test him and he could not be weak or indecisive. Kennedy worked tirelessly on preparations, studying briefing books, talking points, and personality profiles for weeks before the session. A scope paper obtained from a briefing book advised Kennedy “not to take an ultimative tone, to improve the prospects of finding an acceptable and workable basis for improving relations, to impress on Khrushchev our capacity and resolve to resist Soviet and Communist encroachments.”

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<sup>26</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 20.

<sup>27</sup>Khrushchev, *Remembers*, 488.

<sup>28</sup>Khrushchev, *Remembers*, 490-91.

<sup>29</sup>“Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, 16 May 1961,” *Letters*. 38.

The paper continues “he will undoubtedly press hard his position on Berlin and a peace treaty with East Germany,” and ends with “in an exchange of this type, particularly with so outspoken a leader as Khrushchev, it is not practical to expect that the course of the talks could be charted in advance.”<sup>30</sup> Khrushchev did not feel a need to prepare as he considered the Bay of Pigs had left Kennedy weak and vacillating. He toured Eastern Europe on the way to Vienna telling the Czechs he would probably sign the peace treaty at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in October, although he acknowledged Ulbricht wanted him to sign it immediately.

Both Kennedy and Khrushchev believed in the power of their personalities, but Kennedy had never met anyone like Khrushchev. Within an hour of the start of the summit, Kennedy mentioned both powers needed to be careful of miscalculations. Kennedy reported to his friend, Kenny O'Donnell, that Khrushchev “exploded yelling at Kennedy to stop using that word and never use it again.”<sup>31</sup> Khrushchev continued his assault, pushing the Americans to leave Berlin entirely. Kennedy was caught off guard, but he did not back down completely. As described by Gelb, “he refused to accept that the Soviet Union could either make the changes it proposed or hand the United States such an ultimatum.”<sup>32</sup> Kennedy reiterated that the United States national security was linked to West Berlin, and in fact American soldiers had also assisted in the subjugation of Berlin. Khrushchev continued to advance the Soviet theory that West Berlin was in fact part of East German territory, and cautioned any violation of East German sovereignty would be regarded by the Soviet Union as an act of open aggression.”<sup>33</sup> Additionally, he continued to advance his neutral “free city” idea for West Berlin, and set a deadline of the end of the year “to lance the blister that was West Berlin.”<sup>34</sup>

In his description of the Summit in his address to the American people on the seventeenth anniversary of D-Day, Kennedy referred to the conference as a “very sober two days.”<sup>35</sup> W. R. Smyser opines the Soviet leader’s peasant upbringing was reflective of his boorish bullying behavior. He says he was often crude and aggressive in his speech causing his interpreters to substitute more refined language reflected in the transcripts.<sup>36</sup> There was no mistaking his body language and his tirades though – he hoped to scare Kennedy into abandoning West Berlin. Kennedy remained on script though and advised Khrushchev that he was free to sign a unilateral peace treaty with East Germany, but that action would not affect the Western Powers occupation of West Berlin. Kennedy acknowledged he had no standing in the affairs of East Berlin and Khrushchev could do as he liked in his portion of the city. Khrushchev’s browbeating did cause Kennedy “a slip of the tongue when he acknowledged the present balance of power between the two camps,” even though the actual ratio of U. S. stocks of nuclear warheads to those of the USSR was “9.7:1.”<sup>37</sup> Khrushchev was delighted with the mistake, but the stalemate remained. Kennedy was

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<sup>30</sup>“President’s Meeting with Khrushchev; Vienna, June 3-4 1961; Scope Paper, 23 May 1961,” JFK Library, digital identifier JFKNSF-234-008p0011, Folder Title: Europe: 1961: May-June Khrushchev Briefing Book (Volume II) 1 of 5 Folders/ Date of Materials: 1961: 18 February – 26 May.

<sup>31</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 65.

<sup>32</sup>Gelb, *Berlin*, 82.

<sup>33</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 68.

<sup>34</sup>Khrushchev, *Remembers*, 504.

<sup>35</sup>Burridge, *Kennedy and Khrushchev*,

<sup>36</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 72.

<sup>37</sup>Seanon S. Wong, “Who Blinkered? Performing Resolve (or Lack of It) in Face-to-Face Diplomacy,” *Security Studies* 30, no. 3 (2021) 13.

exhausted by the end of the second day of talks. In an example of the almost bipolar methodology of Khrushchev's foreign policy, and as a postscript to the Vienna Summit, Khrushchev sent the Kennedy family a puppy – Pushinka, two weeks after the summit. Pushinka's mother was one of the Soviet space dogs that had orbited Earth in a capsule.<sup>38</sup> Pushinka was examined by the Central Intelligence Agency for listening devices before she was delivered to the family, and later she had puppies that Kennedy called “pupniks.”

Walter Ulbricht relentlessly hammered Khrushchev about his East German issues as the refugees continued to stream out of East Berlin. He continuously sought to aggravate the situation through petty interference in day-to-day operations between the Four Powers. For instance, he instituted a policy mandating Western officials had to show their documents to East German border guards, not Soviet border guards as agreed to by the four occupiers. East Germany had not been recognized by the Western Powers, so the change violated protocol, ruffled feathers, and was done without prior notice to or approval from the Soviet government. In January 1961, Ulbricht sent a delegation to Beijing without prior notification to Moscow. His pitch to the Chinese compared West Berlin to Taiwan and hoped to create a bond as both countries were suffering due to Khrushchev's inaction against “imperialist occupation.” Ulbricht met with the Warsaw Pact in March 1961 to get assent to close the border and was ordered not to take any action unilaterally. Still, Soviet diplomats were worried about the East German level of impatience.<sup>39</sup>

In the United States, Kennedy assembled a team to assess his options for Berlin. He could find no agreement with his allies. MacMillan, the British Prime Minister, was worried - Great Britain was close enough to the Soviet Union to suffer an easy nuclear strike as Khrushchev had threatened - and he wanted to compromise. De Gaulle of France believed Khrushchev was just posturing and would not go to war over Berlin. In Washington, Kennedy added Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State to President Truman, as well as Henry Kissinger, director of Harvard's Defense Studies Program to his staff to explore diplomatic and military solutions. The hardliners in the group believed Khrushchev intended war and was using Berlin as a pretext, while others believed the situation could still be negotiated. They advocated reinforcing United States troops in West Germany so Khrushchev would not doubt their resolve. The more moderate in the group counseled patience and caution so as not to cause additional antagonism. Kennedy pleaded with them to provide an option other “than holocaust or humiliation.”<sup>40</sup> There seemed no good alternative. On July 25th Kennedy addressed the nation, calling for an increase in the military budget. In his speech, he used the qualifier West when speaking of Berlin because he was reiterating his message from Vienna – the Soviets could do what they wanted in East Berlin but dare not touch the West.

Meanwhile, Ulbricht was increasing his provocative behavior. On June 15, 1961, he called a press conference inviting Western correspondents which was unusual in itself. He made a routine opening statement and opened the floor to questions. Ulbricht was asked about the future of West Berlin if he and the Soviets prevailed, and he explained that the “centers of espionage and subversion” would be closed and “the refugee slave trade” would cease. He indicated all access routes to West Berlin would be under his control by the end of the year. In a vague response to a question about travel

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<sup>38</sup>President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, 21 June 1961, *Letters*, 40-41.

<sup>39</sup>Harrison, “Soviet -East German,” 9.

<sup>40</sup>Kempe, 1961, 310.

between the Berlins – “difficult” Ulbricht declared “because of Western restrictions” – he made an innocuous statement “no one intends to build a wall.” To the reporters present, it seemed from his tone that the very idea was absurd.<sup>41</sup> Still, 20,000 more people left East Berlin in June 1961 as they sensed the noose tightening.<sup>42</sup>

Both sides sent new military commanders for their respective sectors which only increased tensions. In July, as East Germany attempted to tighten their border controls 30,000 refugees slipped over the invisible line. Ulbricht met Khrushchev and Mikhail Pervukhin, the Soviet ambassador to East Germany, and advised that “if the present situation of open borders remain, collapse is inevitable.”<sup>43</sup> Khrushchev sent for a map of West Berlin, “We deliberated on our tactics and set a certain date and hour when the border control would go into effect. We decided to erect antitank barriers and barricades. We also planned to use our own troops to guard the border, although the front line would be German soldiers.”<sup>44</sup> Khrushchev stipulated the closure to be constructed of barbed wire until they were able to gauge Western reaction. He also understood that the closure would not be a good look for socialism, but felt he had no alternative if he were to save East Germany. Ulbricht, overjoyed, headed home to make the plan a reality.

Ulbricht assigned his Politburo security chief, Erich Honecker, to the project, and the two began to assemble barbed wire and concrete posts all over East Germany without attracting attention. The Soviets also provided material and in short order, they had assembled enough wire and posts for the 146-kilometer project.<sup>45</sup> A date and time were chosen – August 13th – early on a Sunday when activity in the city was low. Khrushchev joked the number thirteen was considered unlucky in the West but “for us and the whole socialist camp it would be a very lucky day indeed.”<sup>46</sup> Even though the project was kept secret, East Germans were aware of changes in the mood of the city – 1709 refugees left East Berlin on August 10, 1961.

Khrushchev called Ulbricht to Moscow for a meeting on August 1st. Although they spoke primarily about the East German economy (Khrushchev advised Ulbricht to plant corn on newly collectivized farms), Khrushchev gave him the green light for the barrier to be constructed but emphasized that caution must be used to ensure that Western military access be uninterrupted as guaranteed in the Potsdam accords. Khrushchev advised him to be careful not to “create provocations and to proceed smartly.”<sup>47</sup> However, Khrushchev did not trust Ulbricht to abide within the parameters he had set for him. As a precaution, he increased Soviet forces in East Germany in case of a militant Western reaction and ordered his commander in East Germany, Marshal Konev, to keep Ulbricht on a short leash.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Gelb, *Berlin*, 98.

<sup>42</sup>Harrison, *Soviet-East German*,

<sup>43</sup>Harrison, *Soviet-East German*, 9.

<sup>44</sup>Khrushchev, *Remembers*, 505-506.

<sup>45</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 85.

<sup>46</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 94.

<sup>47</sup>“Notes on the Conversation of Comrade N. S. Khrushchev with Comrade Ulbricht on 1 August 1961.” Wilson Center Digital Archive.

<sup>48</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 99-100.

Ulbricht gave a party at his home on the night of the 12<sup>th</sup> but elsewhere in the city, the East Germans were making final preparations for their midnight endeavor. Starting in the busiest part of Berlin, Potsdamer Platz, and working outward, East German soldiers and border guards (Vopos) “jackhammered out cobblestones and trolley tracks, blasting holes into the ground for the posts on which barbed wire would be strung.”<sup>49</sup> Guards with submachine guns faced both directions in anticipation of interference from either side. East Berliners who had toyed with the idea of leaving grabbed a few essentials and hurried across the border while they still could. Altogether, Ulbricht had designated 28,400 police, factory militia, and State security men to the project, as well as 50,000 East German soldiers to stand guard in case of an uprising in East or West Berlin to protest construction. By mid-morning on the 13<sup>th</sup>, the border was virtually closed. Where there was not yet a physical barrier, transit points were heavily guarded. The last 6,904 refugees reported to the West German refugee center having left East Germany just as the “Wall” went up.<sup>50</sup>

Khrushchev was satisfied with the result. In his memoirs, he recounted “we were all very pleased with our decision. I gained some personal satisfaction in particular. Without signing a peace treaty, we had extracted from the West something by rights was ours.”<sup>51</sup> He reported the effect on East Germany was an immediate improvement – he stated the border closure improved order and labor discipline. Ulbricht had followed Moscow’s instructions to the letter. There were thirteen checkpoints in the barrier for West Berliners, West Germans, foreign civilians, and Western Allied Forces. To test the military access, Khrushchev made an impromptu, incognito visit to the city and with his military commander, crossed and recrossed the border. He said he never left the car.<sup>52</sup>

In the United States, there was a feeling of shock as they had received no advance notice of the plan to divide the city. The State Department – indeed all the Allies, were focused on Khrushchev’s threat to sign the peace treaty with the East and chase the Western Powers out of Berlin entirely. In reviewing State Department plans for contingencies in Berlin, they had created a folder for the “Division of Berlin” but it was empty. Foy Kohler, an Assistant Secretary of State for Europe said “the East Germans have done us a favor.”<sup>53</sup> Kennedy himself felt Khrushchev had taken a “minimal step,” telling assistant Kenny O’Donnell “why would Khrushchev put up a wall if he really intended to seize West Berlin?... This is his way out of his predicament. It’s not a very nice solution but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.”<sup>54</sup>

Ulbricht was overjoyed. By the 16<sup>th</sup>, based on a lack of Western response, he gave the command to commence making the barrier permanent, albeit with Khrushchev’s permission. Concrete blocks began to replace the barbed wire and in short order the Wall, as it came to be known, was six to eight feet tall. For Ulbricht, it was important to block the view from East to West, and he believed the wall demonstrated his power and prestige.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Gelb, *Berlin*, 157.

<sup>50</sup>Kempe, 1961, 362.

<sup>51</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 311.

<sup>52</sup>Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, 312.

<sup>53</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 105.

<sup>54</sup>Kempe, 1961, 363.

<sup>55</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 110.

Khrushchev never signed the peace treaty with East Germany. After the Wall went up, Ulbricht continued to provoke the Western Powers and squabble with Moscow. Khrushchev had come to believe Ulbricht might be uncontrollable after the treaty was signed. In fact, Leonid Brezhnev sacked him as soon as he seized power. Khrushchev and Kennedy had faced off over the issue of Berlin and both walked away thinking they had a victory. Khrushchev had shored up his failing satellite, quieted Ulbricht and his critics in Moscow, and felt he had bested the West. Kennedy had maintained his commitment to West Berlin as well as the Western Allies and avoided a confrontation. Cold War controversies would continue to arise in Berlin for the next thirty years but at that moment, the Wall was a solution they could both live with.

Khrushchev believed in Lenin, Communism, and the USSR. His policies were “the policies of a man possessed by a dogma, who believed that the Soviet way held the key to the future of the world and must ultimately conquer.”<sup>56</sup> He had an almost patriarchal attachment to East Germany in part because of its poor start after the Soviets stripped the country for reparations. Another reason for his concern was expressed by Ulbricht to Khrushchev in January 1961: “We are a state which was created without having and still does not have a raw material base, and which stands with open borders at the center of the competition between two world systems.”<sup>57</sup> W.R. Smyser expressed Khrushchev’s intent as a “firm believer in a glorious future for Communism. Khrushchev wanted to make the GDR a show window. He thought that with Communism, the Soviet Union and all its allies could attract refugees, not generate them.”<sup>58</sup> He took Ulbricht under his wing and gave him advice on all aspects of building socialism; Khrushchev understood the prestige of the Soviet Union was tied to that of the German Democratic Republic. In remarks, Khrushchev repeatedly reported he had no interest in West Berlin and that may have been true. He was invested in protecting the prestige and power of the Soviet Union as well as his fledgling satellite, and Khrushchev accomplished that goal. Khrushchev was the wall before the Wall was built. In his own words, “I should mention that it was a difficult task to divide the city of Berlin because everything is intertwined...But what could we do? History created this inconvenience and we had to live with it.

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<sup>56</sup>Edward Crankshaw, foreword to *Khrushchev Remembers*, ix.

<sup>57</sup>Kempe, *1961*, 115-116.

<sup>58</sup>Smyser, *Kennedy*, 13.

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# Broken Promises: The Disconnect between Soviet Theory, Soviet Legislation, and Female Experience (1920-1930s)

Madeleine Mason

“Are you too shy or something? Aren’t you used to it? Or are you one of those gymnasium girls? With your bourgeois mortality? There’s no place for bourgeois mortality in the party. The party has thrown it out the window.’ I got away from him and ran as fast as my legs would carry me.”<sup>59</sup>

-Comrade Ganov (Komsomol District Secretary) to Paraskeva Ivanova

The final years of the Russian Empire were a time of unrest for the entire population. Peasants and laborers were facing incredibly low wages, hunger, and a corrupt government. These, with continuous hardship during World War I, set the stage for the downfall of the Romanov reign. In the context of women’s place in the historically patriarchal Russian society, the revolution, with a country-wide strike being held on Women’s Day, gave women the chance to stand up against unjust reign and the domination of women in Russia’s historically patriarchal society.<sup>60</sup> In the years following the revolution, Bolshevik leaders boasted about plans to create an industrialized utopia where all were equal, that the Communist Party would provide social aid to all, and citizens would repay the state with labor. In theory, this would have resulted in female liberation in the home and the workplace. However, although women did gain some liberties through this period of rebuilding, they also faced new complications that came with this “freedom.”

It is clear that the expectations of this new “utopia” were not the reality that many women experienced. This paper argues that the theory and law produced with ‘the woman issue’ in mind and the desire to industrialize quickly without a concrete plan, were contradictory to and they clashed with the highly misogynistic culture that was ingrained in the masses. By examining memoirs written by Soviet women like Paraskeva Ivanova, it is clear that rather than being liberated, Soviet women faced sexual harassment in the workplace. They also felt the lack of social aid promised by the party during the emergence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR.)

The patriarchal society in the Russian empire had a complex view of gender and the role of women. Bourgeois women, women of nobility or wealth, were privileged with the means to acquire an

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<sup>59</sup>Paraskeva Ivanova, “Why I Do Not Belong in the Party,” in *In The Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*, eds. Shelia Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 214.

<sup>60</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v “Russian Revolution,” last modified March 05, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Russian-Revolution>.

education and participate in society. At the other end of the spectrum, the female peasant population was largely illiterate, apolitical, and expected to be solely concerned with bearing children.<sup>61</sup> While elite women were influenced by European fashion and culture and consequently developed opinions on a woman's role in society, the Orthodox Church was a main influence for the peasant women of Russia. Church sermons during this time reinforced traditional gender roles. An Orthodox manuscript of a chastity sermon from the time preaches as follows:

What is a woman? She is worldly thought for a man, slumbering sloth, a reviver of grief, a painted snake, a willful enemy, daily vanity, a storm in the home, a flood for a man, an untamable animal... She is the Devil's weapon.<sup>62</sup>

For illiterate peasant women, the church was a place of education and influence. With Orthodox Christianity being the prevalent religion in Russia beginning before the 11th century, this misogynistic view of women was well rooted in Russian society, especially in rural communities that were less aware of European influence.

Women at the forefront of Europeanization were publishing writings with views on gender roles drastically different from the Orthodox Church's views. This created a complex division in a society where the bourgeoisie had the privilege to worry about social issues instead of problems faced by wider society such as food insecurity. The 'bourgeois mentality' was later weaponized by early communist leaders with the intent to insult proletariat women looking for 'more' equality or women threatening collectivization by disagreeing with the "free love" attitude that came with the abolition of the traditional family structure.

With the nobility and church in disagreement, and the peasant population revolting for food and fair wages, the Revolution was a catalyst for change in all aspects of society. During the February Revolution, women gained the right to vote based on a theory of equality developed by Russian noblewomen. An example of this is the activist Ariadna Tyrkova, whose essay titled *The Emancipation of Women* outlines a theory that the Bolsheviks would later try to expand on. She writes,

A woman should receive the same education as a man. A woman should receive equal pay for equal work. The labor of women and children should fall under the special protection of the state. The state should care for poor mothers. Providing support before and after the birth of a child.<sup>63</sup>

This concept was not questioned in Bolshevik theory and was indeed advanced in resulting legislation in ensuing years. Unfortunately, its translation into Soviet society was lost, and women continued to struggle to reach their dreams of equality.

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<sup>61</sup>Robin Bisha, "Defining Ideals: Introduction," in *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression, An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 20.

<sup>62</sup>Unknown, "On Chastity (n.d.)," in *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression, An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 21-23.

<sup>63</sup>Ariadna Tyrkova, "The Emancipation of Women," In *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression, An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha et al. trans. Amy Singleton Adams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 51.

The Bolshevik Party which transitioned into the Communist Party of the USSR was spearheaded by Vladimir Lenin and other party officials who were influenced by Marxism and with Lenin's interpretation of Marxism set as the foundation of Soviet society. Marxist values included opposition to capitalism and the support of the collective power of the working class backed by the party.<sup>64</sup> Lenin also agreed with the Marxist belief in female emancipation and equality. In his work "The Principles of Communism," one of the creators of Marxism, Frederick Engels, states:

It will transform the relations between the sexes into a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no occasion to intervene. It can do this since it does away with private property and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of traditional marriage – the dependence rooted in private property, of the woman on the man, and of the children on the parents.<sup>65</sup>

Engels states that the natural order would come under communism when men and women were equal. With housing, education, and childcare provided by the state, women and men were equal beings who could put all their efforts into industrializing the state. Supplementary to this Marxist-Leninist vision, Bolshevik revolutionaries began creating theories further conceptualizing social ideals and programs which envisioned the USSR as a utopia of gender equality. A significant contributor to feminist theory was Alexandra Kollontai, the People's Commissioner of Welfare under Lenin and later an Ambassador to Norway and Sweden.<sup>66</sup> Influenced by Marxism, she wrote that communism allowed women to reach full equality, in *Communism and the Family* she proposes:

In Soviet Russia the working woman should be surrounded by the same ease and light, hygiene and beauty that previously only the very rich could afford. Instead of the working woman having to struggle with the cooking and spend her last free hours in the kitchen preparing dinner and supper, communist society will organize public restaurants and communal kitchens.<sup>67</sup>

Kollontai discussed how communist society would also take on the burden of childcare via collective homes for babies, kindergartens, and hospitals.<sup>68</sup> Her theory created a vision of a perfect utilitarian society, and did not envision that anything could go wrong when the state was taking such good care of its people.

Legislation published at the beginning of the USSR reflected the values the Bolsheviks had revolted for, an example being the publication of the first constitution of the Soviet Union in 1918. This document placed the population of the state under the rule of the Communist Party with Vladimir

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<sup>64</sup>Vladimir Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," *The Marxist Internet Archive Library: Lenin's Collected Works*, ed. Robert Daglish, trans. Clemens Dutt.

<sup>65</sup>Frederick Engels, "What Will be the Influence of Communist Society on the Family?" *The Principles of Communism*, *Marxist Archives* accessed May 4, 2023.

<sup>66</sup>Tom Condit, "Alexandra Kollontai," *The Marxist Internet Archive Library: Alexandra Kollontai*, *Marxist Archives* accessed May 4, 2023.

<sup>67</sup>Alexandra Kollontai, "Communism and the Family," *The Marxist Internet Archive Library: Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt, *Marxist Archives*.

<sup>68</sup>Kollontai, "Communism and the Family"

Lenin at the top. It also outlined the utopian desires of Russian Communist theorists. Equality is addressed in Article 22 of the document in vague language. It states:

The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, recognizing equal rights of all citizens, irrespective of their racial or national connections, proclaiming all privilege on this ground, as well as of national minority, to be in contradiction with the fundamental laws of the Republic.<sup>69</sup>

This article is the only mention of the new equalities granted to women and other minorities. There is no information outlining what natural human rights would make them equal to men. Apparently, party officials were confident that Communism was the ultimate equalizer. With social aid from the state, women did not have to do housework and became equal to men.

Other laws that elaborate on the new rights granted to women after the Bolshevik revolution and separation from the church are found in the *1918 Family Code*. This document allowed women to divorce their husbands and get abortions without consent from the church or a male figure.<sup>70</sup> For the time, this was a progressive approach to female autonomy, but the motive for this was to abolish the “traditional family” and replace it with a collectivized Soviet society. Here, the connection between theory and legislation is evident. This legislation prepared the state to fully industrialize and collectivize society. Although all the scaffolding was there to create this utopia, it was not fully achieved. This is explained in the “Journal of Marriage and Family,” where the author writes,

Despite the consensus by such prominent communists and educators that the family should be abolished, there was not yet a replacement for the family in the first decade following the revolution. The system of children’s homes was still so poorly staffed, so erratically supplied, and so shakily organized that the child was better off at home.<sup>71</sup>

This was the ‘double burden’ that Soviet women faced, first to compensate for the lack of welfare and also the increased expectation to work for the collective. Sexual harassment of women in the workplace, limited access of state resources and limited involvement in policymaking reveal the contradiction between lived experience and the Constitutional declaration that all citizens were equal.

Recorded experiences of Soviet women continue to show the disconnect between legislation, theory, and reality. Regardless of the objective of liberation for women, the assumption that communism would immediately create an entire equal class of working people was not accurate. The misogynistic culture of the Russian empire could not be erased in the decade after the revolution. With women in the workplace, sexual harassment from party members was common, and the idea that women who resisted this had the old “bourgeois mentality” and were therefore harmful to the Communist party kept them firmly controlled. Paraskeva Ivanova, a member of the Komsomol, wrote about this mistreatment in a letter sent to a Soviet newspaper. She expressed her excitement to

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<sup>69</sup>“Russian Federation 1918 Constitution,” *The Constitute Project*, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Russia\\_1918?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Russia_1918?lang=en), accessed April 27, 2022.

<sup>70</sup>The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, “Original Family Law of the RSFSR,” *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*.

<sup>71</sup>Becky Glass and Margaret K. Stolee, “Family Law in Soviet Russia, 1917-1945,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 49, no. 4 (1987): 893–902.

join the Communist party and her devotion to “become not a deadweight but a valuable cog in the Great Proletarian Machine for the construction of the future.” This enthusiasm faded as multiple party members took advantage of her. Ivanova recounts this when she writes:

That same night I got another lesson in the new forms of life. Comrade Artiun was walking home with me after our shift at the party committee. Suddenly he grabbed me. He did not embrace me, but squeezed me like a bear and clamped onto my lips like a leech. That wild beast pressed against my lips so hard my teeth hurt. The lesson did not end there. When I broke away screaming, I could hear: ‘Another bourgeois lady!’ I could not sleep that night.<sup>72</sup>

Her experience in the party reflects a misogynistic misinterpretation of the new female roles from executive male members of the party. The communist ideal of equality achieving a harmonious society was not enough to change old Russian gender roles. This resulted in Soviet men embracing the idea of liberation from marriage and family. In the words of Comrade Ganov, “A family? Communists do not have families, and never will. What is a family? It is obsolete, completely obsolete...As for your obstinacy and hesitations, it's all bourgeois attitudes. It is not the communist way.” He weaponized the concept of the ‘bourgeois attitude’ to manipulate Ivanova into submitting to his definition of the “communist way of life”- infidelity and promiscuity. Ivanova continued to write how she did not feel like a member of the party, but was just a prostitute. Women who had never been a part of the “bourgeoisie class” were accused of having old bourgeois values when they did not want to sleep with their bosses. In her work Janet Evans states that “women appeared to feel exploited by the advent of the ‘new morality’ in the 1920’s.” This is not what Lenin, Marx, and other communist theorists preached. The disconnect between legislation and theory was evident in this situation of workplace harassment. Discrimination was not limited to sexual harassment in the workplace, women were also fired at higher rates than men and often left unemployed due to the assumption that they were not as capable as men. Wendy Goldman states:

In line with the Party’s resolutions, the Commissariats of Labor, Social Security and Economic Planning, and the unions sent out a series of decrees aimed at stopping the discrimination against women.... Yet the resolutions and decrees appeared to have little effect on the sexist practices of factory managers and the continuing discrimination against women workers. Managers under the pressure to raise production and maximize efficiency, paid little heed to the Party’s humanist preachings.<sup>73</sup>

Repeatedly, women were disadvantaged in the Soviet workplace, no matter what the Party did to prevent this. The pressure on factories from the Party to industrialize quickly took priority over the Party’s secondary agenda of equality. Legislation was ignored by male managers, and the entire concept of communism was misinterpreted or used to manipulate women into subordination.

The inequality for women in the revolutionized USSR did not stop at gender-based discrimination. The failure to properly establish social welfare was a burden that women were left to pick up. The experience of women getting divorced and left as single mothers and full-time employees was common. The Communist Party’s promises of welfare such as free education, kitchen, and childcare

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<sup>72</sup>Ivanova, “Why I Do Not Belong in the Party,” 214.

<sup>73</sup>Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116.

were not stable or developed enough for women to focus on the industrialization of the state. Gur Ofer summarizes this as:

The double burden imposed on women by this one-sided emancipation process: increased responsibilities and opportunities outside the home that have not been synchronized with an adequate increase in men's sharing of household and child-rearing responsibilities, nor with technological and institutional changes that could ease those chores.<sup>74</sup>

With a lack of support from both men and the state, women were stuck in an impossible loop of working, trying to support the State, household chores, and childcare while legislation intending to prevent this, failed. Although the Party provided some institutions as they promised, they were incapable of providing the amount of support needed by women. Barbra Evans Clements recounts the experience of a Soviet peasant woman when she writes:

The conditions of life are so difficult. There is no chance to bring up the children we already have. The streets of the cities, the railroad stations, and the markets swarmed with abandoned children—*besprizorniki*—who were desperate for food and shelter. Child care institutions, serving only a fraction of the population, were overcrowded, understaffed, and poorly provisioned well into the 1930s.<sup>75</sup>

During this time, most of the population was suffering from hunger and lack of shelter, and these conditions drastically impacted women and their ability to juggle work, motherhood, and personal survival. This and the pressure from higher-ups to reject the “bourgeois mentality” and embrace the new freedom to have sexual relations with married party members put women in a position of severe oppression throughout the 1920s.

Misogyny engrained at the family level was also an issue that Soviet women faced. The separation from the Orthodox Church and legislation simply declaring total equality was unable to change an individual's opinion on gender roles. The experiences of Nina Lugovskaya highlight the misogynistic values still held in society decades after the revolution. Lugovskaya was a Soviet painter, but prior to that her family spent years in the Gulags due to her father's involvement in the counterrevolution. For the purpose of this paper, her diaries express the misogynistic thoughts and ideals her father held. In 1934, she wrote about an interaction with her father:

He said, ‘How can you compare with the guys? The boys are great guys, but you're just girls.’ And I stood there, smiling ever so slightly without feeling angry- of course he's right: how could we possibly be equal of boys? And I remembered my dreams and aspirations, which are destined to come to nothing.<sup>76</sup>

This shows the continuation of a misogynistic attitude well into the 1930s, after the revolution and introduction of communism. Lugovskaya also used language that showed how these comments

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<sup>74</sup>Gur Ofer and Aaron Vinokur, “Work and Family Roles of Soviet Women: Historical Trends and Cross-Section Analysis,” *Journal of Labor Economics* 3, no.1 (January 1985): S329, JSTOR Collection.

<sup>75</sup>Barbara E. Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D. Worobec, eds. “Women, Abortion, and the State, 1917-36: Demographics of Legal Abortion,” in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 256, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

<sup>76</sup>Lugovskaya, *I Want to Live*, 78.

impact her emotionally; in this quote she questions her equality with men, agreeing with her father's views. She again expresses her inability to be equal when she writes:

What rights do they have to sit there talking and laughing, making me bring them spoons and plates and interrupting my meal? Even If I am worse than them, inferior, then so what? I am still a human being, a free person. I want to be free! But no, they'll break me, they'll have their way; even now, my father is trying stubbornly to turn me into that kind of humble slave.<sup>77</sup>

Her journal entries continuously referred to her desire for freedom but her inability to achieve it because of her father's mentality. The legislation to equalize women had been passed and attempts to collectivize households were extant, but still the idea of male superiority was being taught and accepted.

On a psychological level, one cannot fulfill their potential if they are continuously oppressed in the home and workplace even if the laws were against it. This is illustrated in Lugovskaya's conflicting ideas regarding gender. She yearned to explore her aspirations but was stopped by her father's expectations for her. There are underlying themes of shame in her diary, as she respects her father, but wants to reject his plan for her to become "a humble slave". Laws and theories are useless unless a society commits to evaluating and restructuring the biases they were built on. Based on Lugovskaya's experiences it can be assumed that her father was not the only person carrying these "old" values into Soviet life. This guilt coincides with the guilt pushed onto women being accused of having a "bourgeois" mentality. The want to gain tangible equality was met with the ideals of a misogynistic society that equality-focused legislation could not penetrate. It is clear that misogyny was present in the Komsomol, in factories, family lives, and more. This greatly impeded the agenda of "equality" that communist theorists preached.

What was the overall consensus from Soviet women living during this time of unrest? It is impossible to declare with any definitive measure that all women were living in absolute oppression. Although it was prevalent with the misogynistic culture carrying over from the Tsarist regime, some women found ways to thrive under the Communist Party. Anna Balashova devoted her life to the party and her work in a textile factory. She boasted about her career when she said:

In 1927, I was elected a women's representative. I worked very hard. I was well known in our shop and in the party committee. In the shop they saw me as a person who could explain things, and they kept coming to me with different questions...Everyone thought I was a party member. Once, when our communists were having their military training, I was with them. Somebody said: 'Have you joined the party? It's about time.'"<sup>78</sup>

Her experience reflects the benefits provided to childless women who devoted their lives to the party. This reflects the goal the Bolsheviks had for the USSR and directly aligns with the feminist theory of Alexandra Kollontai and legislation released by the Communist Party. Communism allowed her to transcend the role her parents held as peasants living in poverty. When she had her

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<sup>77</sup>Lugovskaya, *I Want to Live*, 79.

<sup>78</sup>Anna Balashova, "A Worker's Life," in *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*, eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (Princeton University Press, 2000), 249.

child, she continued to work diligently, as she was already established as a party member. Balashova briefly wrote about her husband and their divorce in her memoir, highlighting another example of misogyny in the Soviet household. She recounts her husband's disapproval of her devotion to the party when she states:

Basically he was unhappy with the amount of volunteer work I was doing. At first, he just knew he had an obedient wife who would spend all her free time at home waiting for him. On Sundays, I used to beg him to stay home with me and cry over his neglect...after I got involved in volunteer work, I no longer cared what my husband did.<sup>79</sup>

Unlike Nina Lugovskaya, Balashova was able to involve herself so deeply in the party that this misogynistic attitude from her husband was lost on her but she still experienced the sexism ingrained in society. She finishes her memoir with the words "Work among women is not easy, but it is an important, necessary, and interesting aspect of party work. I give it everything I've got." Even with her success as a woman in the Soviet Union, she acknowledged the difficult position women were in during this time.

Balashova was lucky compared to other women living in the USSR at the same time. Some women did not have the same privilege to devote their lives to the Communist Party as Balashova did; Theory and legislation attempted to liberate all women with the idea that they would fall into place in the Communist society. However, this utilitarian vision was unable to reach everyone due to the lack of resources for women with children, and those without children were subjected to misogynistic values held by their employers. This, alongside the pressure to rapidly industrialize taking priority over the push for equality in the workplace, allowed women to be continuously oppressed in this society.

The combination of Communist theory, its misconstrued translation into USSR legislation, and the reality of the female experience in the 1920s, there is an assumption that women spent the entire duration of the Soviet Union living miserably. This is not entirely true; as small improvements were made for women willing to solely devote themselves to the party. However, the lack of infrastructure in place did not allow those who were family-oriented to enjoy the same improvements. The 'sexual revolution', predicated by the legalization of homosexuality, abortion, and the prevalence of infidelity was short-lived as Lenin disapproved of the chaotic 'free-love' attitude. In general, Lenin was famous for his stuffy and unenthusiastic thoughts on sex. Researcher Greg Carleton quotes Lenin when he writes, "The Revolution demands concentration. It cannot tolerate orgiastic conditions." In his mind, this sexual freedom was the enemy of the revolution. How were people to focus on the development of the USSR if they were too busy engaging in profuse amounts of sexual activity? The Party adopted this stance after Lenin's death in 1924.

Party officials started releasing statements about their disapproval of the free love attitudes that had developed post-Bolshevik Revolution. Carleton summarizes these stances as follows:

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<sup>79</sup>Balashova, "A Worker's Life," 249.

First they declared that unbridled sexuality would only lead to a rise in sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution. Second, it would deprive women of the very independence and freedom that the revolution has ostensibly brought them... Third, with the focus aimed at me, sexually active youth would be putting their maturing bodies in grave danger.<sup>80</sup>

This third point made by the party was interesting. Instead of this principle of grown men not having sexual relations with young women (especially members of the Komsomol) being discouraged on the grounds of pedophilia, it was discouraged due to the pseudoscientific idea that putting too much energy into sex would drain the body's finite supply of energy. This would render the youth of the USSR unable to contribute to the collective. Although these statements were rooted in the selfish desire to focus the population on industrialization and collectivization instead of sexual relations, they did impact women positively in the sense that sexual harassment in the workplace was publicly disapproved by Party officials going into the 1930s.

With the death of the sexual revolution and new legislation due to Stalin coming into power, a new version of the constitution was published. The rewritten 1936 Constitution, referred to as 'Stalin's Constitution,' addresses gender equality in more language than the previous one. Article 122 states:

Women in the USSR are accorded equal rights with men in all fields of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life. The possibility of realizing these rights of women is ensured by affording women equally with them the right to work, payment for work, rest, social insurance and education, state protection of the interests of mother and child, granting pregnancy leave with pay, and the provision for a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries, and kindergartens.<sup>81</sup>

While this solidified the idea of equality in new legislation, that is virtually all it did. Amendments to the family code directly contradicted this by prohibiting abortion and divorce. This was justified by the belief that communism had healed society post-revolution and that the improved USSR provided enough aid to families to make abortions unnecessary. This revised 1936 Family Code stated,

The performance of abortions shall be allowed exclusively in those cases when the continuation of pregnancy endangers life or threatens serious injury to the health of the pregnant woman and likewise when a serious disease of the parents may be inherited, and only under hospital or maternity-home conditions.<sup>82</sup>

Although this decree intended to speak on the positive impact the USSR had on women, alluding to the idea that women should *want* to raise their family in this society; restriction on a woman's body generally does not result in gender equality. This added to the fact that the collective childcare centers, education, and general government aid were inadequate for a country the size of the USSR, and did little to create the utopia the Party strived for.

The Stalin Era did strive to further equalize Soviet women; however, no significant changes were made other than the encouragement and incentives promised to women with big families. Stalin was

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<sup>80</sup>Carleton, "Writing-Reading the Sexual Revolution in the Early Soviet Union," 235-236.

<sup>81</sup>Joseph Stalin, "New Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic," in *Source Book on European Governments*, ed. Samuel M. Harper (Bridgeport: Braunworth & Company, Inc, 1937), V107-V129.

<sup>82</sup>"Protection of Motherhood: Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions. June 27, 1936," *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An Online Archive of Primary Sources*. Accessed May 22, 2023.

focused on growing the population of the USSR but again failed to incorporate the promised social welfare that would remove the double burden they had been experiencing. Alice Erh-Soon Tay writes:

Ten years have passed and it is clear that there has been no such development of public facilities...the Western tourist is still struck overwhelmingly by the comparative austerity, hardship and inconvenience of life for the vast majority of Soviet people....The consistent neglect of services and consumer products has weighed most heavily on women.

While this was not a new concept, it shows that despite the Soviet Union revising the theory and legislation they again failed to work together, and communism was unable to achieve “natural” equality between the sexes.

The Soviet Union was created on an illusion of Communist theory and legislation. Women were liberated in writing but immediately put at a disadvantage due to a misogynistic culture and poorly implemented support. A common theme presents itself in the examination of stated ideals compared to the reality of the female experience. Not only is there a theme of inequality and discrimination; these experiences support the idea that Communism was unable to support a nation of peasants. The ambitious planning of the USSR paired with a severely impoverished country on the verge of political collapse was doomed from the start. If given the chance to further research minorities and the peasant populations of the USSR, it can be inferred that these marginalized populations were also negatively impacted by progressive theory and legislation and lack of State support in achieving it. Without a doubt, the female experience in Soviet Russia highlights the flaws in the Soviet implementation of Communism. It is evident that no matter how much theory was produced or how much legislation was released, the reality for women was a society stained by misogynistic ‘old’ values, and new burdens to carry.

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# Women as Codebreakers during World War II: How the Wrens and WAVES helped bring the Allies to victory

Michael Fowler

## Introduction

During the second world war, the German and Japanese militaries frequently encrypted their diplomatic communications to stop the Allies from intercepting them and gaining access to sensitive information. To gain an upper hand, Allied powers such as Britain and the United States also set up codebreaking operations led by mathematicians and intelligence officers studying and implementing cryptology. At Bletchley Park, the British government's cryptological department organized an operation in which men and women worked to decipher encrypted messages from enemy forces. The codebreakers were guided by methods designed by The Government Code and Cypher School (GS & CS). The women who were stationed at the facility were recruited from the Women's Royal Naval Service and were known as the 'Wrens' of Bletchley Park. This began the entry of women in the codebreaking field which had previously been male-dominated.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the United States Navy also recruited women to serve as codebreakers and mathematicians in order to neutralize German U-boats. This women's reserve became known as Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, or WAVES. Despite the men involved in these operations receiving most of the credit and recognition, the 'Wrens' and WAVES still held important roles such as linguists, mathematicians, and computer operators. Through the American and British governments' recruitment efforts among college-educated women, those who served as 'Wrens' and WAVES were able to disrupt the male-dominated landscape of STEM careers while simultaneously making significant expansions to the field of cryptanalysis. They also paved a path for women in the future to be both accepted and respected in these spaces. While influenced by extraordinary women, their progress was possible because wartime labor demands necessitated the inclusion of many women in the field of codebreaking.

There is a significant body of literature on women as codebreakers during World War II, and some historians have synthesized the available information in a way that outline the experiences of these women. However, significant information surrounding the clandestine cryptologic operations of the world wars were kept secret until recently, more analytical studies are only recently beginning to emerge. Based on the available material, the study of codebreakers remained focused on the men who were involved, and tended to minimize the stories and accomplishments of women. This study on female codebreakers during the second world war focuses on the contributions of the women in London's Bletchley Park for the British Navy and the women who served as codebreakers in Virginia's Arlington Farms for the United States Army and Navy. Based on a selection of historical issues of *The New York Times* during World War II as well as government documents and transcripts of interviews from women who worked as codebreakers, this paper paints a picture of what these women experienced. Apart from these primary sources, this article is also based on a close reading of academic journals that focus on cryptanalysis and codebreaking, and the

contributions of those who deciphered codes during World War II. Liza Mundy's monograph, *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II*, also serves as a significant secondary source regarding the WAVES of Washington DC.

In terms of organization, this paper first addresses the evolution of women's work during wartime, and then explains the use of encrypted messages and signals in warfare. A comparative study of the recruitment process of London's Bletchley Park and the United States Navy follows ahead of an analysis of the work done by women in cryptanalytics. Comparing the 'Wrens' in Britain and the WAVES in the United States, as well as setting their work in comparison to work done by men is aimed at highlighting the uniqueness of their achievement. Finally, the last section explains the overall impact women have had on the field of codebreaking, cryptanalysis and other clandestine positions. During World War II, women across the globe were recruited for roles in codebreaking and espionage to aid Allied victory. Although there are many recorded academic studies of men's contributions in these positions, there is little to be found on the efforts and experiences of female codebreakers and cryptologists. Overall, this research argues that women's positions in places like Bletchley Park and Arlington Farms allowed them to enter into a space that was dominated by men in the prewar era, allowing women an opportunity to make waves as mathematicians and gatherers of confidential intelligence in ways not previously possible.

## **The Evolution of Women's Wartime Work During World War I**

Before World War I, the involvement of women in any military or war activity was unusual, the notable exception being non-combat roles such as camp nurses. However, the reality of a world war made it clear that the contributions of women would be vital to the outcomes of major world conflicts. On women's work during the world wars, Rachel Bassinger states that "with more men getting shipped off overseas, more opportunities arose for females".<sup>83</sup> Due to this deficit in labor forces, women became more accepted in the context of military and paramilitary jobs. During World War I, the position open to women was nursing through Voluntary Aid Detachments. Alice O'Brien, a woman who served as a nurse in France during the First World War, recounted her experiences in a series of letters to her family in the United States. Alice stated that her position had been arranged and she finally belonged "to the American Red Cross and (we) wear a big U.S. on our shoulder and feel like real soldiers".<sup>84</sup> This sentiment of pride and patriotism stemmed from involvement in the war effort and was widely shared among women in Voluntary Aid Detachments during World War I.

These sentiments also continued into World War II, as opportunities for women in government and military affairs expanded even further. During the Second World War, the United States began production of an atom bomb, launching the Manhattan Project to facilitate its production. Lise Meitner, an Austrian physicist, was employed as a scientific researcher in this operation, eventually being the one to make sense of the liquid drop model.<sup>85</sup> With her major scientific contribution, Meitner paved the way for other women to enter the male-dominated fields of physics and mathematics. In her article, Krisztina Robert described the roles women played within British

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<sup>83</sup>Rachel Bassinger, *Hidden in History: The Untold Stories of Women During World War I and World War II* (Ocala: Atlantic Publishing Group, 2019), 73.

<sup>84</sup>Nancy O'Brien Wagner, *Alice in France: The World War I Letters of Alice M. O'Brien* (Twin Cities.Com, Pioneer Press, 2022), 40.

<sup>85</sup>Denise Kiernan, *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of The Women Who Helped Win World War II* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2013), 32.

paramilitary units during World War I. She argues class was a factor in motivating women to serve, but the primary factors were patriotism and female empowerment.<sup>86</sup> As women discovered that involvement in military and government operations brought them more equality in society overall, many joined the forces. This sentiment is also reinforced by Dorothy Sheridan in her article on British women during World War II. Sheridan argued that “during the Second World War, British women enjoyed a degree of freedom and opportunity which had previously been denied to them, which resulted in long-term improvements in their social status.”<sup>87</sup>

In congruence with Krisztina Robert, Sheridan also argued that during wartime, women were able to find freedom from societal gender roles that often barred them from certain opportunities and experiences. In addition to academic studies, newspapers from the time period also reflect women’s eagerness to become involved in war efforts. After the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps began in 1942, “women poured out of homes, offices, and colleges to roll up a total of 10,000 for all the recruiting stations of the nation.”<sup>88</sup> The rush of potential employees combined with women’s strong will to be included in the workforce led to shifting views on what warfare looked like. In a *New York Times* article from 1943, John Erskine explained that women had been opportunists in the inter-war period and did the work of men “with equal competence, perhaps with more devotion, since this is their chance to promote their sex on a large scale”.<sup>89</sup> This reinforces the idea that women used global conflicts as an opportunity to gain equality as well as respect from men in the workforce.

## The Rise in Ciphers as a Tool for Warfare

By 1942, superiors in Allied governments began to realize that women were needed to fill the gaps left by deployed men; they also began to see how important the use of ciphers and code breaking had become as war strategy. Enigmas and ciphers had not always been a major aspect of warfare, but they began to be widely used out of necessity by major powers during World War I. The need to encrypt military and government messages and plans during war stemmed from the prevalence of spies and intelligence operations. Yves Gylden, a well-known Swedish code and cipher expert, wrote *The Contribution of the Cryptographic Bureaus in the World War* for the National Security Agency in 1935. This document was intended for the Naval Department of Communication Security in the United States. Gylden provided a review of the ways cryptography was implemented in World War I, criticizing the high levels of secrecy surrounding cryptography as it was “obstructing knowledge and training.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Krisztina Robert, “Gender, Class, and Patriotism: Women’s Paramilitary Units in First World War Britain,” *International History Review* 19 (February 1997): 52.

<sup>87</sup>Dorothy Sheridan, “Ambivalent Memories: Women and the 1939-45 War in Britain,” *Oral History* 18, no. 1 (1990): 37.

<sup>88</sup>Lucy Greenbaum, “10,000 Women in U.S. Rush to Join New Army Corps: They Want to Serve: Candidates for Officer Posts Report to Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps 10,000 Women Rush to Join Army Unit,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1942.

<sup>89</sup>John Erskine, “The World Will Belong to the Women: That is the Conclusion Reached by John Erskine After Noting their Rapid Progress in these Days of Conflict. the World for Women,” *New York Times*, Mar 14, 1943.

<sup>90</sup>Yves Gylden, National Security Agency, War Department. United States Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. *The Contribution of the Cryptographic Bureaus in the World War*, (November 1935): 2.

This document influenced the way government and Naval officials viewed and wished to implement cryptology after World War I. Gylden described the activities of the cryptographic bureaus of France, Germany, England, Russia, Austria, and Italy during World War I, explaining that the allied powers were underprepared since “No special measures were taken for mobilizing reserve personnel versed in cryptography nor for cooperation between the various branches of the service.”<sup>91</sup> Gylden highlights how the power of ciphers was unforeseen prior to World War I, stating that the cryptanalytic systems, regulations, and services were “laboriously organized, bit by bit, without any common leadership and without the centralization of experiences or results.”<sup>92</sup>

Recognition of a deficit in resources put into cryptography during the previous war increased government and public interest as use of ciphers became more widespread. This sentiment is reflected in newspapers from the 1940s, with one *New York Times* article documenting the drive for national defense preparedness with World War II on the horizon. The article explained how the American Radio Relay League began sending out nightly transmissions, seeking to help beginners learn how to understand continental code.<sup>93</sup> The messages were typically updates coming from the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, containing “important announcements relative to new preparedness amateur regulations”.<sup>94</sup> That the federal government was seeking to educate the general public on how to understand encoded messages through public radio broadcasts emphasizes how enemy ciphers were seen as a looming threat even before the U.S. entered the war. A *New York Times* article from 1943 described Laurence Dwight Smith’s text *Cryptography: The Science of Secret Writing* which was a warning that there had been a lack of publicly available information on cryptography. It then highlighted how the “introductory nature of Mr. Smith’s book, with practice problems on ciphers included in the back, is a welcome method for making learning cryptology more accessible.”<sup>95</sup> As public interest in codebreaking grew, people also began seeking to implement skills they learned. Although the role of women within the codebreaking field was generally overlooked by the men in positions of power, the field of cryptanalysis was also a resource that was widely untapped when World War II began. It was only when women at Bletchley Park and Arlington Farms began making large contributions with their projects that the significance of the science of cryptology was recognized as war strategy.

As public interest in ciphers grew, so did the interests of governments and military leaders across the world during the interwar period. David Kahn, a cipher expert, explained in his article on codebreaking that before World War I, “only three great powers had cryptanalytic agencies. Afterward, all did.”<sup>96</sup> As the practice of intercepting encoded transmissions gained popularity, engaged military forces began using this strategy against one another. A *New York Times* article from 1942 described a situation in which agents of the Axis powers on the East Coast were suspected of alerting German submarines to the movement of American and other Allied ships in the

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<sup>91</sup>Yves Gylden, 17.

<sup>92</sup>Yves Gylden, 17.

<sup>93</sup>W.T. Arms, “Short-Wave Pick-Ups: As Part of National Defense, Amateurs Are Being Trained in Continental Code,” *New York Times*, Aug 18, 1940.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup>J.G. Forrest, “Breaking the Ciphers: Cryptography: The Science of Secret Writing. by Laurence Dwight Smith. 164 Pp. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc. \$2.50,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1943.

<sup>96</sup>David Kahn, “Codebreaking in World Wars I and II: The Major Successes and Failures, Their Causes and Their Effects,” *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 3 (1980): 39.

Atlantic Ocean. It is explained that reports of this got to Chairman Martin Dies, from the House Committee on un-American Activity, who suggested “banning Axis aliens from certain vital East Coast areas.”<sup>97</sup> The use of code breaking techniques by Axis powers continued to be a growing issue during World War II, with many fearing that spies from the east were intercepting plans and communications. These fears were realized in 1941 when a group of American citizens who had immigrated from Germany were found to be running an underground spy operation for the German government. Newspapers described the accused ringleader of the operation as having access to a short-wave radio capable of sending and receiving encoded messages from overseas.<sup>98</sup> When this case was uncovered, it proved that signal intelligence, interception of messages, and espionage were a pressing matter that needed to be addressed quickly.

One of the solutions to these problems was censorship. Spreading fear surrounding breaches of intelligence led Byron Price, the Director of Censorship in the United States during World War II, to issue a code of restrictions to all radio stations. These restrictions were intended to stop enemies from acquiring any useful information through broadcasts.<sup>99</sup> Simple things such as interviews and public access to microphones were banned as they were seen as a dangerous risk. A newspaper article from the period details how staff at the Office of Censorship scanned all foreign mail passing through the New York Postal Censorship Station as a part of the war effort. They were legally required to check all forms of communications entering and exiting the United States, and “examiners were instructed to look out for ciphers, codes, or secret ink messages to or from enemies”.<sup>100</sup> The number of precautions taken against the enemy’s interception of information embodied the worry that people felt.

## **Government Recruitment of Women into Codebreaking Programs**

As the field of codebreaking grew at an accelerated rate after World War I, training programs and government cryptanalysis operations were organized by both Allied and Axis countries. As Jurgen Rohwer argues, “the knowledge that cryptanalysts of different countries had achieved such successes led to the introduction of improved cipher methods, especially of cipher machines.”<sup>101</sup> This surge in the field meant that more personnel were needed for these operations, and it led to mass recruitment campaigns in women’s colleges and other institutions. Men were also recruited as codebreakers but many had already been deployed. Their absence left vacancies for women to fill. In her monograph *Code Girls*, Liza Mundy explained that the recruitment process for WAVES at the base in Arlington Farms outside of Washington DC was focused on finding educated women. Mundy described how U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes informed leaders of women’s schools

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<sup>97</sup>“Axis Agents Suspected: Dies Gets Reports They Send Data to U-Boats Off East Coast,” *New York Times*, Feb 01, 1942.

<sup>98</sup>“Girl, 2 Boys Admit Aiding 'Master Spy': Plead Guilty Here to Helping Alleged Nazi Agent Gather Military Information --Radio, Codes Play Part-- Supposed Ringleader Prisoner in Spokane, Germany is Named in Indictments,” *New York Times*, Sep 04, 1941.

<sup>99</sup>The Associated Press, “Censorship Code Applied to Radio: Quiz, Interview and Request Music Programs Stopped Or Restricted As Aiding Enemy Use As Code Anticipated Weather And Types Of News, Which Might Inform Foes, Also Banned From The Air,” *New York Times*, Jan 17, 1942.

<sup>100</sup>Special to The New York Times, “2,000 Here Censor All Foreign Mail: Experts and Translators Look For Cipher, Code Or Secret-Ink Messages To Enemy All Pledged To Secrecy Cablegrams, Radiograms And Every Other Type Of Communication Also Examined,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1942.

<sup>101</sup>Jurgen Rohwer, “Signal Intelligence and World War II: The Unfolding Story,” *The Journal of Military History* 63, no. 4 (1999): 939–51.

that “in the event of total war, women will be needed for this work, and they can do it probably better than men.”<sup>102</sup>

In response to these new opportunities for women, the dean of Barnard College, Virginia Gildersleeve, wrote a newspaper article published in the *New York Times*, in which she declared that there is a “shortage of people with mathematical and scientifically trained minds.”<sup>103</sup> Gildersleeve explained how the war could not be won without the soldiers on the front lines being backed by people at home working in research laboratories, developing cryptological methods to aid in war efforts. Another newspaper featuring Gildersleeve detailed how women’s colleges and universities were having issues with “representatives from factories trying to recruit math and science students from campuses before their training was complete.”<sup>104</sup> Gildersleeve also explained how the responsibility of women’s colleges had increased since there was a shortage of men during wartime, meaning that there was a need for more trained women in math and science to take their places in the workforce. Although many WAVES were recruited through their schools, some were recruited through other methods. Julia Parsons, a codebreaker at Arlington Farms during World War II, detailed in her interview with WQED Pittsburgh that “I applied, and they said if you were a college graduate you could go directly through to officer training school” and that “since I knew German I ended up in the German U-Boat decrypter section” where she was trained to use the Enigma machine.<sup>105</sup>

Similar to women recruited for the U.S. Navy, British Women in the Royal Naval Service, or ‘Wrens,’ were recruited based on their academic prowess and ability to solve problems. The codebreaking and intelligence agency at Bletchley Park began as a small group of men who were running the Government Code and Cipher School. As the second world war broke out, the organization expanded and women were added to the mix. Pauline Lee, recounted in her interview with the Bletchley Park Foundation that she was recruited after graduation from a technical institution and “told to attend an interview, after which I was given a ticket straight to Bletchley.”<sup>106</sup> This expedited recruitment process described in the interview highlights the desperation of the British government in putting together an intelligence operation. These examples also highlight how, similar to the United States, the British government also began recruiting women who had some level of college education. Interviews like Lee’s have expanded the public’s understanding of an organization that was kept secret for many years. New studies grant recognition and public acknowledgment of the contributions of the ‘Wrens’ and their heroism to achieving victory in the war. As more English men were sent off to fight, women were being employed as codebreakers in Bletchley Park and by 1944, “Of the 7,825 staff, some 5,835 (almost 75 percent) were women.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 12.

<sup>103</sup>Virginia C. Gildersleeve, Dean of Barnard College, Columbia University, “We Need Trained Brains: We Need Brains,” *New York Times*, Mar 29, 1942.

<sup>104</sup>“Girls In Colleges Lured to Factory: Dean Gildersleeve Says Science and Mathematics Students Are Taken Not Fully Trained Educators’ Burden Heavy Women’s Institutions Have Big Wartime Responsibilities, She Tells Club Federation,” *New York Times*, May 08, 1943.

<sup>105</sup>WQED Pittsburgh, “Julia Parsons: World War II Codebreaker tells her story at age 100” YouTube video, November 11, 2011.

<sup>106</sup>Bletchley Park, Anne Chetwynd-Stapylton, et al. “Codebreakers | Recruitment - Real Life Stories from the Veterans of Bletchley Park,” YouTube video, 11 Nov. 2019.

<sup>107</sup>David Kenyon, *Bletchley Park and D-Day*, New Haven: (Yale University Press, 2019), 10.

The majority of staff were female even though there remained “a clear gender divide within the organization. Women were generally allocated ‘operator’ tasks using the various mechanical aids to cryptanalysis and communications” and they were not “expected to hold management roles.”<sup>108</sup> Although limited by sexism in the workforce, the contributions of ‘Wrens’ at Bletchley Park were crucial to the outcome of the war.

## The Contributions of Women as Codebreakers During World War II

Overall, it is easy to see how vital the work done at Arlington Farms and Bletchley Park was. Liza Mundy explained that “the American codebreaking operation ramped up quickly and became ever more crucial as the war progressed, growing larger than Bletchley Park.”<sup>109</sup> The large scale of the organization was congruent with the amount of work that was to be done, especially with rising pressure building to end the war as the death toll grew. Operations at both Arlington Farms and Bletchley Park were mainly focused on breaking codes from German U-boats and the Japanese Navy. A *New York Times* article, written in 1945, provided information on a codebreaking operation that took place three years prior. The article recounted information revealed by Defense Minister John A. Beasley, who stated that “the American Navy had deciphered the Japanese Naval cipher code just before the Battle of the Coral Sea.”<sup>110</sup> It also highlighted how cracking this code helped the Americans to predict Japanese ship movements and win the battle, demonstrating a real-life instance of how codebreakers helped to turn the tides of World War II in favor of the Allies.

Another major contribution of codebreakers during the war took place in the Battle of the Atlantic when German U-boats were defeated with the help of the ‘Wrens’ at Bletchley Park in Britain. In his article, Schofield discussed the threat that German U-boats posed to the Allied powers during World War II, as well as the steps that were taken to defeat them. In his words, “the defeat of the U-Boats was majorly unexplained until the 1970s when the secrets of Bletchley Park were released to the public, leading to recognition of the personnel in the operation.”<sup>111</sup> Schofield then highlights how Bletchley Park were responsible for “the interception and decryption of German cypher messages relating to the dispositions of the U-Boat.”<sup>112</sup> This process was dependent on the four-root cipher system known as ‘Shark’ developed by Bletchley Park to add to the U-boat Enigma machines.<sup>113</sup> Mundy asserts that at the beginning of the project, “the British still had lead responsibility, but the Americans—who also had a stake in the outcome—were doing what they could to help crack Shark.”<sup>114</sup> Despite Schofield’s argument that Bletchley Park was more responsible for the success against German U-boats, Mundy states that by 1944, “the British had indeed handed over the four-rotor bomb operations to the Americans.”<sup>115</sup> Overall Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic was a significant victory which saved many lives in the war.

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<sup>108</sup>David Kenyon, *Bletchley Park and D-Day*, 12.

<sup>109</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 18.

<sup>110</sup>“Code of Japanese ‘Cracked’ in 1942,” *New York Times* (1923-), Sep 06, 1945.

<sup>111</sup>B.B. Schofield, “The Defeat of the U-Boats during World War II,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 119.

<sup>112</sup>B.B. Schofield, “The Defeat of the U-Boats during World War II,” 123.

<sup>113</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 136.

<sup>114</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 140.

<sup>115</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 285.

Another major contribution that was made by ‘Wrens’ at Bletchley Park and WAVES at Arlington Farms was the cultivation of a scientific and technological culture that included women. Christopher Smith discusses the process of creating the Rockex family of cipher systems that took place at Bletchley Park in his article, arguing that “the development of these systems was a defining moment in the process of building a ‘technocratic culture’ within the Government Code and Cipher school at Bletchley Park.”<sup>116</sup> By aiding in the development of new code systems, ‘Wrens’ at Bletchley Park helped to cement an area for women within the fields of technology and cryptanalysis.

In addition, WAVES at Arlington Farms in the United States also made technological advancements for the Navy whilst simultaneously carving a space for women in the organization. In her article, Kathleen Broome Williams explains that senior administrators of the U.S. Navy worried about manpower and were not on board with recruiting women at the start of World War II. Although women were only eventually brought into the Navy out of necessity in early 1942, when “a generally reluctant Navy was driven to consider unorthodox sources of personnel,” once they proved themselves and their quality of work, their numbers began rising.<sup>117</sup> Women were begrudgingly brought into military operations as codebreakers, but they found ways to maximize the opportunity as a way to achieve liberty for women. Amy Martin in her article notes that there is a severe underrepresentation of women in clandestine work such as the CIA, as a result of which women have had to hold themselves to a higher standard to be considered for these positions. Martin also asserts that “emerging female operations officers often face obstacles including dealing with bias within the bureaucracy, issues of female equality within certain cultures, and experiencing slower rates of promotion.”<sup>118</sup> Issues of sexism were also experienced by the women at Arlington Farms and Bletchley Park, because the public perception remained that women were not as smart as men and could not handle complex tasks. As Mundy states, “women were considered better equipped for boring work that required close attention to detail rather than leaps of genius.”<sup>119</sup> Although this is the reason women were given codebreaking jobs, as it was thought they would just be analyzing numbers and letters, the operations grew into something much more. Successfully handling complex codebreaking enabled women to prove their prowess in intelligence work.

As women in clandestine operations like the ‘Wrens’ in Bletchley Park and the WAVES in Arlington Farms were working as codebreakers, other women were working in other areas as spies in espionage projects to gather intelligence, and as mathematicians behind the scenes. Although there were women responsible for breaking encoded messages, there were also women tasked with sending out and encrypting messages. A New York Times article detailed how the women’s platoon in the United States Air Corps Ferrying Command provided guiding information to pilots flying through. These “women in the Ferrying Command would encode messages sent to pilots so that any

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<sup>116</sup>Christopher Smith, “Bletchley Park and the Development of the Rockex Cipher Systems: Building a Technocratic Culture, 1941–1945,” *War in History* 24, no. 2 (2017): 176.

<sup>117</sup>Kathleen Broome Williams, “Women Ashore: The Contribution of Waves to Us Naval Science and Technology in World War II” (*Northern Mariner / Le Marin Du Nord* 8 (2): (1998), 20.

<sup>118</sup>Amy J. Martin, “America’s Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community.” (*Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no. 3 (2015): 99.

<sup>119</sup>Liza Mundy, *Code Girls*, 21.

nearby enemies would not be able to intercept the information.”<sup>120</sup> The versatility and knowledge of ciphers and codebreaking suited women and provided many new job opportunities within government military operations. In Britain during World War I, “more than six-thousand women served in either civil or military occupations as members of the British intelligence community.”<sup>121</sup> While it is clear that operations of intelligence depended on the work of women and they were entrusted with top secret information, it is important to emphasize that they still did not have the right to vote or hold political office.

## Conclusion

The mathematical and scientific contributions made by the ‘Wrens’ and WAVES during World War II were very significant, paving the way for a larger pool of women to enter the field in the postwar years. In her monograph from The MIT Press, Margaret A.M. Murray describes stories of women who earned their Ph.D. in mathematics from various institutions in America between 1940 and 1959. Murray stresses that, although historically women have not been accepted in academia, “in the mid- to late nineteenth century, institutions of higher education began to open their doors to women.”<sup>122</sup> As they became more accepted in STEM careers, the identity of the field of mathematics and intelligence began to evolve as more and more women entered. Murray explained how this helped to pave the way for women to become involved in more prominent work within the government and military.

Above all, the perseverance of the ‘Wrens’ and WAVES who deciphered codes during World War II allowed them to break into a male-dominated field, which created opportunities that ushered a new generation of women into careers in math and science. Although they were originally included in reluctance, the women working in cryptanalysis quickly proved their prowess and skill, ultimately making major contributions to intelligence-gathering methods and codebreaking technology that shaped the outcome of World War II.

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<sup>120</sup> Nona Baldwin. “Women Aid Fliers of Ferry Command: Feminine Platoon at Capital Map Routes and Put Message in Code to Guide Flights Group Carefully Picked Many Are College Graduates and Have Studied Languages and Traveled Widely” (*New York Times* (1923-), Jun 03, 1942).

<sup>121</sup> Tammy M. Proctor, “*Female Intelligence : Women and Espionage in the First World War*” (New York: NYU Press, 2003), 30.

<sup>122</sup> Margaret A. M. Murray, *Women Becoming Mathematicians : Creating a Professional Identity in Post-World War II America*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2000), 4.

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# Perpetrators during War Time: Nazi Women

Selena Funk

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933, a young Austrian man born in Germany rose to power when he was elected as Germany's Chancellor. Adolf Hitler was seen as a new start for the German people, yet the changes he made would lead to catastrophic events that forever changed history. There are many studies on violence, however these largely focus on violent acts committed by men, with few studies done on the violent acts of women in war. This study of women during the holocaust focuses on female perpetrators and the atrocities they committed against other women and children both inside and outside concentration camps.

Based on a variety of newspaper articles written about the offenders, this paper uncovers the horrific crimes that have often been hidden from society, by looking through court documents to discover how these perpetrators were convicted. These sources reveal how women were driven to join Hitler's regime and campaign of violence. The existing literature on this topic include monographs written by Elissa Bemporad, "*Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*," along with Elissa Mailänder's "*Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*," and Wendy Lower's "*German Women and the Holocaust in the Nazi East*." These monographs paint the picture of Nazi Germany and the women who committed atrocities for the regime.

The beginning of the Nazi regime in 1933 already demonstrated the type of hold Hitler had over German citizens and why many citizens blindly followed him. Women, as part of the citizenry identified with the Nazi ideology and many were willing participants in its violence. Such cases of violence committed by women during the regime are discussed in two sections: crimes committed in the camps and crimes committed outside of the camps. The conviction of these crimes reveal the thoughts and beliefs of the women about their actions. Overall, it is clear that Nazi women in Germany voluntarily committed atrocities against the Jewish community to further their careers and standings in the Nazi Party and to be seen as equal to men.

The Nazi ideology which started in the 1920s was first formed among a very small party which due to its size, was often seen as violent but not threatening. However, between 1924 and 1933, the party became the largest elected party in the Reichstag with Hitler becoming Chancellor of Germany. The Nazi party had originally wanted to try and take power over Germany by force, but Hitler understood that the country would not follow his ideology if it was forced upon them. He then changed the direction of the group to create an environment where the people of Germany freely chose him. Hitler changed the strategy of the Nazi Party to be a more democratic group focused on gaining power through elections and popular support. He quickly rose in power and status using propaganda and messaging designed to make German citizens feel connected to him or sympathetic to his cause. He spoke to women as mothers and claimed to show ways in which Jewish children could cause German children to become sick simply by being near them. In a 1938 article by *The New York Times*, "Hitler not only has not scorned to recognize the value of feminine cooperation, but has gone to some effort to obtain it, an effort which has been rewarded with a measure of

access.”<sup>123</sup> This type of propaganda worked by playing to the fears of motherhood, such as women wanting their children to be healthy. Hitler focused on the idea that the most important role women could have in society was being a mother, stating “it is not degrading to a woman to be a mother. On the contrary, it is her greatest honour.”<sup>124</sup> Many of the women who were interviewed about their opinions on Hitler at this time saw him as a positive for Germany, with one saying “I heard about the courage to face sacrifice and death of Hitler’s storm-troopers and just could not but join the movement.”<sup>125</sup> In an article written about Nazi feminism, it was argued that women were also taught that “they should glow from fresh air and exercise, Hitler thought, or better yet, from pregnancy.”<sup>126</sup> Women aligned their social roles with those of the regime, with many Schutzstaffel (SS) guards or active members of the party in order to show that women were capable of being more than wives and mothers.

It is often hard for people to think of women as capable of committing atrocious crimes against children and other women. This perspective comes from thinking about war only as battles and the front lines, with the conflicts fought on the home front comparatively less discussed. As the German people continued to be enamored by Nazi ideology, many men rose in the ranks working as part of the SS in concentration camps and in the broader military. Women were also joining the fight, and many joined the regime to work as SS guards in camps, the most famous of which were Majdanek in Poland and Ravensbrück in Germany. The Ravensbrück concentration camp started operation in May 1939, and the SS began to search for female guards to staff the camps. At the time, Ravensbrück was the only location where female prisoners were held, “Ravensbrück also served as a training camp for all female concentration camp guards, including the women who later were transferred to Majdanek.”<sup>127</sup> There were many ways in which these female guards were recruited, however the most common was through a help wanted ad that was posted in local newspapers.

Female workers between 20–40 years of age sought for work at a military installation. Remuneration will be made in accordance with the salary agreement for civil service employees (TO.A). Also supplied are: free housing, meals, and clothing (uniform).<sup>128</sup>

Many women applied to receive the benefits of the job and did not know what was in store for them. However, many did not leave these jobs after learning of the violence that they would have to inflict on others. Some authors argue that women only stayed working at the camps for financial security and that they were traumatized as well. However, others like Wendy Lower disagrees because many of the women in the camps expressed immense pride at the destruction they caused. In her book “*Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*,” Wendy Lower discusses photographer

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<sup>123</sup> Edwijn Hullinger, “The Place of Women in Nazi Germany: Nazi Germany—Its Women and Family Life” New York Times, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

<sup>124</sup> Charu Gupta, “Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany,” Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.26, No. 17, (1991) pg. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Peter H. Merkl, “Chapter 5: Nazi Women,” *Political Violence Under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) pg. 124.

<sup>126</sup> Dwight Garner, “Nazism's Feminine Side, Brutal and Murderous,” *New York Times* (New York, New York), October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013

<sup>127</sup> Elissa Mailänder, “Women Looking for Work: Paths to Careers in the Concentration Camps” *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015) pg. 45.

<sup>128</sup> Mailänder, “Careers,” 46.

Margaret Bourke-White and her experience photographing Nazi women like Hildegard Roselius. A wealthy socialite, Roselius gushed about Hitler and spoke on why the regime was correct in their beliefs that Jewish citizens were dangerous and inferior. "Those people from concentration camps really are behaving very badly," Roselius remarked. They crowded the marketplace. They were demanding. They were suspicious."<sup>129</sup> This demonstrates that men were not the only people to show support for Hitler's regime and believe the misinformation that was being spread about Jewish citizens.

Contrary to the common notion that women are nurturers, mothers, sisters, and daughters, and therefore they cannot commit the same crimes as men or even think of killing someone let alone children, Nazi women were as desensitized. In "*Women of the Third Reich*, Tim Heath narrates the role of Nazi women in the concentration camps and the crimes they committed against children. He highlights the case of Herta Oberheuser, a doctor under Karl Gebhardt at Ravensbrück, where they used inmates at the camp as guinea pigs for medical experiments. Heath recounts, "Oberheuser and Gebhardt would purposely infect wounds with foreign objects such as wood, rusty nails, silvers of glass, soil, sawdust and even human excrement."<sup>130</sup> Experiments were conducted on eighty-six female inmates, and also children. Oberheuser injected children with "evipan then proceeded to surgically remove their vital organs and limbs."<sup>131</sup> Oberheuser was a trained medical professional and completely understood how these experiments was torture to the inmates, yet she felt no empathy for them.

In the same vein, Nazi women callously committed violence in concentration camps through the selection process. One of the most important days in the concentration camps were selection days, when women and children arrived at the camps as inmates and would be separated by age and whether they had children. One survivor, Chela Apelbaum, described the scene as an SS guard, Hildegard "Brigida" Lächert, "tore the struggling children away from their mothers, threw them to the floor, and kicked them. When a mother came over, "Brigida" would kick her in the back of the head."<sup>132</sup> This intense brutality was the way in which the Jewish women and children would be introduced into the camps. It is important to note that these female SS guards were not forced to act violently to these inmates, yet when given the opportunity they did so.

Court documents provided by the United States Department of Justice documents the crimes of another guard at Ravensbrück, Elfriede Lina Rinkel who used a "trained attack dog to carry out her guard duties. At Ravensbrück, SS female guards armed with attack dogs forced malnourished women inmates to march to slave labor sites each day, guarded them while they performed manual labor, and then force-marched them back to the concentration camps..."<sup>133</sup> This is an interesting case

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<sup>129</sup>Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren quoting Wendy Lower, "German Women and the Holocaust in the Nazi East," *Women and Genocide : Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018) pg. 111.

<sup>130</sup> Tim Heath, "There be Monsters," *Women of the Third Reich: From Camp Guards to Combatants* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2019) pg. 112.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup>Elissa Mailänder, "Annihilation at Work: The Daily Work of Killing in the Camp," *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015) pg. 164-165.

<sup>133</sup>"San Francisco Woman Who Served as Nazi Concentration Camp Guard Is Deported to Germany," Department of Justice, #06-633: 09-19-06 September 19, 2006.

because it works to show that women were perpetrators in ways other than direct violence. Women who did not commit violence against those in the camps still had a role in the torture and execution of women and children in the camps. Even being a bystander in Hitler's regime made you a culprit, and it is important to look at women at least as collaborators and accessories of the Nazi regime. They included women who were married to SS guards or whose husbands worked closely with the regime or women who supported the regime by promoting the propaganda. They all can be held accountable for the atrocities that were committed against Jewish men, women, and children. Wendy Lower describes three different types of German women as, "witnesses, accomplices, and perpetrators"<sup>134</sup> to underscore that it was unacceptable to be a bystander to violent crimes, or aid an evil regime or directly committing the crimes.

Women were only torturing inmates because of the environment of the camps and the fear that if they did not comply, they themselves could be targeted. However, this is not a fair assumption because women committed crimes outside of the concentration camps in everyday life. These crimes included, "secretaries, for example, who decided which of the hundred remaining Jews in a village would go on a list of fifty slated for execution the next day."<sup>135</sup> There were also the nurses who killed many Jewish people, "more than 11,000 Germans, including over 5,000 children, were murdered there."<sup>136</sup> There were instances where crimes were committed against women and children outside of the camps by Nazi women. Examples of these instances include the cases of Erna Petri, "the wife of an SS officer and a mother who was convicted of shooting to death six Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Poland, Johanna Altvater Zelle, a German secretary who was accused of child murder in the Volopdymyr-Volynsky ghetto in Nazi-occupied Ukraine,"<sup>137</sup> among others. These are horrific acts that show crimes like this were not only happening in concentration camps but across Nazi-occupied areas.

Once the war was over and those confined in concentration camps were liberated, British personnel on the ground tried to help those that survived. Accounts from British officers and journalists recall the camp violence, with one recounting "the SS women came from Auschwitz, they heaved the dead into the grave, then dropped over the ... to pull the bodies from the side and fill up the centre to make more room. Everybody says that the women were the most vicious in the camps."<sup>138</sup> Another article comments on the way the children looked after being liberated and how suspicious they were of the British soldiers. "... a boy, perhaps 7, and his sister, maybe 5. The knobs of their joints bulging through their thin clothes, faces like mummies, timorously sneaking up with small pails toward a water truck, their great fierce eyes intent on a chance to rush in and steal pailfuls of

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<sup>134</sup>Elizabeth Heineman, "Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields by Wendy Lower," *The Women's Review of Books* 31, No. 6, pg. 15.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Karin Doerr, "Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust by Elizabeth R. Baer, Myrna Goldenberg," *Life Writing by and about German-Speaking Women in the Long 18th Century: A Special Essay Collection* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004) pg. 3.

<sup>137</sup>Isabel Kershner, "Women's Role in Holocaust May Exceed Old Notions: Research Finds Greater Female Involvement" *New York Times* (New York, New York), July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

<sup>138</sup> Unknown, "Horrors at German Camp at Belsen: Thousands Die like Flies," *The Times of India* (Mumbai, India), April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1945.

water.”<sup>139</sup> The horrors of the camps were obvious to officers and civilians after the liberation of Jewish prisoners..

In the beginning of the effort to prosecute Nazis, there were not many trials where women were held accountable for their crimes. In fact, many women were given excuses for their involvement in the Nazi regime and let go. However, as time passed and more accounts were heard from surviving victims, it became clear that women should be held just as accountable as the men. In 1947, five women and six men who worked in the Ravensbrück camp were sentenced to death for their crimes against humanity. A contemporary article written by the New York Times discusses the verdict, “the Ravensbrück concentration camp trial ended today with the sentencing to death by hanging of five women and six men of the staff of the Nazi’s women prison.”<sup>140</sup> One of the women included in the hanging was a young nurse, Vera Salvequart, who was accused of injecting poisons into prisoners. In a 1947 article from the Baltimore Sun, another trial was reported where a woman was sentenced to death for, “Sadistically putting 10,000 of her own sex to death at the notorious Oswiecim concentration camp.”<sup>141</sup> These are significant because many believed that women could not be committing these acts under their own control, and thus could not be prosecuted for their actions. Once women started to be prosecuted though, it became clear that women were capable of the same atrocities as men.

However, that did not mean that women would typically get the same punishments as men, many were given lesser sentences such as prison time compared to a death sentence. The doctor previously mentioned in this article, Herta Oberheuser, was tried in the Nuremberg "Doctors" Trial and only served twenty years in prison. When she was released she attempted to work as a doctor again, seemingly unbothered by her past.<sup>142</sup> Many of the women who were tried did not feel ashamed for their actions inside and outside of the concentration camps. One woman in particular stated, "No, no. I did my job to the best of my knowledge as I was supposed to do."<sup>143</sup> This is particularly hard to hear because it shows that these SS guards believed in what they were doing, “she appears both unapologetic and remarkably skillful at avoiding difficult questions of complicity.”<sup>144</sup> It is easy to see that many of these women did not feel guilt about their roles in the regime.

To continue the discussion on the prosecution of Nazi women for their crimes during Hitler’s regime, it is important to make sure one understands that these women were not tried at the same level as the men during this time. This is because of the idea that these women were brainwashed or forced to commit these crimes, therefore they did not truly understand their actions and should not be prosecuted in the same ways. Clearly, this belief was incorrect, yet multiple women used this as a

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<sup>139</sup> William Frye, “Captives Made into Cannibals: SS Men and Women Starved, Degraded, Killed Thousands,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945.

<sup>140</sup>“11 Nazi Camp Aides Sentenced to Hang: Five Women, Six Men of Staff of Ravensbrück Doomed– Prison Terms for Four,” *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Feb 4, 1947.

<sup>141</sup>“Death Decree Given 23 Nazis: Woman Among Camp Staff Sentenced in Poland,” *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1947.

<sup>142</sup>Heath, “Monsters,” 113.

<sup>143</sup>“N.Y. Woman Who was Concentration Camp Guard is Not Ashamed,” *The Jewish Advocate* (Boston, Massachusetts), May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1972.

<sup>144</sup>Jennifer Kapczynski, “Hitler’s Helpmates,” in *Nexus 4: Essays in German Jewish Studies*, ed. by William Collins Donahue and Martha B. Helfer (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2018) pg. 75.

shield. One of the arguments used to avoid prosecuting female guards was the idea that if they could not be identified by former prisoners as having committed violence despite documentation of their employment as a guard they should be acquitted. As reported by *The Globe and Mail* in 1979, one prosecutor stated “three women concentration camp guards accused of murdering Jews should be acquitted for lack of positive identification.”<sup>145</sup> This is one of the many arguments that are seen in the prosecution of female SS guards. One must understand that these women had the ability to not torture innocent Jewish women and children. If the argument is that women were unable to understand what they were doing during this time, then the same could be said for the men who committed violent acts for the regime. As stated by Christina Thürmer-Rohr, “when feminist historiography had just outgrown its infancy, women were usually pictured as victims of society. The discovery that “the world” actually was the “man’s world” led to the conclusion that in this “man’s world”, women could only be present as victims where “distance to power meant distance to guilt, and no power meant no guilt.”<sup>146</sup> Men and women were both under an oppressive and demanding regime, yet they were prosecuted differently when tried for their participation in the regime’s campaign of violence.

In one trial, Aaron Kaufman discussed what he had seen while he suffered in the camps. He described seeing a female SS guard, Hermine Braunsteiner, “whip five women and a child to death at the Second World War concentration camp at Majdanek, Poland.”<sup>147</sup> Braunsteiner was later deported from the United States where she was living after changing her name and trying to escape her past. Instead of being tried for her participation in the mass execution of Jewish citizens, she was simply sent back to Germany. This seems to be the way that many Nazi women are tried, especially in the United States where many of them immigrated to after the Second World War to escape prosecution. There were multiple reports of this case in multiple different newspapers, and two of these reports will now be compared for how they reported this event to the public. In the second article, there are more details on the life Braunsteiner lived in the United States with talk about her being married and her revocation of her German citizenship.<sup>148</sup> The article then goes on to provide more information about how Braunsteiner failed to mention in her citizenship application that she was an “SS, Hitler’s elite guard.”<sup>149</sup> This goes to show that Braunsteiner knew that if she admitted on her documents she was a member of Hitler’s elite guards then she would be denied citizenship in the United States. In another article discussing Braunsteiner, it is revealed that she, “had been convicted by an Austrian court in 1949...”<sup>150</sup> Thus, this identifies the different lengths Nazi women would go to erase their path to escape prosecution. It also shows that these women were smart enough to avoid prosecution by changing their names and immigrating to a new country. One

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<sup>145</sup>Unknown, “Acquit 4, Prosecutor Says at Trial of Ex-Nazi Officials.” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada), March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1979.

<sup>146</sup>Evelyn Zegenhagen quoting Christina Thürmer-Rohr, “The Holy Desire to Serve the Poor and Tortured Fatherland’: German Women Motor Pilots of the Inter-War Era and Their Political Mission,” *German Studies Review* 30, no.3 (2007).

<sup>147</sup>Max Seigel, “Deportation of SS Prison Guard Sought: Saw Woman Whip 6 to Death, Nazi Victim Tells U.S. Hearing” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada), September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1972.

<sup>148</sup>Morris Kaplan, “Citizenship Lost by Queens Woman: She was a Guard at a Nazi Camp-- 7-Year Inquiry,” *New York Times* (New York, New York) September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1971.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>150</sup>John Sibley, “Ex-Nazi in Queens Faces U.S Action: Death Camp Officer Could Lose Her Citizenship,” *New York Times* (New York, New York) August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1968.

woman pleaded guilty in the Nuremberg trials for her role as the head of “the branch of the office that controlled the disposition of “Children with characteristics of racial value” to Germany.”<sup>151</sup>

There are more cases like this where women pleaded guilty but did not receive harsh sentences. However, there was one trial where two Nazi women were sentenced to death for their crimes, “47-year-old women doctor, and nurse Helene Wiczorek were guillotined here today for the murder of hundreds of patients at a sanatorium for mental incurables in that part of Eastern Germany now under Polish administration.”<sup>152</sup> This is one of a very small number of trials resulting in a woman sentenced to death for her crimes during the Holocaust. This is very powerful because it is a turning point for the prosecution of female Nazis and shows that public opinion on the prosecution of women had changed. This created an understanding of the crimes that women committed and created a societal shift in how women were perceived. Women were no longer thought of as brainless and incapable of their own opinions, now women were seen as individuals capable of committing crimes for their own benefit.

In conclusion, contrary to the notion that women are incapable of committing crimes against other minorities such as women, children, and other religious groups, this article has demonstrated that women are capable of being just as vicious as men. Female Nazis committed atrocities and for years hid behind the belief that they were unable to think for themselves. By examining newspaper sources and articles, we see that even women who wanted equality and wanted to challenge Hitler’s theory that they were only meant to be mothers and take care of their husbands joined the Nazi forces and became elite guards, secretaries, and more. They wanted employment and promotion in the Nazi ranks and to show that they were equal to the men. They wanted to demonstrate that they were capable of being more mothers; that they could be as strong, vicious and unempathetic as the men.

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<sup>151</sup>Kathleen McLaughlin, “14 Plead Innocent in Lidice Murders: 13 SS Men and a Woman Arraigned in Nuremberg—U.S Court to Open Case Oct. 20,” *New York Times* (New York, New York) October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1947.

<sup>152</sup>Unknown, “Two Nazi Women Guillotined,” *The Palestine Post* (Jerusalem) January 15, 1947.

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# The Fall of Democracy in the Empire of the Rising Sun: An Analysis of Political Shifting in Imperial Japan

Noah Ulrich

Contemporary academia paints a picture of Japan during the 1930s and 1940s as a totalitarian empire with stripes of fascism and ethnic exclusion. This is relatively true for the period from 1932 to 1945, as there was a firmly established military rule over parliamentary governance following the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi in the ‘May 15<sup>th</sup> Incident.’<sup>153</sup> However, it is noteworthy that in the previous decade, Imperial Japan appeared to be undergoing a second ‘democratization’ through the Meiji Restoration and the establishment of the Meiji Constitution in an era known as ‘Taishō Democracy.’ The contents of the legal documents of the early Meiji to late Taishō eras created a façade of popular sovereignty, disguising the true nature of imperial governance through centralized control of speech, education, and political movements during the first thirty years of Meiji rule.

This Orwellian control, combined with the volatile economic industrialization and rapid militaristic modernization of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, revealed an intriguing hybrid regime of semi-democratization in which those who held the plurality of power and influence in the state were those not held accountable to any electoral oversight. The core of this intrigue is that the Empire of Japan during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was attempting to rapidly industrialize and modernize in order to catch up with the leading Western nations controlling the global economic market, as well as spread societal and cultural ideas across the world. There were two main reasons behind the failure of the Japanese imperial government to effectively emulate the political structure and society of liberalizing Western nations. First, their inability to fully relinquish their grasp on a top-heavy aristocratic and autocratic power structure and embrace more modern republicanism. Secondly, the failure to fully realize and establish a rooted bourgeoisie middle class which would have allowed a fluid establishment of free-market capitalism within their economy.

Part of the Meiji Restoration was the establishment of an electoral process via the Meiji Constitution, mass land reform creating more economic flow, mass literacy programs across the country, rapid industrialization, and the implementation of competitive political parties. These actions all pointed to a shift away from the feudal authoritarianism of the Edo period. In reality, the influences of reactionary conservatives, industrialist oligarchs, and aristocratic elites laid the foundations for a fascistic monarchy with a veneer of parliamentary semi-constitutionalism. Throughout this analysis, this paper will explain why and how democratic principles were ultimately conquered by Japan’s rising militarism, nationalism, and totalitarianism which arose between the initial establishment of representative democracy through the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Diet, and the cession of political power to the military in the establishment of authoritarian control over the Empire at the beginning of the Shōwa era.

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<sup>153</sup>Harukata Takanata, *Failed Democratization In Prewar Japan: Breakdown of a Hybrid Regime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 128-129, 156-157.

Throughout the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many state officials pointed to the anarchists, communists, and socialists as threats to stability and democracy within Japan. However, they did not see the rising power of the generals, admirals, and ultranationalists, or rather, ignored them. The vilification of Marxist movements by the mainstream liberal and conservative political parties during Meiji and Taishō Japan ultimately led to the deterioration of Japanese democracy. When compared to similarly labeled democracies, one might think of the representative democracy and republican virtues of the United States of America, the Second and Third French Republics, or even the parliamentary constitutional monarchy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However, while this might seem applicable at first to both the Charter Oath of 1868 and the Meiji Constitution of 1889, which were the foundations of the principles of liberty, freedom, and democracy within Meiji and Taishō era Japan, those foundations were in actuality only guaranteeing the rights and political powers of the former samurai and *daimyō*, as well as the Edo-era merchant and artisan guilds.

Not all those who sought to upend the political status quo intended to maintain a narrow power base around the imperial household and the aristocratic *daimyo*. Ōkuma Shigenobu, who served as the second prime minister, was one of those who wished to pursue a more equitable balance of power within the government. He was a large proponent of the liberalistic style of the British Constitution which guaranteed a much more involved and fluid two-party system in Parliament and the Cabinet. In an open letter to the Imperial Household, Ōkuma requested haste in the opening of the National Diet and the promulgation of the Constitution but also advised that “it is a wise policy of government to reform and renovate the laws and institutions and adapt them to people’s minds.”<sup>154</sup> Prior to the Meiji Restoration and the Boshin War, the Tokugawa clan held absolute power over Japan through the Shogunate, a feudal bureaucratic-military administration, from 1603 to 1868. This absolute dominance was established through isolationism (*Sakoku*), severely limiting personal liberties (*buke shohatto*), and forcing the powerful lords to abide by a system of ‘alternate attendance’ (*sankin-kōtai*).<sup>155</sup> When a faction of samurai and *daimyō* took it upon themselves to seize control and re-establish Emperor Meiji as the true sovereign of Japan in 1868, they set out to establish a new order for Japan. This was abstractly portrayed through the Charter Oath of 1868, the second article representing the more substantial changes of the Restoration,

“It is requested that a system be established under which not only the civil and military officials, but also the common people may be permitted to pursue their respective callings so that there may be no discontent.”<sup>156</sup>

This was traditionally perceived as a shift in the polity of Japan towards principles of liberty and personal freedom. Purposefully ambiguous, it was only meant as a veil for the Meiji Oligarchy that administered state affairs until the drafting of the Meiji Constitution just over twenty years after this

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<sup>154</sup> Councillor Ōkuma Shigenobu, *Memorial of Councillor Ōkuma Shigenobu Requesting the Opening of the Diet*, March 1881; in Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, *Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources*, Vol. 3, (Tokyo: The Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1972), 46-47.

<sup>155</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 3rd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13-19.

<sup>156</sup> Kido Takayoshi, *Gokajō no Goseimon* [Oath in Five Articles] (Kyoto: Empire of Japan, 1868); quoted in David John Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History* (Armonk: New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 308.

supposed proclamation for Japan's process of legal modernization. However, this shift certainly impressed Western advisors of the time who had invested in the opening and modernization of Japan. George A. Malcolm, a prominent American lawyer in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, referred to the *Charter Oath* as "the Magna Carta of the political and social life of Japan."<sup>157</sup>

Once the samurai revolutionaries established dominance, they began radically overturning the order of governance, such as abolishing samurai stipends and centralizing governmental structure around the Imperial Court. They sought to strip the old feudal powers of their influence, incorporating the Western influence of the division of powers. Most radically, they abolished the *han* system, replacing the feudal *daimyō* and their domains with imperial prefectures overseen by centrally appointed bureaucrats.<sup>158</sup> Political scientist Harukata Takanata argues that "the regime that ruled Japan before the rise of the Hara cabinet in 1918 did not satisfy any of the three criteria for democratic and semi-democratic regimes noted above."<sup>159</sup> While he provides more than ample evidence for this claim, it can be argued that, based upon the principles of freedom within a democratic regime of any caliber, from 1868 to 1945 the government of Japan never reached a status sufficient to be called 'democratic.' A lynchpin in the definition of a government and a society definitively 'free' and 'democratic' is the necessary freedom of thought that was virtually nonexistent throughout the history of Imperial Japan. Examples of this include the suppression of "The Freedom and People's Rights Movement," the oppressive 1880 Public Assembly Law, the incredibly narrow suffrage laws first introduced in the 1889 Meiji Constitution, and finally the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education. The supposed "new, Westernized Japan" had merely put up a façade of Western influence whilst continuing the repression of the masses and free thought of the Tokugawa Shogunate.<sup>160</sup>

Specifically, the 1880 law officially known as the *Regulations for Public Meetings and Associations*, forbade any public assemblies, gatherings, meetings, or lectures dealing with any matter referring to politics without first receiving approval and sanction from the police authorities of that jurisdiction. Additionally, the police authorities must also have received a list of the names of all persons who would be in attendance, all topics discussed, and the exact location of the event. They also were required to be in attendance at the event as police, and according to an 1882 revision of Article V, "the police officers shall have their choice of seats, and information shall be furnished to them on any subject into which they choose to inquire." Furthermore, Article VII of the law decisively forbade any members of the military, police officers, teachers, students, and trade apprentices from attending or associating with any political meetings or lectures. Any violation of the repressive articles of this law resulted in hefty fines, jail time, or even suppression and prohibition of certain organizations.<sup>161</sup>

The Meiji Constitution, the first elections, and the first Imperial Diet in 1889-90 served as one of the most prominent examples of the lack of a tangible difference between the class structure of Japan. As the Meiji Oligarchs dictated within the Constitution's suffrage laws,

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<sup>157</sup>George A. Malcolm, "The Constitution of the Empire of Japan," *Michigan Law Review* 19, no. 1 (November, 1920): 62.

<sup>158</sup>Harukata, *Failed Democratization In Prewar Japan*, 45-47.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-13, 45.

<sup>160</sup>Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 79-81, 89-92.

<sup>161</sup>Empire of Japan Home Ministry, *Regulations for Public Meetings and Associations*, April 5, 1880; in Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, *Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources*, Vol. 3, 37-43.

to qualify for the franchise for the prefectural assembly, one had to pay a tax of at least 5 yen...For the national Diet, which was convened in 1890, the right to vote and the right to serve in the lower house were limited to those paying at least 15 yen in taxes...When the first election for the Diet was held, only 1.14 percent of the population was qualified to vote.<sup>162</sup>

Despite accounting for roughly 70% of the population of Japan at the time, the rural peasants, under the new national land tax and recognition of land ownership produced crops that accounted for 85.6% of government revenue between 1882 and 1892.<sup>163</sup>

Considering the context of the slogan that defined the first three decades of industrialization, modernization, and militarization of Japan, “Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Armed Forces,” (*Fukoku kyōhei*), a realization comes to mind. The vast majority of the people responsible for Japan’s rapid propulsion to modernity were not those who reaped the toils of labor, nor were they represented equitably in the legislative process.<sup>164</sup> Whilst the leaders of this new Japan did indeed demolish the old feudal system of governance and land ownership, technically granting freedom of movement and economic ventures, nothing truly changed. The samurai aristocracy that carried out this revolution merely relabeled themselves as bourgeoisie capitalists and replaced the hereditary requirement for entrance into political power with a monetary requirement.

The political infrastructure of the transition from Tokugawa to Meiji Japan was formulated in entirety to parallel the Western European liberalism of the Victorian era. However, in Japan’s rush to modernize, they missed a crucial key to unlocking a successful representative government: an educated, enlightened, and enriched middle class. While the merchants of the Tokugawa era were indeed encroaching on economic enrichment, they still lacked the political gumption to seize the reigns of power as often seen in the bourgeois revolutions of the West.<sup>165</sup> This rising merchant class did begin to enter the political fray in parallel to industrialization in Japan; the large rice merchants, banks, and moneylenders were among the pioneering capitalists first investing in railroad construction, steamships, and the modernization of the silk, textile, and cotton industries. Resulting from the industrial transformation of steam power and global trade were the origins of the *zaibatsu* (financial clique), and thus the large merchant guilds of the Tokugawa era emerged from the enforced *Sakoku*. It was not long before they realized the necessity to adopt the same monopolistic style of capitalism as the West in order to survive and thrive in the modern world of commerce.<sup>166</sup>

Whilst the political revolution of the Meiji Restoration might have been just a simple transfer of political power from the Shogunate of the Tokugawa clan to the Chōshū, Satsuma, Tosa, and Hizen

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<sup>162</sup>Oka Yoshitake, *Kindai Nihon no Keisei* [The Formation of Modern Japan] (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1947), 301; quoted in Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Inc., 2003), 13.

<sup>163</sup>Keizo Shibusawa, *Japanese Society in the Meiji Era*, trans. A.H. Culbertson and M. Kimura (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1958), 410; quoted in *Ibid*, 16-17.

<sup>164</sup>Jon Livingston, Joe Moore, and Felicia Oldfather, *The Japan Reader I: Imperial Japan, 1800-1945*, (New York, NY: Random House Inc, 1973), 165.

<sup>165</sup>Robert A. Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan: The Failure of the First Attempt* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 34-36.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid*, 93-100.

clans forming an oligarchy around the Imperial Court, the true revolution of Japan during this time occurred industrially and commercially. The eagerness of those outsider or *tozama* clans to embrace and emulate the West in all aspects of statecraft set the stage for the massive economic boom during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The introduction of capitalism and its steadfast reception in Japan did more to upturn the social order than the early reforms of the Meiji oligarchy. Initial anti-Western sympathizer Ōkuma Shigenobu was the second prime minister of Meiji Japan and oversaw Japan's early financial and industrial development through the unification of the national currency, the establishment of the national mint, and Ministries of Finance and Industry.<sup>167</sup> Ōkuma himself acknowledged the devastating repercussions of the industrial world of Japan upon the opening of the markets to European goods, modern manufacturing, and capitalist division of labor: "A vast number of occupations which had hitherto been thriving had suddenly to be abandoned, and skilled laborers and artisans were thrown out of employment in thousands."<sup>168</sup>

With the flood of Western machinery came immense profits to be had, which introduced another of the major facets that led to the downfall of any hope of democratic governance: greed. The introduction of industrialization gave the new masters of Japan an opportunity and need to grow their economy to the levels of the Western nations; silk weaving and spinning, cotton spinning, and textile manufacturing made up the bulk of the export industry that saw Japan to modernity. However, it was not the samurai revolutionaries that boosted the silk industry in 40 years to produce over a third of the world's silk, nor was it rich merchants and landlords who sat weaving silk for 14 hours a day, 5-6 years straight, earning roughly 4 to 20 *sen* a day.<sup>169</sup> Rather, it was the poor, rural peasant women of Japan who were the ones to build Japan's wealth, birth soldiers for their armies, till their fields, and weave the silk sold for lucrative profit.

The reality for women in prewar Imperial Japan is one of the most damning examples of the lack of democratic representation and any kind of individual equality. In reality, during the first 40 years following the Restoration, peasant women had three options in life: remain on the farm or in the village to toil away in the soil, be sold to a silk or cotton mill by their family and work for meager wages, or be sold to a brothel by their family. Most Japanese women, as well as men, began work by the age of 12 or 13. Additionally, women did not have any semblance of political sovereignty, only receiving the right to vote with the establishment of the postwar Constitution in 1947.<sup>170</sup> Women would continue to suffer in subjugation throughout the reigns of Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa with only small labor regulation reform with the insufficient Factory Act of 1911.<sup>171</sup> This was preceded by the outlawing of buying and selling of people for prostitution with the Prostitute Emancipation Order of 1872, but it had done nothing to discourage prostitution or to alleviate the financial burdens of women.<sup>172</sup> With half of the nation's population lacking political equality and suffering social

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<sup>167</sup>Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 82-83, 90.

<sup>168</sup>Ōkuma Shigenobu, "The Industrial Revolution In Japan," *The North American Review* 171, no. 528 (November, 1900): 679.

<sup>169</sup>Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcastes*, 173, 176-178, 182-183.

<sup>170</sup>E. Patricia Tsurumi, "Female Textile Workers and the Failure of Early Trade Unionism in Japan," *History Workshop Journal* 1, no. 18 (Autumn, 1984): 5-9.

<sup>171</sup>Nakamura Masanori, *Nihon no Rekishi, Rōdōsha to Nōmin* [History of Japan, Laborers and Peasants] (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 1976) 91, quoted in Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcastes*, 194-195.

<sup>172</sup>Okada Akio et al., *Nihon no Rekishi* [A History of Japan], 12 vols. (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1959-1960); X: 193; quoted in *Ibid*, 208.

disenfranchisement through being considered legal property in all but name, the government could not be considered in any way democratic. The Meiji Restoration differed from its feudal predecessors in that it recognized the desperate need for economic change to prevent a complete collapse of the existing social hierarchy. This was accomplished by replacing the self-supplying mercantilist feudal order with private land ownership, tenant farming, and industrial wage labor. However, this economic shift did not come with increased individual liberty or freedom of speech. The first two decades of Meiji rule were wrought with clashes between the statist and aristocratic oligarchs, who mainly held power in the state until the Taishō era and were known as the *genrō*, and the individualist and liberal intelligentsia, who were still of the upper cream of society but fantasized about the Enlightenment ideas of the West. The Restoration was principally based on the semi-democratic values laid out in the *Charter Oath*, Japan had been flooded with the ideas of laissez-faire economists and political philosophers in the West.

Reflexively, cries went out during the 1870s and 1880s for a Constitution to be established and a representative assembly to be gathered.<sup>173</sup> This first democratic assault on the imperial government came in the form of the “Freedom and People’s Rights Movement,” helmed by Itagaki Taisuke. Founder of Japan’s first Liberal Party, Itagaki was the head of this “liberal” movement calling for a Constitution and a national assembly. This political disturbance was in reality two sides of the same coin. The self-labeled liberals were calling for popular rights and political freedom, yet this was merely a farce. The ex-samurai liberals quickly compromised with the state for a Constitution and a place in government because “liberalism” in Meiji Japan merely represented a desire for a strong state still governed by the aristocratic samurai through the hereditary peerage system of *Kazoku*.<sup>174</sup> By 1890, Japan had not shifted towards a Western constitutional monarchy, but rather simply expanded its power base towards a bureaucratic plutocracy to give the impression of popular representation.

Itagaki was the personification of liberal democracy during the 1870s in his agitation for representation in government, individual liberties, and as the first tenet of their founding *Charter Oath* lays out, “A deliberative assembly shall be convoked on a broad basis, and all matters of state shall be decided by open discussion.”<sup>175</sup> Throughout the 1870s his continued agitation for the government to follow through on the objectives laid down in the *Charter Oath* was articulated in a memorial penned to advocate for the establishment of a representative assembly. Itagaki remarked, “the rapidity with which this country has advanced in civilization is unparalleled in the history of the world...But in reality our position is far otherwise...It is our opinion that all these evils arise from the fact that Your Majesty’s ministers exercise a power solely despotic, the administration being carried on entirely without reference to the opinion of the nation.”<sup>176</sup>

It was exactly this kind of disturbance and agitation for guaranteed freedoms of speech, press, and assembly, as well as equal representation and participation in government that most likely prompted

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<sup>173</sup>Chitoshi Yanaga, *Japanese People and Politics* Science Ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1964), 34-37.

<sup>174</sup>Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan*, 40-42.

<sup>175</sup> *Excerpts from the Document on the Form of Government (Seitaisho)*, 1868; quoted in Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, 308-309.

<sup>176</sup> The Society of Free Thinkers, *Memorial Advocating the Establishment of a Representative Assembly*,” June 1877; from McLaren, W.W., *Japanese Government Documents*, Vol I & II, (Washington D.C.: University Publications of America Inc, 1979), 457-458. The Society of Free Thinkers was a political association organized by Itagaki Taisuke.

government retaliation. The *Law of Libel and Slander* and the *Newspaper Law*, which punished any public statements that might dishonor or give a bad reputation to the Imperial Throne, imperial family, or any government official, were passed to silence calls for democratic participation in government.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, the creation of the Meiji Constitution awarded widespread authoritative powers to the Emperor and by proxy his closest advisors. These powers included the supreme leadership of the Army and Navy, the power of appointment to members of the Upper House of Lords, and the power of appointment of all judges and public procurators.<sup>178</sup> By stacking the deck of power constantly in favor of the central authority of the established government, it eliminated any possibility for the free and fair elections or protection of civil liberties seen in contemporary democracies.

This initial influx of Western ideals and rhetoric also created the first hints of leftist thought and unionism within this new age for Japan. The initial steps towards personal liberties and individual rights were scattered and half-hearted thus leaving much to be desired in the form of an organized effort. To explain the failure of trade unionism, the state-mandated education programs of the early Meiji regime must be examined. The Meiji Oligarchy proclaimed in 1872 a compulsory education system of a mandatory four years of elementary education for boys and girls in congruence with the national objective to ‘Enrich the Nation.’<sup>179</sup> The state-mandated schooling was extended to six years in 1908, and it did improve literacy rates nationwide. However, this appears to only be the case for the families who could afford the tuition or the loss of income working children could bring. The relationship between Meiji Japan’s state-sponsored education and its failure to effectively integrate democratic principles into its government revolves around indoctrination through nationalistic and militaristic rhetoric which preached unquestioning subservience to the state and Emperor through constant sacrifice and service.<sup>180</sup>

The three doctrines of education that fabricated the unflinchingly obedient Japanese population of the Shōwa era were *shūshin* (a term referring to morality education), *chūkun aikoku* (loyalty to the emperor and love of nation), and the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education (IRE). In summation, the Ministry of Education was initially modeled after the American-style schools, but very quickly the Oligarchy switched to a stricter Prussian model. Furthermore, the Education Reform Acts of 1879, ’80, ’81, ’86, ’90, and 1904, rigidly implemented morality education, government-regulated textbooks, and militarism within teacher schools as well as any schooling above elementary.<sup>181</sup> The stranglehold that the *kokutai* (national body/structure) had on the education system clearly demonstrates the utter domination of will and thought that was imposed upon the peasants of Japan. This supreme control of the nation’s education also demonstrated the savvy of early Meiji leaders who understood the importance of indoctrinating the youth of their day. Moreover, centering this system of subjugation around the ancient symbol of the Emperor aided in connecting the moralities and cultural nuances of the past with the Western modernization of the future to create a new and

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<sup>177</sup> *Law of Libel and Slander and Newspaper Law*, June 28, 1875; from The Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, *Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources*, Vol. 3, 30-36.

<sup>178</sup> *Law of the Constitution of the Courts of Justice, Clause LXII and LXXIX*, Law No. 6, February 8, 1890; from McLaren, *Japanese Government Documents*, 641-643.

<sup>179</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 67-68.

<sup>180</sup> Ignacio Villamor, “Education in Japan,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 122, no. 13 (November, 1925), 111-112.

<sup>181</sup> Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcasts*, 51-59.

secure national identity.<sup>182</sup> Specifically, this identity was built upon the control and repression of the masses through the installation of Confucian moral codes, total obedience to the government and the Emperor, and a vow of loyalty in the form of the IRE, which was distributed to all schools along with a portrait of the Emperor. All students were required to memorize as well as recite and prostrate themselves before the portrait and IRE every morning, such as this excerpt, “should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.”<sup>183</sup>

The Imperial Japanese Ministry of Education was an antithesis of democratic principles by restricting the freedom of thought and access to unbiased education. The final blow to those seeking a self-governing Japan with popular rights, universal suffrage, and freedom of political parties came in the form of reactionary legislation in the 1910s and ‘20s. Shortly following Itagaki and “The Freedom and People’s Rights Movement” were the pioneering unionist and social democrat movements. Due to the First Sino-Japanese War bringing taxes and inflation to the country, civil unrest staggered national progress. With 43 strikes involving 6,293 people occurring in 1897, unrest was deemed threatening enough by the *kokutai* to suppress labor activity with the Public Peace Police Law of March 1900.<sup>184</sup>

In retaliation emerged the socialists and anarchists, influenced by previous activists and opposing the *genrō*’s continued labor suppression, imperialist expansion into China and Korea, and the costly Russo-Japanese War. These new political factions were led by figures such as Kanno Sugako, a notable anarcho-feminist, and Kōtoku Shūsui, who embodied Japan’s first semblance of an anti-imperialist, anti-establishment movement. As one of the founders of socialist and anarchist movements within Japan, he helped form the Social Democratic Party of Japan in 1901, which was banned the very next day. He was a vocal opponent of Japan’s war against Russia and was a member of many leftist organizations and publications, particularly *Heimin Shimbun* (The Commoner’s News).<sup>185</sup>

Kōtoku solidified the freedoms and liberties expressed within the *Charter Oath* and the Meiji Constitution but not delivered by the *genrō*, and he expressed this through his collection of essays, *Imperialism: Monster of the Twentieth Century*. The collection was filled with such proclamations as “the main purpose of the nation-state is to ensure continual social progress and to better the welfare of humanity,” and “anyone who challenges the conventional wisdom of the day is muzzled and forcibly retained.”<sup>186</sup> Kōtoku would later be arrested and imprisoned for six months in 1905 for his criticism of the conduct of the government and his advocacy for direct action, and would later self-exile to the United States for 8 months before returning in 1906. His return to Japan and politics would lead him to the 1908 Red Flag Incident, which was a reactionary crackdown on an anarcho-

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<sup>182</sup>Richard H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 19.

<sup>183</sup>Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcasts*, 57-8; and Unknown, “The Imperial Rescript On Education In Japan,” *The Journal of Education* 67, no. 4 (January 23, 1908): 102.

<sup>184</sup>George Oakley Totten, *The Social Democratic Movement In Prewar Japan* (Binghamton: Yale University Press, 1966), 20-22.

<sup>185</sup>Robert Thomas Tierney, *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Kōtoku Shūsui and Japan’s First Anti-Imperialist Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 1-4.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*, 140, 150.

communist demonstration, and to meet Kanno Sugako.<sup>187</sup> The leftist movement that had materialized over the past forty years would, however, ultimately be decimated in the crackdown aftermath of the 1911 High Treason Incident, in which prominent figures such as Kōtoku and Kanno were executed by the state for plotting to assassinate the Emperor. As a result, any leftist groups were relatively dispersed for the next decade by the conservative Katsura administration.<sup>188</sup>

The Marxist and communist groups would return in the post-WWI years and the early 1920s, but would also inevitably be sabotaged by the liberals and progressives in the Imperial Diet. They would also be outright attacked by the conservatives, reactionaries, and militaristic nationalists through legislation and incidents like the 1923 Kantō Massacre, the 1925 Peace Preservation Law, and the 1928 March 15 Incident.<sup>189</sup> Leading up to these events was the Home Ministries founding of the *Tokkō* (Special Higher Police), or the ‘Thought Police.’ Founded in 1911, this task force was formed in response to the High Treason Incident, increased labor unrest, and continued distrust and suspicion of radical political groups deemed a threat to the public order of the empire. This division of high policing operated with extreme prejudice and few limitations. The censorship division especially eliminated the spread of leftist literature and media. However, due to the wartime boom, the continued exploitation of tenant farmers and factory workers, and exorbitant price fluctuations, the economy of the Taishō era began to destabilize. The end of World War I brought a steep cratering in the rice market, causing the Rice Riots of 1918. While not initially associated with any leftist movement, this labor unrest certainly provided a boon to the recovering radicals; this was, however, an indicator of the continuing slide toward unabridged militaristic nationalism and exploitative colonialism.<sup>190</sup>

Inevitably, the leftist movement would collapse into oblivion until the end of World War II, due to party rivalry and ideological disagreements, as well as ostracization within the Imperial Diet and the public stage by the liberals and progressives. Ultimately, it was the pro-military ultranationalist groups that would undermine efforts for class consciousness with the 1925 Universal Manhood Suffrage Law and concurrently suppress direct action and distribution of media via the 1925 Peace Preservation Law.<sup>191</sup> In particular, the Peace Preservation Law (PPL) was one of the final death strokes delivered to the last vestiges of hope for representative government and freedom of choice. The law was purposefully vague and abstract in order to be applicable to any suspected subversive activity. Article 1 of the law denounces any suggestion of change to the status quo, crystallizing the conservatives' hold on power and advancing the military's involvement in the Diet.<sup>192</sup> This slide towards centralized governmental control and military involvement within affairs of state was the exact direction that Imperial Japan had been going since the ex-samurai revolutionaries overthrew the Tokugawa clan and maintained relative power in the hands of the military and the upper classes. Between the continued oversight of education and distributable literature, as well as

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<sup>187</sup> Mikiso Hane, “Reflections On The Way To The Gallows: Kanno Sugako,” in *Reflections On The Way To The Gallows: Rebel Women In Prewar Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 53-54.

<sup>188</sup> George Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922-1945*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 6-8.

<sup>189</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 162-172.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 162.

<sup>191</sup> Harukata, *Failed Democratization In Prewar Japan*, 96-101.

<sup>192</sup> Domei Tsushin Sha, *Wartime Legislation in Japan*, 1941, 70-77; quoted in Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*, 201-203.

the reactionary responses towards the popular rights movements with an extremely fearful response to the Bolshevik victory in Russia, autocracy only grew. The initial adoption of Western liberal thought had always been a pretense to advance national strength and fortify patriotic statism. The samurai revolutionaries never idealized or romanticized republicanism or individualism, their goal initially had been merely to use the Emperor as a cult of personality to center their power base around. The existing paternalistic values and Confucian reverence within Japanese culture negated the individualistic values associated with democracy, and the economic unpredictability of Japan's rapid modernization also doomed democratic political stability.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>Harukata, *Failed Democratization In Prewar Japan*, 173-174.

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# **“A Deliberate, Systematical Plan of Reducing us to Slavery:” Thomas Jefferson’s Belief in Conspiracy as Shown in his Public and Private Writings**

Sabrina Sutter

## **Introduction**

In the years preceding the American Revolution, the taxation campaigns enacted by the British government not only earned the ire of the American colonists, but also provoked belief in a conspiracy theory that the colonists were being targeted. A long history of government corruption, Enlightenment ideas surrounding moral influence on politics, and the English pamphleteering tradition that had influenced American political thought since the Glorious Revolution. This combined to create an American pamphleteering campaign that insisted parliament and the king were attempting to destroy the liberty of Britain’s subjects beginning with attempts to enslave the American colonists. As belief in this theory grew and it became a political motivation for those pushing for independence, the rhetoric of American pamphleteers began to enter the writing of Thomas Jefferson.

The question this paper seeks to answer is whether Thomas Jefferson, noted to have been motivated by the preservation of virtue in politics, natural rights, and political autonomy of the colonies, was also explicitly influenced by conspiracy theory. Examining American pamphleteers and comparing them to Jefferson’s writing shows that he was both aware of this conspiracy and agreed with its predictions, parroting language used by pamphleteers regarding the eventual enslavement of colonial America. Following Enlightenment philosophy that the actions of parliament and King George III were deliberate attacks on liberty instead of mistakes or mismanagement, Jefferson shared colonial belief in Britain’s intentions to repeat its historic despotism and deprive its subjects of liberty, starting with the enslavement of the American colonists, as evidenced by Jefferson’s public and personal writings.

## **The Beginning of Belief in Conspiracy**

For the colonists, the fear of tyranny even before Britain enacted the Stamp Act in 1765 was an incredibly present one. Autocracy was prevalent throughout Europe, and in the century preceding the American Revolution, England had experienced unprecedented corruption.<sup>194</sup> Between the brief restoration of King Charles II to the throne after the expulsion of Oliver Cromwell in 1660 and the ascension of the first Hanover monarch, George I in 1714, political intrigue and plots were so common that it was always assumed a conspiracy was being undertaken.<sup>195</sup> In the following years,

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<sup>194</sup>Gordon S. Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1982) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1919580>, p. 407.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

the belief in conspiracy became deeply ingrained in the political consciousness of British subjects, partially giving rise to the popularity of the idea of virtue in politics.<sup>196</sup>

The key philosophy that lay at the basis of English politics that had risen out of the sixteenth century was the idea of public and private virtue.<sup>197</sup> A product of the Enlightenment and its insistence that the woes of society were squarely caused by man instead of a higher power, an emphasis on secular virtue divorced from religion had grown to immense popularity.<sup>198</sup> Heavily promoted by the Whig party in the English Parliament as part of their practice of Republicanism alongside the natural rights of John Locke, good politics were seen as being the result of good morals and the intent of those in government to promote the liberty and free property of the people.<sup>199</sup> This could only be achieved through the practice of both public and private virtue, essentially the commitment to ensuring the liberty of the people and abstaining from practicing corruption. The belief that government was the root source of corruption due to individuals' immense power and the incredibly prevalent trend of autocracy throughout Europe for much of its history meant politicians' policy decisions were seen as indicative of their moral character. Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the establishment of rights such as those enshrined in the English Constitution, and the shift in assigning responsibility for society's health to secular goodwill instead of the grace of God, suddenly every issue in English society became a matter of conspiracy, as the ills of society could only be deliberate, immoral choices rather than simple mistakes.<sup>200</sup>

Out of these developments came the English pamphleteers who would influence American colonists in their revolutionary aspirations. Writers such as the duo John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, who partnered in 1719 to publish the weekly *Whig Independent*, were the political commentary of choice for most colonists.<sup>201</sup> Their later series, *Cato's Letters*, a scathing rebuke written in response to Tory-led financial crises and policies such as William III's standing armies, was a massive success in the colonies when printed as a book in 1721.<sup>202</sup> Alongside them were institutional figures such as Benjamin Hoadley, the radical Anglican bishop who pushed back against the idea of divine right to rule in his work *The Original and Institution of Civil Government Discussed* and other writings.<sup>203</sup> The written tradition that had been born out of the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent fight for moral supremacy in parliament and against corruption was continuously fed to the American colonists for decades, influencing their politics and inspiring their own writings.<sup>204</sup>

This written tradition of political opposition and Enlightenment-inspired views of politics and morality meant that, when the British government began to tax the American colonies to settle its

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<sup>196</sup>Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Michael Butter, "Mapping American Conspiracism," in *Plots, Designs, and Schemes: American Conspiracy Theories from the Puritans to the Present* De Gruyter, Inc. (Boston, 2014) p. 45

<sup>198</sup> Wood, "Paranoid," 414.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Bernard Bailyn, "Sources and Traditions," in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Vol. Fiftieth anniversary edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2017) p. 35-36.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Bailyn, "Sources," 37

<sup>204</sup> Wood, "Paranoid," 415

military debts, the colonists were immediately suspicious.<sup>205</sup> Beginning with the 1765 Stamp Act which taxed paper goods, a series of taxation campaigns followed, first designed to simply raise revenue and then to demonstrate to outraged colonists that parliament could force the colonists to depend on them.<sup>206</sup> As incursions against colonial self-rule began to mount, such as the suspension of the Assembly of New York in 1765, colonists began to believe a conspiracy existed in the British government.<sup>207</sup> They believed that Lord Bute, the leader of Parliament, and his allies, the Tories, were intent on destroying the English Constitution, seizing control of the Crown to fashion a puppet despot, and enslaving the American colonies to promote this end.<sup>208</sup>

## Pamphlets

Fear of enslavement began to permeate American society and empowered the revolution's chief pamphleteers to begin their commentary. In 1767, Pennsylvania statesman John Dickinson published the first in a series of circulated letters titled *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, essays addressing the colonists' grievances that first began with the Stamp Act.<sup>209</sup> Dickinson, trained as a lawyer and serving in the Pennsylvania Assembly, was incensed at the Stamp Act even after it had been repealed, and his first letter admonished the British government for its enactment and their decision to suspend the Assembly of New York when it objected.<sup>210</sup> Famously, Dickinson raised the question of the true motivations of the suspension of the Assembly of New York:

It seems therefore to me as much a violation of the liberties of the people of that province, and consequently of all these colonies, as if the parliament had sent a number of regiments to be quartered upon them till they should comply. For it is evident, that the suspension is meant as a *compulsion*; and the *method* of compelling is totally indifferent.<sup>211</sup>

Not only had the Stamp Act been designed to raise money from the colonies, it was also legislation designed to put the colonies in their place and promote their dependence on parliament. Dickinson asserted that the retaliation against New York was indeed retaliation against the entirety of the colonies, since if the British legislature could smother the elected body of those in New York, it would have no problem doing it elsewhere.<sup>212</sup> Dickinson ended his letter with the observation that neither of the elected bodies of Pennsylvania or Delaware had issued a statement, insisted he only meant for the reform of the king's ministers and not rebellion against the king, and called for unity

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<sup>205</sup> Bailyn, "The Logic of Rebellion," in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Vol. Fiftieth anniversary edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2017) p. 94.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Bailyn, "Login," 146.

<sup>209</sup> John Dickinson, "'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies: Introduction,'" in *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Liberty Fund, 1962)

<sup>210</sup> John Dickinson, "'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies: Letter I,'" in *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Liberty Fund, 1962)

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

amongst the colonists in this endeavor, famously signing his letter in the tradition of the day as simply: “A Farmer.”<sup>213</sup>

Unfortunately for Dickinson and the colonists, Dickinson was compelled to write more vociferously over the Townshend Acts.<sup>214</sup> The Revenue Act of 1767 was enacted just later that month, imposing duties on imports of common materials.<sup>215</sup> Dickinson, incensed at the open aim to raise revenue off the colonists, named this as a departure from how Britain had historically treated her colonies. Dickinson openly raised the alarm regarding Britain’s intentions, crying “rouse yourselves.”<sup>216</sup> He noted how “Mr. Pitt,” William Pitt the Whig statesman in Parliament, had protested the imposition of these acts, proof of how even those in parliament knew that forcing the colonists to depend on Britain for material goods while also punishing them for importing goods through duties was a violation.<sup>217</sup> It is here we see the first invocation of the fear of slavery at the hands of Britain in Dickinson’s pamphlets:

If *Great Britain* can order us to come to her for necessities we want, and can order us to pay what taxes she pleases before we take them away, or when we land them here, we are as abject slaves as *France* and *Poland* can show in wooden shoes and with uncombed hair.<sup>218</sup>

Dickinson’s fears revolved around parliament forcing the colonies to be dependent on them. He saw this as the first step towards upending colonial liberties and enslaving the colonists. If parliament could render colonial legislatures obsolete, they could justify their dismantlement, paving the way toward subjugation. These fears continued to be justified throughout his proceeding pamphlets, as the colonists’ Whig champions in parliament were either unable or unwilling to advocate for them. However, while parliament continued to impose taxation and restrict the assembly of the colonists, Dickinson’s essays became widely circulated as his message gained traction. Other American pamphleteers soon latched onto and advanced similar arguments.

In 1773, six years after Dickinson began publishing *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, John Allen, a British Baptist minister who had moved to the American colonies, published *The American Alarm*. Expanding on sentiments expressed by Dickinson, Allen pleaded to educated American gentlemen to become aware of the danger posed to them by the British government and the ignorance of the king.<sup>219</sup> While his pamphlet acknowledged a range of issues concerned with the preservation of the Lockian natural rights of life, liberty, and property, the main argument as outlined on pages 15-17 is that various taxation campaigns that began with the Stamp Act in 1765 were all leading to a spate of taxation so severe it would prompt

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> John Dickinson, ““Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies: Letter II,” in *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Liberty Fund, 1962) p. 14.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> John Allen, *THE AMERICAN ALARM, OR THE BOSTONIAN PLEA, For the RIGHTS, and LIBERTIES, of the PEOPLE. Humbly Addressed to the KING and COUNCIL, AND To the Constitutional SONS of LIBERTY, in AMERICA*, (Boston: printed by D. Kneeland and N. Davis, 1773) *Evans Early American Imprint Collection*, p. 17.

property seizure.<sup>220</sup> He warned that this would lead to the loss of the natural and political rights of the American colonies whereby they would be enslaved.<sup>221</sup> According to Allen, the Tories led by the Earl of Bute were plotting to gain control of Britain itself and either make King George III complicit in despotism or to eventually replace him with someone more swayable.<sup>222</sup> Once they had control of the Crown, Allen posited, they would plunge the British empire into despotism, starting with enslaving the American colonists so they could not provide support to the opposition in Parliament. Allen chiefly asked whether Americans would allow the removal of their rights to choose their governors and judges, who were suddenly appointed and paid by royal authorities, giving them a vested interest in doing the Crown's bidding and so less motivated to uphold just laws for the colonists' benefit.<sup>223</sup> This is a reference to the intention of the 1767 Townshend Acts that Dickinson discussed in his letters.<sup>224</sup> The Townshend Acts' judicial provisions were activated in 1772 to tax the colonies to provide revenue to pay for colonial judges independent of elected colonial assemblies, reducing the power colonists had over their judiciary and transferring it to British hands.<sup>225</sup> The colonial legislatures were being made obsolete, and Allen was concerned that the natural rights of the colonists were in danger of being lost to British enslavement.

Allen's specific references to Lord Bute, King George III's personal advisor and cousin of James the Pretender whose family had been deposed in the English Civil War, are more explicit than Dickinson's as they had the benefit of a few years of taxation campaigns to ferment.<sup>226</sup> Allen believed the conspiracy theory that Bute was the mastermind behind the plot to enslave the colonies, which would ultimately involve the reversal of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution that gave England a constitutional monarchy.<sup>227</sup> Going after colonial legislatures and buying the judiciary by forcing it to depend upon Crown taxation could dismantle what self-rule the colonies had. The English constitution mandated legislature was needed but did not specifically state that colonial legislature was protected, and if the Crown could destroy the colonial legislature and judiciary, it could subject the colonies to whatever it liked. Bute's past in parliament and backroom deals only served to prove to Whig supporters such as Allen that he was capable of planning the subjugation of the colonists. In a very public feud, Bute successfully orchestrated the temporary exile of a Whig political opponent, John Wilkes, who was popular with the colonists.<sup>228</sup> Though he was allowed to return in 1768, he was continuously denied his elected seat in the House of Commons much to the outcry of those in the colonies.<sup>229</sup> When considering what Bute was willing to do to his opponents in Parliament, many colonists such as Allen felt justified in considering him an enemy.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Allen, *ALARM*, 16

<sup>224</sup> Joseph H Smith, "An independent judiciary: The colonial background," in *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* vol. 124: 1104 (1976). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania law school. p. 1124.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Bernard Bailyn, "The Logic of Rebellion," in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*. Vol. Fiftieth anniversary edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2017)p. 122-123.

<sup>227</sup> Bailyn, "Rebellion," 148.

<sup>228</sup> Arthur H. Cash, "Number 45," in *John Wilkes : The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) p. 101-102.

<sup>229</sup> Bailyn, "Rebellion," 112.

Pamphlets were used to express the fear of the enslavement of American colonists at the hands of the British government. This fear, when contextualized within the growing popularity of Enlightenment ideals such as natural rights and virtue in politics suddenly makes sense. Due to legal concepts such as a property requirement to participate in local democracy, the attack on what many colonists would have perceived as property was seen as an attack on their ability to participate in government. As outlined by the idea that political decisions are, in essence, based on individual morality, then decisions that affected the people badly were decisions made with deliberate ill intent. Therefore, the idea that taxes would eventually cause the financial ruin of those with the property to participate in government would indeed be a calculated disenfranchisement. To the colonists, this disenfranchisement would lead to slavery, as those who should be able to participate in government would be barred, and their legislatures and judiciaries would be deemed obsolete and then ripped apart to suffer under the full control of Parliament. The efforts on the part of Lord Bute and his Tory allies, when compared to the preceding English history and Bute's own past, were then seen as the machinations of immoral politicians seeking to promote tyranny for their own ends. As the conspiracy spread throughout the colonies and became more and more accepted, politicians like Thomas Jefferson parroted it.

## Conspiracy in Jefferson's writings

Born in Virginia in 1743 to one of Virginia's most prestigious families, Thomas Jefferson had access to an extensive education and political participation in the American colonies.<sup>230</sup> Educated at the College of William and Mary and trained to become a lawyer under the respected George Wythe, Jefferson became interested in the morality of legal matters in his young adulthood and was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1768.<sup>231</sup> A believer in Enlightenment and Whig ideals, Jefferson immediately joined the likes of George Washington and Patrick Henry in a political coalition poised against the royal governor of Virginia.<sup>232</sup> Jefferson's reputation as an excellent writer was quickly established during his time in the House of Burgesses, and as the colonists became more and more disgruntled by the actions of the British Crown, Jefferson began to be known for more than just the legislation he drafted.<sup>233</sup> An avid reader of Enlightenment thought such as the natural rights of John Locke and English whig politics, and living during an age of shared anxiety regarding conspiracy plots, Jefferson believed that the British Crown was intent on enslaving the American colonies.

In 1774, Jefferson's public support of the conspiracy can be seen in his support of statements made by the Virginia House of Burgesses. In May 1774, the House released "Resolution of the House of Burgesses Designating a Day of Fasting and Prayer" on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and "Association of Members of the Late House of Burgesses," on the 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>234</sup> "Resolution," was a show of solidarity with Boston

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<sup>230</sup> R. B. Bernstein, "A Young Gentleman of Virginia (1743-1774)," *Thomas Jefferson* Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2003) Kindle edition. pg. 1.

<sup>231</sup> Bernstein, "Gentleman," 8.

<sup>232</sup> R.B. Bernstein, "'We Hold These Truths...' (1763-1776)," *Thomas Jefferson* Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2003) Kindle edition. pg. 15

<sup>233</sup> Bernstein, "'Truths,'" 16

<sup>234</sup> Virginia House of Burgesses, "Resolution of the House of Burgesses Designating a Day of Fasting and Prayer, 24 May 1774," in *Founders Online* National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0082>

which was suffering British military occupation under the Boston Port Act. “Association” was released as a statement on the actions of the British government in recent events:

With much grief we find that our dutiful applications to Great Britain for security of our just, antient, and constitutional rights, have been not only disregarded, but that a determined system is formed and pressed for reducing the inhabitants of British America to slavery.<sup>235</sup>

While Jefferson cannot be credited as the sole author of either of these statements, he was a signer of both, indicating he publicly agreed with their accusation against the British government. These parliamentary statements are the prelude to Jefferson’s first prominent piece of public writing, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, written in 1774. It is plain in its claims of the colonies’ eventual future and the intentions of the British government.<sup>236</sup> Originally written as a statement of policy for the other Virginian delegates to the Continental Congress, the pamphlet was spread and reframed as a plea to King George III himself, as Jefferson attempted to appeal to the king over parliament.<sup>237</sup> Arguing that the colonists were the king’s subjects before they were parliament’s, Jefferson questioned whether the king would allow this blatant disregard for the rights enshrined in the English Constitution to continue. Not only that, but whether he was willing to face how history would remember him if he did not advocate for the colonies.<sup>238</sup> Rather famously, however, he directly expresses the belief in ulterior motives for the actions of the British parliament that pamphleteers had been writing about for years:

“Single acts of tyranny may be ascribed to the accidental opinion of a day; but a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period, and pursued unalterably thro’ every change of ministers, too plainly prove a deliberate, systematical plan of reducing us to slavery.”<sup>239</sup>

If the King did not stop Parliament, he feared, the colonists would be enslaved and his refusal to do so would have been a deliberate action of being complicit in the colonies’ enslavement. Jefferson continued to use this language when, in 1776, he drafted the Declaration of Independence.<sup>240</sup> Whereas *A Summary View* was written from the perspective of a proud English subject appealing to their king’s better nature to intercede in defense of colonial rights, the *Declaration of Independence* is written from a decidedly American national perspective, charging Britain with acts of war against American Sovereignty. The king had not stopped parliament and instead supported it, once again a deliberate action of tyranny in the colonists’ eyes. *Declaration* charges the king with crimes against liberties such as dissolving colonial legislative bodies in retaliation to protests, forcing the judiciary to be dependent on him through the source of their salaries, and elevating the military beyond colonial civilian control whereby it can abuse the

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “A summary view of the Rights of British America,” in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) Kindle Edition. Pg. 49.

<sup>237</sup> Bailyn, “Literature,” 7.

<sup>238</sup> Jefferson, “Summary,” 62.

<sup>239</sup> Jefferson, “Summary,” 55.

<sup>240</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence,” in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Penguin Books, 1975) Kindle Edition. p. 280.

population.<sup>241</sup> Chiefly however, Jefferson expressly states these acts are deliberate in their intention and the supposed goal of the British government and King George III:

He [King George III] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere.<sup>242</sup>

Throughout both of the writings that Jefferson publicly supported, as well as the major pieces of public writing attributed to him before the Revolution, he staunchly believed that the goal of the British government, whether led by the king or parliament, was to enslave and subjugate the American colonies, and its actions up to this point were in preparation to carry out this plan. Did Jefferson genuinely believe that the British king and parliament were in cohort to enslave the colonists or was this a political strategy of opposition against the monarchy? The language of enslavement in reference to Britain's treatment of the colonies had been common and popularized by other earlier colonial pamphleteers. Therefore, Jefferson's usage of it in *A Summary View*, such as when he asked if the king would have the colonists made "the absolute slaves of his sovereign will," and also in the *Declaration of Independence* would not have been unusual.<sup>243</sup> Could an argument be made that instead of Jefferson genuinely believing in conspiracy, he could have been putting on a front for his colleagues in the Continental Congress or the House of Burgesses? Examining the evidence of Jefferson's private writings, the answer to this question is a resounding no. While *A Summary View* became his first publicly promoted piece of writing, it was originally written as a pamphlet for the other Virginian delegates to the Continental Congress as a policy statement so they could present a united front on how to handle Britain.<sup>244</sup> Jefferson had never intended this document to be publicly spread, only meant for the eyes of the delegates he was attempting to coordinate a political position with. Therefore *A Summary View* was originally written to be private, it was not intended to be a propaganda piece but instead it aimed at presenting his beliefs and strategy to appeal to the king.

Yet even as this judgement on *A Summary View* could be seen as tenuous, as perhaps Jefferson was appealing to his fellow delegates, his private notes on what led to the Revolution written years later plainly stated his thoughts on the matter. Commenting on a biography written on King George III, in a section discussing the King's education Jefferson remarks that the king was always going to attempt to enslave the colonies due to his Tory education.<sup>245</sup>

The education of the present King was Tory. He gave decisive victories to the Tories. To these were added sundry rich persons sprung up in the E. I. 144 America would have been too formidable a weight in the scale of the Whigs. It was necessary therefore to reduce them by force to concur with the Tories.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Jefferson, "Declaration," 281-282.

<sup>242</sup> Jefferson, "Declaration," 283.

<sup>243</sup> Jefferson, "Summary," 61.

<sup>244</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "Draft of Instructions to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of *A Summary View*, &c.), [July 1774]," in *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0090>

<sup>245</sup> Thomas Jefferson quoted by Bailyn, "Logic," 124.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

In a letter to the biographer Jefferson expanded as follows:

At the moment he came to the throne... the assumptions of unwarrantable right over America commenced... and followed one another so close as to prove they were part of a system either to reduce it under absolute subjection and thereby make it an instrument for attempts on Britain itself, or to sever it from Britain so that it might not be a weight to the Whig scale.<sup>247</sup>

In his notes and again in his letter, Jefferson not only whole-heartedly stated his belief that King George III intended to subjugate the colonists following the peace of Paris, but he also demonstrated his belief in the specifics of the conspiracy.<sup>248</sup> The references to the king's "Tory education," as well as his decision to agree to the peace of Paris are clear references to the influence of Lord Bute on George III's education and life as his father figure, a position Bute held as the King's tutor in the aftermath of George II's death.<sup>249</sup> The influence of pamphlets such as *American Alarm* and its assertion that Lord Bute is essentially a power behind the throne is evident, and the belief that this was specifically a plot to disenfranchise the Whig party demonstrates the attitude towards politicians such as Bute over the exile of John Wilkes.

## Comparison of Language

Jefferson's reference to enslavement is incredibly deliberate in both his public and private writings. Slavery was prevalent in Jefferson's own life, and claims to be threatened with enslavement, whether by Jefferson or American Pamphleteers would not have been made lightly. Jefferson's public and private writings are similar in language to popular pamphleteers, in terms of the idea that it is the goal to deprive the colonists' of their property, thus their ability to participate in politics, and eventually completely dismantle their systems of self-government, as well as the idea that this is the plan of Lord Bute as evidenced by his private notes referencing the king's Tory education.<sup>250</sup> The Enlightenment idea of politics as morality; that good people governed by a set of respectable personal morals, made the idea that these injustices could only be deliberate even more frightening. According to Jefferson, "a series of oppressions" could only be proof of a systematic effort to reduce the power of the colonies through attacks on their property, and then their liberty.<sup>251</sup> With the actions of those in parliament in years past, such as Lord Bute's feud with John Wilkes over Wilkes' criticisms of Bute, and the fact Wilkes still was unable to take his elected seat clearly showed what parliament was capable of. Parliament was controlled by bad men, and while good men like William Pitt as referenced in Dickinson's letters attempted what they could to oppose them, in the minds of

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Arthur H. Cash, "Into Parliament," in *John Wilkes : The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) ProQuest eBook. p. 56.

<sup>250</sup> Thomas Jefferson quoted by Bailyn, "Logic," 124 (I thought these documents would be on Founders and they're not, I have the quotes and their origins but *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. II is almost \$200 I will figure something out

<sup>251</sup> Jefferson, "Summary," 55

the colonists without their key political support to turn the scales of power in Parliament against the Tories, they could do nothing.<sup>252</sup>

Finally, the question of whether this was an attempt to pander to those Jefferson felt he could sway into rebellion against the state is resolved by pointing to his private writings which firmly answer this as no. Indeed, does not change between his public and private writings, if anything he is even more inflammatory in private where he can openly attribute King George III's corruption to Lord Bute.<sup>253</sup> Without an audience that Jefferson could possibly be pandering to, the idea that what he wrote in his private notes could be disingenuous is illogical, and the consistency of language similar to both his public writings and the writings of American pamphleteers at the time definitively supports his belief and support of the conspiracy theory.

## Conclusion

In the century following the Glorious Revolution and the advent of the English Constitution, the fear that the newly realized balance of power between the king and parliament could be disrupted ran as a current throughout the politically observant population. A history of corruption, partisan tensions between the Whigs and Tories, and the belief that good morality made good policy and thus bad policy came from bad people all served to create a political environment in the mid-eighteenth century that could only produce conspiracy. As the rise of virtue politics, natural rights, and the Enlightenment inflamed these convictions, British pamphleteers lambasted those they saw in parliament as poison to the liberties of the British people and these fears flooded into the American colonies. When taxation such as the Stamp Act in 1765 was imposed, the American colonists turned to the literary traditions of their British brethren to begin sounding the alarm on the attack on natural rights. Writings such as those from Dickinson and Allen only increased in both number and influence as the colonists began to believe those morally corrupt in parliament, led by Lord Bute, wished to return Britain to an age of tyranny, beginning with hamstringing the colonists' independence through their legislatures and judiciaries until they were slaves to Parliament. Among those believing this conspiracy was Thomas Jefferson. His conviction is evident in his public writings such as *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* and *The Declaration of Independence*. Jefferson publicly parroted the fears of enslavement by the British through the loss of property. While this could potentially be pandering to his more radically minded colleagues, Jefferson's own personal writings regarding the origin of King George's injustices against the colonies being a result of the influence of Lord Bute dispel this theory. Thomas Jefferson believed in the conspiracy theory that morally bankrupt politicians and the king himself were attempting to smother the political capability of the colonies, in the first stages of seizing tyrannical control of the British empire by dismantling self-government until they would be made slaves to parliament.

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<sup>252</sup> Dickinson, "Letter II"

<sup>253</sup> Thomas Jefferson quoted by Bailyn, "Logic," 124.

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