



# ORACLE

THE HISTORY JOURNAL  
OF BOSTON COLLEGE

VOLUME XI - ISSUE I

ORACLE: THE HISTORY JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

VOLUME XI, ISSUE I (2026)

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Article I

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**Victorian Women Detectives:**

**The Forgotten Sleuths**

Kaitlyn Bell

## VICTORIAN WOMEN DETECTIVES: THE FORGOTTEN SLEUTHS

One of the most curious fields of female labour that there is.

*-Aberdeen Journal, October 1888<sup>1</sup>*

For decades, historians portrayed the Victorian female detective as a work of fiction, the counterpart to Sherlock Holmes who could only be imaginary. After all, in an era famous for respectability and decorum, in which falling rates of marriage for middle- and upper-class women plagued British minds across the country, it seems impossible for a significant number of female detectives to exist. Yet throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women created spaces for themselves in detective fields in a myriad of ways. By collaborating with police, volunteering in times of moral crisis, working as employees at detective agencies, and eventually operating their own businesses, women consistently took advantage of their social connections and Victorian ideals to expand their independence.

As recent historians have evaluated the rise of female detectives throughout the nineteenth century, they attribute it largely to the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which allowed for the filing of divorce to happen in court instead of only through Parliament.<sup>2</sup> However, the largest influx of female detectives occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century, as visible through the British Library Newspapers database by Gale. When tracking the number of newspapers mentioning either the “lady detective” or the “female detective” between the years 1830 and 1910, there is a significant upwards spike in 1892, whereas the number rose

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<sup>1</sup> “Women as Detectives,” *Aberdeen Journal*, October 27, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Nell Darby, *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2021), 20; Sara Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2024).

and fell steadily throughout the previous decades.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in this paper, I argue that it is the combination of the emerging New Woman movement and the public debate surrounding women’s potential to find Jack the Ripper that opened the field for female detectives.

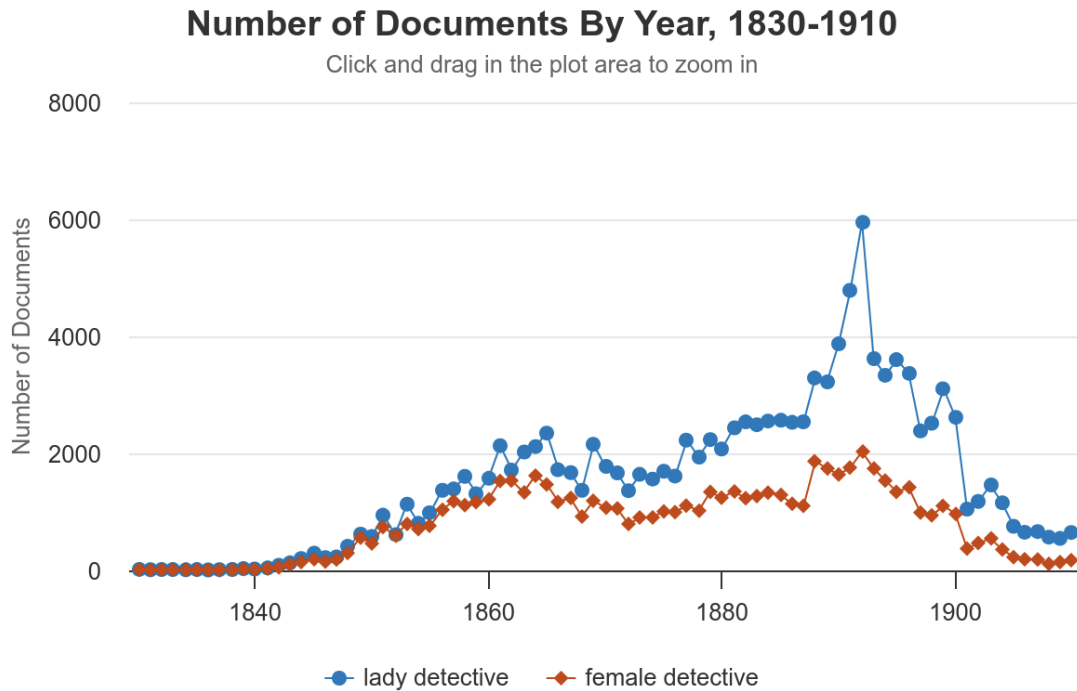


Figure 1<sup>4</sup>

### Working Alongside the Police

The first British women to work in detective roles were closely related to male detectives, and leveraged their position as a sister, wife, or neighbor to involve themselves in a strictly male field. After the passage of the Metropolitan Police Act in 1829 and the Rural Constabularies Act in 1839, government sanctioned police forces were tasked with bringing both male and female criminals to justice across Britain. In an ironic twist of fate, the very Victorian propriety that

<sup>3</sup> Gale British Library Newspapers, “Term Frequency, Searching Terms ‘Female Detective’ and ‘Lady Detective’ 1830-1910,” April 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Gale British Library Newspapers.

emphasized the role of women within the home also demanded the employment of female searchers, who would “frisk the outer clothes, undergarments, bodies and hair of female suspects for stolen property,” as it would have been improper for a man to do so.<sup>5</sup> Female searchers became an integral part of the policing system; in Birmingham, Ann Lovsey, who lived on the same street as the police station, was steadily employed for at least 36 years.<sup>6</sup> Her ability to be reached at any time, along with her “knowledge of the community,” made her a reliable and valuable resource for the Birmingham police.<sup>7</sup>

In special circumstances, the police extended the role of women in law enforcement by employing them as undercover agents. For example, in 1851, during the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, women posed as the wives or sisters of policemen, allowing the officer to blend in with the crowd. However, these women were not mere props but instead actively working alongside their male counterparts. *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, addressing the women as “female detectives,” noted that while a pickpocket would assume the couple was conversing about the event, they would actually be “discoursing softly as to the avocation and person of himself, the thief.”<sup>8</sup> Placing the “male and female detective,” on equal footing while insinuating that they were collaborating to identify suspicious activity, the author highlighted the abilities of women in detection.<sup>9</sup> However, the fact that the female detectives were always accompanied by a man, and had uniformed, “openly avowed” policemen nearby as backup, revealed that women detectives relied on men as a legitimizing and protective presence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Lodge, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Lodge, 37.

<sup>8</sup> “The Great Exhibition,” *Lloyd's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 11, 1851.

<sup>9</sup> “The Great Exhibition.”

<sup>10</sup> “The Great Exhibition.”

Another early example of undercover work by a woman that signifies the limitations of their role is the case of Sarah Dunaway, wife of a police-constable in London. At the behest of her husband, Sarah lingered on a street corner near the docks, watching for suspicious activity. The clerk of a sugar trader, F.L. Grace, had asked the police to watch out for Edward Payne, a deliveryman who he suspected of stealing and reselling sugar.<sup>11</sup> After spotting Payne, Sarah trailed him around the block to a shop, where she witnessed the duplicitous sale.<sup>12</sup> A few days later, Sarah watched for Payne again, this time with two policemen prepared to arrest him.<sup>13</sup>

When Sarah testified during Payne's trial, the strategy of the cross-examiner was to question her motivation for staking Payne out while suggesting that she was operating outside of womanly virtues and ideals. Sarah's own defense rested on the position of her husband, as she said she had "acted under his directions," not on her own. The magistrate too emphasized her husband's role in her work. After the cross-examiner sarcastically commented that there was "now a new department of police – a female detective," the magistrate retorted that "she is the wife of Dunaway, a detective police-constable."<sup>14</sup> The attempt to undermine Sarah's work by challenging her womanhood reveals the sexism women faced during detection, while the emphasis on the role of her husband in her actions reinforced the need early female detectives had for men to defend them.

Even a neglectful or deceased police officer could enable a woman to become a detective, as his experience and absence provided a motive for her labor. In June 1880, the *Northampton Mercury* reported that Mrs. Caroline Smith had applied for a protective order "for her goods and earnings against her husband, who had twice deserted her and her family."<sup>15</sup> Writing under the

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<sup>11</sup> "Police Intelligence," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, January 22, 1860.

<sup>12</sup> "Police Intelligence."

<sup>13</sup> "Police Intelligence."

<sup>14</sup> "Police Intelligence."

<sup>15</sup> "News," *Northampton Mercury*, June 19, 1880.

heading “Female Detective,” the paper added that Caroline made “private enquiries for solicitors.”<sup>16</sup> The protective order was granted by the court without apparent question, signifying their awareness that detective work was a source of income for women, especially those in need.<sup>17</sup> It is probable that Caroline utilized skills she had learned from her husband in her own investigations, allowing her to act as the breadwinner for her household.

### **Volunteer Efforts**

Other women also created space for themselves in detective work by volunteering their efforts to a specific cause. One such cause was baby farming, which became a sensation in the Victorian period. Baby farming was a phenomenon in which an unwanted child could be adopted for a fee by a spinster. Unknown to the biological mother was the fact that some women had several children already in their care, and would purposefully neglect, abandon, or poison the children to avoid the cost of their rearing. All was true in the case of Margaret Waters, who was charged with infanticide in June of 1870, creating a national fervor over the issue.<sup>18</sup> In reference to the case, *The Times* commented that the year would be “notorious for the horrors committed or brought to light,” while adding that nothing was “so revolting to the ordinary feelings of humanity,” as the deeds of “Mrs. Waters.”<sup>19</sup> Covered in newspapers across the country, the so-called “Baby-Farming at Brixton” case realized one of the worst fears of the nation: anti-maternal women.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the highly publicized Brixton case, a woman wrote to the *Times* in July 1870 detailing her foray into detective work, in which she attempted to investigate several

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<sup>16</sup> “News.”

<sup>17</sup> “News.”

<sup>18</sup> “The Baby-Farming Case,” *The Times*, June 29, 1870, 11.

<sup>19</sup> “The ‘Baby Farming’ Case at the Lambeth,” *The Times*, June 21, 1870.

<sup>20</sup> “Baby Farming at Brixton,” *Illustrated Police News*, June 25, 1870.

suspicious adoption advertisements in the newspaper.<sup>21</sup> Identifying herself only as “A.B.,” the woman explained in a narrative and dramatized style how two years earlier, she asked several of her maids and anonymous gentlemen to reply to the advertisements.<sup>22</sup> Pausing her tale, A.B. described the internal conflict she experienced, as she knew she should not “meddle with subjects quite outside the modest women’s sphere,” and instead leave the investigation to “medical men.”<sup>23</sup> However, A.B. continued and expanded her detective endeavors, due to “the remembrance of [her] own child,” who inspired her fervent attempts to save the other innocents.<sup>24</sup> A.B.’s emotional framing of the matter highlighted her ostensible maternal inclinations and signaled them as justification for her actions. In an era where people were so fixated on the anti-maternal nature of baby farmers, A.B.’s decision to fit her work into acceptable conceptualizations of femininity and morality reveals an effective strategy women could use to legitimize detective work.

The second half of A.B.’s adventurous detective story once again highlights the integral part that men played in the acceptance of female detection. Visiting the home of one of the suspected baby farmers who replied to her letters, A.B. was sure to mention that she was accompanied by a male escort, who “vowed that if [she] was not out in an hour, he should bring a policeman with him and demand [her] to be given up.”<sup>25</sup> The promise that men were at the ready to save her in case of danger made A.B.’s story more palatable to her audience, as she complied with gender expectations of the time. She portrayed herself as a weak and feeble woman, dependent on a man to rescue her, that her readers would find desirable. Furthermore, after explaining her entire encounter, in which A.B. became convinced that “children are

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<sup>21</sup> “Baby Farming,” *The Times*, July 14, 1870.

<sup>22</sup> “Baby Farming.”

<sup>23</sup> “Baby Farming.”

<sup>24</sup> “Baby Farming.”

<sup>25</sup> “Baby Farming.”

murdered in scores by these women,” she expressed her hope that her findings “may induce the police to look into the matter a little more sharply.”<sup>26</sup> By concluding her investigation and imploring the police to pick up where she left off, A.B. indicates one of the limits on women who wanted to do detective work. They could only initiate the investigation but could not yet take corrective action.

The dramatic tale of A.B. contains many narrative tricks typical of cheap Victorian literature. Her disguise as an unmarried, pregnant woman and the gleeful admittance of infanticide by the baby farmer raises the question about the truth of the story. Yet regardless of its improbability, the narrative was treated as fact by *The Times*, who not only printed A.B.’s entire account, but celebrated her efforts and encouraged others to act similarly.

We must request our readers to consider that private volunteer investigations are the only way in which these dreadful mysteries can be detected and exposed... Liberty has to be defended from its own abuses, and some must be checked that all may be free. It is, then, a public duty, and in the interest of all, that everybody takes the trouble and incurs the risk of such an inquiry as is related in our columns today.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the *Times* itself highlighted the maternal nature of A.B. that inspired her to act. Addressing any woman, “above all a mother,” the male author sympathized with the opposite sex, as he assumed it must be “horrible to know” that children are so callously “hustled out” of the world.<sup>28</sup> The male author’s supposed understanding of women’s emotional responses and concerns exemplifies how successful A.B.’s maternal justification for her work was, and it reveals how the ideal vision of women could be weaponized to create a space in police work.

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<sup>26</sup> “Baby Farming.”

<sup>27</sup> “Under the Head of ‘Baby Farming’ Our Readers,” *The Times*, July 14, 1870.

<sup>28</sup> “Under the Head of ‘Baby Farming’ Our Readers.”

Other women found opportunities to work as detectives after witnessing a crime. During a June night in London, 1861, Louisa Gillot and her sister decided to keep watch after they noticed two boys “loitering about” outside their father’s shop.<sup>29</sup> Hiding around the store, Louisa and her sister waited for the boys to enter; once one stole a fishing rod, “Louisa darted from her place of concealment and detained him, while her sister informed her father, who pursued,” and caught the other.<sup>30</sup> During the trial, Louisa gave evidence. The magistrate complimented her and her sister for the “admirable tact displayed,” in the case, while he also noted that the girls “would really make excellent detectives.”<sup>31</sup> The praise of the magistrate for the sisters’ actions is understandable when considering the factors in the case. Essentially volunteering to protect their father’s livelihood during a time of crisis, neither Louisa nor her sister were pursuing detective work on a full-time basis. Furthermore, they relied on their father to help them, reinforcing the reliance on men. Yet, the magistrate’s suggestion makes it clear that, in certain contexts, there was a role for women to enter the field of detective work on an amateur basis.

### **Jack the Ripper: Bringing the Female Detective to the Forefront**

It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that a significant portion of women became what we would now consider “professional” detectives, or those who supported themselves on a detectives’ salary. Unlike Caroline Smith or searchers, these women did not have to be connected to the police to attain their position. Instead, they were employed by private agencies or operated alone on a small scale. It is possible that women had been working in these capacities prior to this period, but it became apparent in the public record in the wake of the Jack the Ripper murders.

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<sup>29</sup> “Yesterday’s Law Police, Etc.,” *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, March 17, 1861.

<sup>30</sup> “Yesterday’s Law Police, Etc.”

<sup>31</sup> “Yesterday’s Law Police, Etc.”

More than any other episode in the Victorian era, the ‘Jack the Ripper’ murders brought female detectives to the forefront of public debate, in part due to a ‘letter to the editor’ that Frances Power Cobbe wrote to the *Times*. By October 1888, the public believed that Jack the Ripper had murdered at least four women in East London between August and September. The killings dominated newspaper headlines across the country, while messages from the public poured in; during the first two days of October, *The Daily Telegraph* alone published “ninety-four Ripper-related letters.”<sup>32</sup> About 41% of letters to the editor were centered around potential methods to catch the Ripper, and perhaps the most famous of suggestions was Cobbe’s, published at the height of Ripper fervor in mid-October.<sup>33</sup> Asking why “should such thing as a female detective be unheard of in the land,” Cobbe laid out the case for including women on the force to uncover the killer. A woman detective

would pass unsuspected where a man would be instantly noticed ; she could extract gossip from other women much more freely; she would move through the streets and courts without waking the echoes of the pavement by a sonorous military tread ; and lastly, she would be in a position to employ, for whatsoever it may be worth, that gift of intuitive quickness and “mother wit” with which her sex is commonly credited.<sup>34</sup>

Reminding her audience of the failure of men to handle the hospital crisis during the Crimean War, and how it was Florence Nightingale and “the feminine mind,” who “came to the rescue” to bring “order and relief,” Cobbe implied that women could once again resolve the matter while men could not. Her emphasis on “mother wit” was an attempt to highlight how women could not only retain, but utilize, their motherly nature to protect other women and restore morality to the nation.

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<sup>32</sup> L. Perry Curtis, “Responses to Ripper News: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,” in *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (Yale University Press, 2001), 240.

<sup>33</sup> Curtis, 241.

<sup>34</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, “Detectives,” *The Times*, October 11, 1888.

In response to Cobbe's argument, the idea of the female detective was dissected by the press for the first time. Most of these authors ignored or overlooked the examples of women in detection, and instead only focused on the hypothetical creation of a female branch of the police department. Their responses were overwhelmingly negative, despite their assertions that law enforcement was incompetent regarding the search for the Ripper. The *Manchester Times* wrote that the police "have absolutely no clue" of the Ripper's identity, then addressed Cobbe's suggestion, labeling it "a grim joke" that carries the "female employment question," to "a ludicrous extreme."<sup>35</sup>

Another contributor to the *Manchester Times* was harsher and insulted the "absurd" expectations "Miss Cobbe" had for her female detective.<sup>36</sup> The author questioned how women could respond effectively in "dens of burglars, street thieves, and cutthroats," and speculated that the "woman detective" would always require "a man detective at her elbow to do the rough work."<sup>37</sup> Although the author went on to acknowledge that "woman's attire and woman's wit," may be helpful in specific circumstances, "the employment of women as detective officers is a very different matter."<sup>38</sup> In a similar vein, the *Bristol Mercury*, providing an update on the "Whitechapel Horrors," was angered that the police had "not a single clue," and even pushed for the dismissal of both the Home Secretary and Police Commissioner, arguing that they had "not been satisfactory in the discharge of their respective duties."<sup>39</sup> However, like the *Manchester Times*, the author found the notion of female detectives ridiculous, as women detectives "would find insuperable difficulties in effecting arrests."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "The Weekly Times," *Manchester Times*, October 13, 1888.

<sup>36</sup> "The Weekly Times."

<sup>37</sup> "The Weekly Times."

<sup>38</sup> "The Weekly Times."

<sup>39</sup> "Whitechapel Horrors," *Bristol Mercury*, October 12, 1888.

<sup>40</sup> "Whitechapel Horrors."

Despite male journalists' criticism of current law enforcement methods, they firmly rejected the incorporation of female detectives into the police force. Although the refusal appears paradoxical, it makes sense when juxtaposing Cobbe's arguments with earlier, accepted forms of female detection. Cobbe highlighted the role of women working undercover in dangerous conditions, such as the East End. On the other hand, the women praised for their efforts had entered primarily female spaces. They had also conducted themselves according to Victorian moral codes. Cobbe's inclusion of female detectives in the search for the Ripper, who was believed to target sex workers in one of the roughest parts of London, extended women's responsibilities to equal those of male detectives. The fear that women would be endangered in these environments, but moreover corrupted by them, permeated the writings of men, who worried themselves over the propriety of the weaker sex.

One male journalist, before making up his mind on the potential effectiveness of female detectives with the Ripper case, visited private agencies to interview the men in charge and the women they hired. Ruthless in their depiction of the female detective, the agency men heightened the concern that women were stripped of their femininity in detection. One described "a good female detective," as the "cruellest, most devilish creature under the sun," who must "drop all her beautiful womanly attributes to be of any service." The portrayal of the lady detective as a woman without "a spark of pity or gentleness in her nature" created the image of a monstrous, immoral figure who stood opposite to Victorian ideals.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, if the recruitment of female detectives was encouraged, the moral and social order would be threatened by these unwomanly women.

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<sup>41</sup> "Women as Detectives."

Ultimately, the men interviewed at the agency also argued that female detectives would be useless in unveiling the identity of the Ripper. Once again, the focus turned to respectable places for upstanding women to be, and the difficulties they would face if entering morally hazardous spaces. In the opinion of one agent, women would not be “the slightest use in the East-end,” as there was “no reliance to be placed on women who are not respectable and self-respecting.”<sup>42</sup> In the case that a female detective was “morally all that she ought to be,” he hypothesized that it would be impossible for her to act, as she could not refuse the advances of a man without suspicion, nor could she blend in if she accepted them.<sup>43</sup>

Evidently, there was no right woman for front-lines detective work. She must either be so morally low to enter a risky location in the first place that all she learned was untrustworthy, or so moral that she would never enter at all due to her womanly conscience. Therefore, it was better to employ men as detectives, as they would go unnoticed, without danger of corruption or cognitive dissonance at the immoral activities they must engage in to avoid suspicion. In the end, the journalist concluded that women had “been tried enough already as detectives.”<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that he had not asked a single female detective for her thoughts on how she might approach the Ripper’s exposure. Rather, when introduced to a female detective at an agency, the author commented on her dress and mannerisms, and focused on the guilty conscience she must have due to dishonesty.<sup>45</sup> It seems that what sold papers was not the lady detective’s potential to prevent crime, but rather the ridiculousness of such an idea and the exotic nature of her personality and profession.

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<sup>42</sup> “Women as Detectives.”

<sup>43</sup> “Women as Detectives.”

<sup>44</sup> “Women as Detectives.”

<sup>45</sup> “Women as Detectives.”

## Finding their Place: The Female Detective and Divorce

Although Cobbe did not convince the police to bring female detectives in for the Ripper case, it is evident that the storm of commentary surrounding her plea, combined with the desire for employment that the New Woman movement brought, inspired more women to labor as detectives full-time. Ignoring the acidic comments of men, a significant number of women began seeking employment at agencies or worked independently across Britain, as evident through the records of the 1891 census. Unlike women in the earlier parts of the nineteenth century, these female detectives often had no connections to the police. One such woman was Mary Annabella Burridge, 35-year-old unmarried daughter of a solicitor who listed herself as a “private detective.”<sup>46</sup> Another was Mary Addey, a 44-year-old wife of a clerk and mother of three who lived in Holborn, London.<sup>47</sup> She too gave her occupation as “private detective,” as did her 16-year-old son, Gordon.<sup>48</sup> Here is an early instance of a woman likely collaborating with her child in detection.

Since women were barred from engaging in dangerous investigations by men, female detectives turned to spheres in which a woman’s touch was a necessary asset. Treading the boundaries of propriety, most female detectives focused on divorce cases, as evidence of adultery was a surefire way for a man to obtain a divorce. In this period, it did not take much to prove that a woman had acted wrongly. Therefore, private inquiry agents were eager to hire women to spy on the wives of men who suspected adultery. The shift from police collaboration to agency work is demonstrated in an interview with a female detective in the *North Wales Times* in 1896, who

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<sup>46</sup> Darby, *Sister Sleuths*, 61; “Mary A Burridge in Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891,” Ancestry.

<sup>47</sup> “Mary Addey in Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891,” Ancestry.

<sup>48</sup> “Mary Addey in Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891.”

stated that it was “only now and then” that she was “employed by the police,” with the “bulk of [her] work coming from private inquiry agents,” which paid best.<sup>49</sup>

The typical strategy used by a female detective to obtain evidence of an affair was to befriend the lonely, estranged wife of the husband who was seeking a divorce, eventually gaining her trust. A typical account appeared in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in 1904.

A fair and charming stranger suddenly appears as a new resident in a district and...strikes up acquaintances. With one favoured lady the new friendship is particularly close and confidential, and under the chatter-moving influence of afternoon tea little secrets are exchanged, photographs of absent ones produced, and treasured letters read. The stranger leaves, and in the Divorce Court in due course she appears – as witness to the indiscretions of her too confiding friend. She is the Lady Detective.<sup>50</sup>

Although Victorian gender norms excluded women from an official place in the police force, they simultaneously provided female detectives with numerous divorce cases to prove that other women were breaking these conduct codes. The exposure of women’s personal affairs and scandals, however dishonorable, allowed female detectives to craft a space in which only women were useful. Cobbe’s advice here did ring true: women alone could obtain information via small talk and gossip, using the domestic sphere to become independent wage earners.

However, some female detectives went too far to obtain evidence, perhaps feeling pressured by their male superiors or their own financial struggles to succeed in court. Both could be true in the case of ‘Ellen Lyon’ who was only identified by what was likely one of many aliases. Along with the owner of the private inquiry business that she worked for, Henry John Clarke, Ellen was charged in 1895 with “conspiring to defeat and perjure the ends of justice and

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<sup>49</sup> North Wales Times, 8 April 1896, as quoted in Darby, *Sister Sleuths*, 63.

<sup>50</sup> “The Yorkshire Evening Post,” *Yorkshire Evening Post*, June 28, 1901.

to procure Gertrude Alexandra Barrett to commit adultery,” three years before.<sup>51</sup> At first, the set-up to catch Gertrude followed the story outlined above; Gertrude, moving into a boarding house after several violent arguments with her husband, encountered “Mrs. Watson,” who was Ellen Lyon in disguise.

[Mrs. Watson] said that her husband was an electrical engineer, and was away a great deal, and she had a lonely life, having no children, and was seeking for a young companion—she told me all her troubles, and I told her mine, and she asked if I would be her companion—I had no means of living then except the prospect of getting alimony, but I afterwards got an order for £44 a year pending the suit—I told her I would think over the matter; I finally accepted it next day, or two days after.<sup>52</sup>

Gertrude was the perfect target to fall for such a scheme. Only 22-years-old, she had been raised in India and therefore had no friends or family to support her during the separation.<sup>53</sup>

“Mrs. Watson,” offering money and a shoulder to lean on, appeared as a savior to the desperate young woman. However, unlike in other cases, Gertrude was not having an affair and had no man in her life besides her estranged husband. It is here that Ellen’s deceit became a crime, as she began encouraging Gertrude to find someone new. One night, “Mrs. Watson” took Gertrude to the theatre, a treat considering she had little money of her own to spend on frivolities.<sup>54</sup> There, “Mrs. Watson” introduced Gertrude to a “Mr. Stephens of the Stock Exchange,” who offered to take her back to his private hotel; in reality, “Mr. Stephens” was Henry John Clarke undercover.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “The Alleged Divorce Case Conspiracy,” *The Times*, February 7, 1895.

<sup>52</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>53</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>54</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

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Although Gertrude refused the advances of Clarke, “Mrs. Watson” continued to introduce her to men until one stuck: the alleged “son of Mr. Charles Wilson, M.P.,” another agent of Clarke’s whose true identity was never discovered.<sup>56</sup> Together, “Wilson” and “Mrs. Watson” convinced Gertrude to join “Wilson” for the night at his private room, and although Gertrude swore that she remained on the couch while he was on the bed, the damage was done.<sup>57</sup> The rules of Victorian propriety dictated that a woman should never be alone with a man, and her miserable night with “Wilson” (during which he ran off with her belongings) was enough for the judge to reprimand Gertrude in 1892.<sup>58</sup> Although he acknowledged her naivety, the judge stated that “she seemed to have been willing to listen to bad suggestions made to her and have acted upon them,” which “a person of purity and respectability,” would never have done.<sup>59</sup>

In the end, a divorce was not granted to Mr. Barrett on the grounds of adultery, as the judge was skeptical of the methods employed by Ellen and Clarke.<sup>60</sup> Gertrude also did not obtain a divorce on the grounds of cruelty, as the judge further believed that Gertrude’s immodesty made her claims of abuse invalid.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the damage to Gertrude’s reputation, as well as her health, were evident in the months after the 1892 hearing; she spent months recuperating in a hospital before she was forced to live in a workhouse.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>57</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>58</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>59</sup> “Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division,” *The Times*, August 13, 1892.

<sup>60</sup> “Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division.”

<sup>61</sup> “Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division.”

<sup>62</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

The duplicity of Ellen Lyon in the Barrett case earned her a sentence of 12 months hard labor after the 1895 trial.<sup>63</sup> Her willingness to lure Gertrude into an affair, even though she was committing a crime, demonstrated how the female detective could easily cross onto the wrong side of the law. It is possible that Ellen was corrupted by Clarke, who took the case from Mr. Barrett, gave her a part to play, and pressured her to find a way to succeed. Ellen was also destitute and lived with Clarke; the desire to escape poverty and this relationship may have contributed to her overzealous efforts.<sup>64</sup> It is further plausible that Ellen found the perfect target in Gertrude, and once she realized how much influence she had on the young woman, decided to risk everything. After all, Gertrude also accused Ellen of stealing some of her jewelry, which had no connection to the affair scheme.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of her motivations, the consequences for Ellen that emerged from the actions of “Mrs. Watson” reflected the ease at which the female detective could self-destruct. As long as lady detectives like Ellen remained dependent on men, either as employers or providers, there were many temptations to go too far.

### **Truly Independent: Women Running Their Own Detective Businesses**

As Britain reached the turn of the century, more women began to advertise themselves as independent female detectives, which suggests a shift away from reliance on male figures to legitimize their presence in the field. Two of the most famous women to do so were Kate Easton and Antonia Moser, who entered detective work through their own distinct paths, yet both were actively engaged in their own names and on their own terms.

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<sup>63</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

<sup>64</sup> Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 184.

<sup>65</sup> Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 25 March 1895, HENRY JOHN CLARKE (45), ELLEN LYON, alias WATSON, (30), t18950325-334.

In 1890, Charlotte “Antonia” Williamson and E.J.C. Williamson both filed for divorce from the other, she on the grounds of both cruelty and adultery, and he for her alleged adultery with Mr. Maurice Moser, a former Scotland Yard inspector who had opened his own agency.<sup>66</sup> Mr. Williamson told the jury that “in September 1888, against his will, [Antonia] obtained employment as a female detective with [Mr. Moser], and from time to time returned home after short absences.”<sup>67</sup> He suspected an affair. Louise Sangster, a female detective also working for Moser, confirmed this. She said that when “she had to see Mr. Moser on business, [she] had frequently seen him in bed with Mrs. Williamson.”<sup>68</sup> With this evidence, Mr. Williamson was granted a divorce from Antonia. The fact that Antonia then moved in with Mr. Moser and listed him as her spouse in the 1891 census suggests that this was her goal all along.<sup>69</sup>

Yet Antonia was not simply trading one husband for another. Instead, she used her new relationship to jumpstart her career as an independent female detective. After adopting Mr. Moser’s last name, and the associations with Scotland Yard that came with it, Antonia left him in 1892 and advertised herself as a lady detective throughout the next decades, supporting herself and her children with her income.<sup>70</sup> By 1906, Antonia was advertising herself as a “detective expert” who was “prompt, secret, and reliable,” with “agents in all cities of the world,” revealing her creation and leadership of her own detective force.<sup>71</sup> When reflecting on her experiences and the possibility of women running a detective agency, she wrote

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<sup>66</sup> Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 190.

<sup>67</sup> “A Detective Matrimonial Suit,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, July 22, 1890.

<sup>68</sup> “A Detective Matrimonial Suit.”

<sup>69</sup> Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 191.

<sup>70</sup> Lodge, 191.

<sup>71</sup> “Personal, &c,” *The Times*, August 8, 1906.

a business woman with a well-trained mind, plenty of common sense, one who is naturally sharp and resourceful, and has, besides, a knowledge of foreign languages and plenty of savoir faire, might enter the business with a good chance of success.<sup>72</sup>

Antonia's assertion that all a woman needed to run an independent detective agency were certain skills and confidence was a bold statement that early female detectives could not have imagined. Her initial use of a man to break into the field was comparable to her predecessors, but her ability to abandon him, as both a partner and employee, and embark on her own entrepreneurial journey was a remarkable deviation from the realities of the first female detectives. Yet Antonia was not the only woman of her kind, as Kate Easton was equally successful at running her own business, signifying that the trends of independence and expanded economic opportunities of the New Woman applied to the female detective role as much as any other profession.

Working as an actress for a significant part of her life, Kate Easton treated the female detective as another part to play.<sup>73</sup> In her advertisements, she called herself "The Lady Detective," portraying herself as "London's Leading Woman in every branch of Detective Work."<sup>74</sup> The detail that she was in charge of "male and female staff," demonstrated how far women had come since the early days of detection: men were now relying on female entrepreneurs for work.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, a 1909 case that Kate was hired for reveals that female-led agencies were viewed as legitimate businesses by male clients. They were also recognized as rivals by male-led

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<sup>72</sup> Antonia Moser, London Evening Standard, January 1913, as quoted in Lodge, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*, 192.

<sup>73</sup> Lodge, 196.

<sup>74</sup> "Special Announcements," *The Times*, November 29, 1909.

<sup>75</sup> "Special Announcements."

agencies. When Francis Wigglesworth suspected his wife, Violet, of committing adultery, he hired a male detective named W. James to watch her.<sup>76</sup> However, when James proved himself unsuccessful, Mr. Wigglesworth fired him and hired Kate in his stead.<sup>77</sup> Incensed at his dismissal, James sent a letter to Violet Wigglesworth, warning her that she was being spied upon.

To Mrs. Wigglesworth – Kate Easton, of 239 Shaftesbury-avenue, a woman detective, has been engaged to watch you. If she or one of her satellites has managed to get into your house, get Mr. P. or one of your gentlemen friends to chuck her out immediately. So beware of any strange woman who tries to make your acquaintance! They are anxious to find out what takes place at night at your apartments. Beware!<sup>78</sup>

Violet, disregarding the letter, stayed close friends with Mrs. Bardwick, a female detective working for Kate, and was subsequently caught in bed with her lover by her husband's brother.<sup>79</sup> With such clear evidence, Francis Wigglesworth was granted a quick divorce, all due to the work of Kate Easton's detective agency and the talent of her female detective. Mrs. Bardwick was apparently so convincing as a trustworthy friend that even the impassioned warning of James had no effect on Violet's confidences.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, James' attempted sabotage of Kate and her agency displayed his belief that if he did not intervene, Kate and her female detective would succeed where he had not, proving that a woman could thrive as a man failed at the same task. Here was a space in which only a female detective could prosper, and one in which a man was a hindrance.

The Victorian female detective was many things: a searcher, police collaborator, and volunteer, as well as an employee, criminal, and businesswoman. Yet the historical record has,

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<sup>76</sup> "Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division," *The Times*, April 24, 1909.

<sup>77</sup> "Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division."

<sup>78</sup> "Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division."

<sup>79</sup> "Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division."

<sup>80</sup> "Probate, Divorce, And Admiralty Division."

until recently, emphasized the female detective as a figment of literary imagination. It is now, more than ever, time to pull back the curtain, revealing her as a savvy, sometimes unsavory, but quite real character who utilized Victorian morals and connections to make herself an asset in detective work. It was Frances Power Cobbe who first pushed the female detective into the limelight, and without the demand for creative solutions that the Jack the Ripper murders brought, along with the corresponding move towards independence that the New Woman introduced, the female detective would not have been such a significant force towards the advent of the new century. Underappreciated for their contributions, female detectives deserve to be remembered, and the clues they left behind tell us much about the period they worked in.

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Volume XI | Issue I

Article II

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**“We Do Not See it as a Precedent”:**

**The Entebbe Raid, Transformation of Western Counterterrorism, and  
American Hesitation**

Michael Stagnone

# **“We Do Not See it as a Precedent”: The Entebbe Raid, Transformation of Western Counterterrorism, and American Hesitation**

## **I. Introduction**

As April turned to May in 2011, an elite group of United States special forces found themselves stationed in Afghanistan, one of the country’s strongest Middle Eastern allies. However, their purpose had no connection to America’s ally; the U.S. government intended to intervene in Pakistan, which shared a strenuous relationship with Uncle Sam’s forces. In the middle of a May 2011 night, Navy SEALs departed from their military base in Afghanistan and, unbeknownst to the local government, landed discreetly in Pakistan. The SEALs then infiltrated a protected compound, killing four men and one woman in a firefight. Within an hour of landing, the SEALs departed from the compound with a recovered body. Shortly after, President Barack Obama announced the greatest triumph of his administration: the assassination of Al-Qaeda leader and September 11th architect Osama Bin Laden. While still classified details raise questions about the operation, few scholars in the international community seriously question American authority to conduct a covert counterterrorist operation in a foreign state. In contrast, 35 years earlier, an unauthorized invasion of a similar nature generated intense international debate and established a new standard for global counterterrorism efforts.

On June 27, 1976, Israel once again found itself the victim of an international terrorist attack. Palestinian and West German terrorists had hijacked a French airliner and after separating passengers based on religion and nationality, held any passenger suspected to be Israeli or Jewish as hostages in Entebbe, Uganda, receiving support from Ugandan leader Idi Amin. (Amin and

the state of Uganda did not admit to this, but witness testimony proved their complicity.)<sup>81</sup> The terrorists then threatened to execute the hostages unless Israel released Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, despite years of negotiations in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), international law provided Israel with no effective counterterrorism measures. With no international remedies and a failure of diplomatic negotiations, on July 4, Israel responded with a perfectly executed and then unprecedented commando unit raid on the Entebbe airport. While the raid succeeded in freeing nearly all the hostages and eliminating the terrorists, the international community's reactions varied considerably. As African, Arab, and Eastern European nations responded with fierce protests against Israel's actions, Western states approved of the successful raid and stressed the need for more significant measures against terrorism.

In the years following the raid, scholars debated the legal aspects of Entebbe in published works. Many scholars defended Israel's actions, including Leonard Salter, who argued that Uganda's inability to apprehend the terrorists authorized Israeli military action in their country.<sup>82</sup> Abel Emiko echoed this defense through interpretations of international law and precedent examples and suggested that terrorist attacks caused a global reduction in national sovereignty.<sup>83</sup> Other scholars condemned the raid: Adeoye Akinsanya denied that "a threat to the safety of nationals abroad constitutes a threat to the security of the state"<sup>84</sup> and cited UNGA resolution 3034<sup>85</sup> to assert that Israel violated international law. In one of the last articles dedicated to the

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<sup>81</sup> Leigh, Monroe to The Secretary, memorandum, 8 July 1976, Ford Presidential Library Museum, [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0019/28469440.pdf](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0019/28469440.pdf), 48-52.

<sup>82</sup> Salter, Leonard M, "Commando Coup at Entebbe: Humanitarian Intervention or Barbaric Aggression?" *The International Lawyer* 11, no. 2 (1977): 331-338, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40705099>.

<sup>83</sup> Emiko, Abel A, "The Impact Of International Terrorism And Hijacking of Aircraft on State Sovereignty: The Israeli Raid On Entebbe Airport Re-Visited." *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 23, no. 1 (1981): 90-101, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43950732>.

<sup>84</sup> Akinsanya, Adeoye A, "The Entebbe Rescue Mission: A Case of Aggression?," *Pakistan Horizon* 34, no. 3 (1981): 12-35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41393851>.

<sup>85</sup> Adeoye, "A Case of Aggression?," 29. Adeoye references that instead of providing effective counterterrorism measures, resolution 3034 "focuses its primary attention on 'finding just and peaceful solutions to the underlying causes which give rise to such acts of violence.'"

Entebbe raid, Rogelio Pardo-Maurer considers the absence of a U.N. resolution condemning the raid as passive international support.<sup>86</sup> He suggests that under the specific circumstances of Entebbe,<sup>87</sup> states can and should use military operations to combat terrorism.

More recent revisionist history does not address Entebbe as narrowly, but historians frequently reference it when discussing counterterrorism methods. Scholars often highlight Entebbe as an ideal application of military force for counterterrorism purposes. See, for example, Geraint Hughes' article "The Military's Role in Counterterrorism" or Paul Pillar's "Counterterrorist Instruments."<sup>88</sup> Melani McAlister highlights that Entebbe causes a shift in the debate on terrorism within the United States,<sup>89</sup> and Michael Byers notes that the "requirements of necessity and proportionality were, as a result [of the raid], loosened."<sup>90</sup> Silke Zoller also identifies that Western States became increasingly focused on multilateral agreements between allies.<sup>91</sup> Overall, however, revisionist history fails to recognize the Entebbe raid as the distinct moment many Western States—notably excluding the United States—adopted unilateral antiterrorism methods. Current scholarship's lack of narrow focus undermines the significance of the raid and does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the American response. Pillar's observation that "[s]everal other countries were ahead of the United States in developing a

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<sup>86</sup> Pardo-Maurer, Rogelio, "Intervention Against Terrorism: Ten Years After Entebbe," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1986): 16–22, doi: [10.1080/09557578608400002](https://doi.org/10.1080/09557578608400002).

<sup>87</sup> Pardo-Maurer, "Ten Years After Entebbe," 19–21. Pardo-Maurer notes that the Entebbe operation occurred under extraordinary circumstances, with an imminent threat of irreversible damage, and when other measures failed to resolve the issue, it was proportional to the attack and done to resolve a crime, not punish it.

<sup>88</sup> Hughes, Geraint, "The Military's Role in Counterterrorism," *The Military's Role in Counterterrorism: Examples And Implications For Liberal Democracies*, Strategic Studies Institute (US Army War College, 2011), [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12105.9](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12105.9). Pillar, Paul R, "Counterterrorist Instruments," in *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 73–129 (Brookings Institution Press, 2001), [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1gpcnx.8](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1gpcnx.8).

<sup>89</sup> McAlister, Melani, "A Cultural History of the War without End," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 439–55, doi: [10.2307/3092165](https://doi.org/10.2307/3092165).

<sup>90</sup> Byers, Michael, "Terrorism, the Use of Force and International Law after 11 September," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2002): 401–14, [www.jstor.org/stable/3663235](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3663235).

<sup>91</sup> Zoller, Silke, "From International Law To Militarized Counterterrorism," in *To Deter and Punish: Global Collaboration Against Terrorism in the 1970s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 198–240, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/zoll19546.10](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/zoll19546.10).

dedicated military capability to rescue hostages”<sup>92</sup> completes scholarly discussion of the U.S. development of counterterrorist forces following the raid.

This paper explicitly follows international responses to Israel’s rescue mission in Entebbe, specifically changes to anti-terrorism measures and stances on international terrorism cooperation between states, and asserts that the Entebbe raid serves as a standalone turning point—not a part of a continuum—in states’ responses to terrorism. Through investigation of relevant official press releases, declassified government documents, newspaper articles, and other primary sources, it argues that the Entebbe raid shifted the global international terrorism debate from international agreements to unilateral military responses and cooperation only among allies. Additionally, it compares the American response with that of other leading Western states and finds that, uncharacteristically, the United States lagged behind other nations in developing domestic counterterrorism measures. While the United States frequently receives criticism for its tendency to exert hegemonic rule over other states, in this circumstance, American leaders failed to recognize the Entebbe raid as the signal to abandon international efforts to combat terrorism. Although the U.S. military would eventually form the Delta Forces, a dedicated counterterrorism unit, their delayed response relative to their allies contradicts its history of strong public support for Israel and asserting its power unilaterally.

### **III. Israel Establishes a New Precedent with Their Firm Response**

Israel responded with an equally firm stance. Following the announcement of the mission, “the press [congratulated] the government and IDF (Israel Defense Forces) on the brilliant accomplishment of rescuing hostages from Uganda” and stressed that the country would

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<sup>92</sup> Pillar, “Counterterrorist Instruments,”

prepare for retaliatory strikes.<sup>93</sup> Israel's hardened stance suggests that under continued terrorist attacks, the government would continue engaging in unilateral military strikes against assailants in lieu of international remedies to protect its citizens. After years of suffering some of the most public and intense terrorist attacks, Israel would no longer wait for the international community to suppress terrorism. As scholars who defended the raid would, the Jewish state emphasized the humanitarian aspect of saving hostages and drew on existing international law.

During the initial scholastic review of this event, some scholars cited previous international law to justify the raid. For example, Emiko stresses how piracy violates international law, and therefore, any state can apprehend and punish a perpetrator because states treat piracy as *hostis humani generis*—a crime against humanity. He then likens piracy to hijackings (which others have referred to as “air piracy”) to argue that the “aircraft involved is similarly subject to seizure by all states.”<sup>94</sup> This analysis assumes that the state where the crime occurs suffers from the crime and, therefore, that state would benefit from apprehending the assailants. But in the Entebbe hostage crisis, the terrorists hurt Israel—not Uganda, the location of the attack—so Israelis would need to cross borders to apprehend the terrorists and save their hostages.

Salter focuses on humanitarian arguments to argue that Uganda's failure to save the Jewish hostages justified the raid. He draws from Yale Law School faculty to categorize the raid as humanitarian intervention, which “seeks neither a territorial change nor a challenge to the political independence of the state involved.”<sup>95</sup> He then refers to the fact that international law allows humanitarian intervention when a state violates human rights under its sovereignty and

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<sup>93</sup> "Press Assesses, Praises Raid," *Jerusalem Domestic Service*, July 5, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Middle East & North Africa*, no. FBIS-MEA-76-130, July 6, 1976: N7-N8, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>94</sup> Emiko, Abel A, “The Impact Of International Terrorism And Hijacking Of Aircraft On State,” 94.

<sup>95</sup> Salter, Leonard M, “Commando Coup at Entebbe,” 332.

voices his belief that Uganda's failure to apprehend the terrorists is a violation.<sup>96</sup> Still, he acknowledges that "humanitarian intervention has a long and checkered history."<sup>97</sup> These claims present an interesting defense of the raid, but still, no international law expressly authorized the Entebbe raid.

Emiko and Salter also address precedent cases they believe justify the raid. However, their examples ignore significant differences from Entebbe, and thus, their analyses fail to recognize its uniqueness. Salter compares Entebbe to an incident in the Congo where Belgium, the United States, and the United Kingdom intervened to help hostages held by rebel forces.<sup>98</sup> But his comparison omits that unlike in the Entebbe raid, where the Ugandan government aided the hostage takers, the foreign troops acted on behalf of the Congolese government. Emiko's comparisons involve hostile governments,<sup>99</sup> but the conflict occurs between two parties recognized as sovereign states. Israel and Uganda may not have been allies, but the Israeli attack did not primarily target Ugandan forces. Nor does the terrorists' hijacking and holding of hostages threaten Israel's stability as an independent nation. Emiko's analysis fails to recognize the difference between conflict between states and conflict between states and terrorists. These analyses provide context and understandable interpretations of the raid, but at the same time, their defense of Entebbe downplays its significance. Entebbe has no true precedent examples; it was the first invasion into another state to apprehend a third-party assailant engaging in terrorist activity without permission from the international community. More than any legal writings, as Pardo-Maurer observed, the validation came from the Global North's refusal to allow the United

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<sup>96</sup> Salter, Leonard M, "Commando Coup at Entebbe," 333.

<sup>97</sup> Salter, Leonard M, "Commando Coup at Entebbe," 333.

<sup>98</sup> Salter, Leonard M, "Commando Coup at Entebbe," 334.

<sup>99</sup> Emiko, Abel A, "The Impact Of International Terrorism And Hijacking Of Aircraft On State," 96-98. Emiko refers to a conflict where France may overtake the Danish navy for war against the United Kingdom, leading the British government to attack the Danish fleet out of self-defense. He also refers to a case where the United States fights pirates attacking U.S. goods in Spanish territory. Lastly, he refers to a case where British forces attacked Canadian rebels in American territory, but the U.S. government admits it was necessary self-defense.

Nations to condemn the raid. The acceptance of Entebbe can be analogized to a courtroom setting: Instead of recognizing precedent cases and existing law to justify a claim, a judge (in this case, the international community) can create a new precedent case by ruling for a party based on circumstance.

## **II. The Global South Condemns Israel and its Allies**

Immediately following the raid, opposing responses highlighted the international community's deep division of opinion regarding terrorism and methods to combat it. The Global South (African, Arab, and Eastern European states) vehemently attacked Israel's mission as a violation of Uganda's sovereignty. The Soviet Union immediately condemned the raid as a "piratical action committed by the Israeli militarists," deeming the "freeing [of] the Israeli passengers who were on the hijacked plane" an "entirely false excuse"<sup>100</sup> in a message delivered to Arab states. The African Republic of Tanzania echoed the Soviet's disapproval via their domestic service: "[Their actions] show that the Israelis do not value human lives and can turn into pirates at any time."<sup>101</sup> Overall, Global South nations asserted that the threat against Israeli citizens did not warrant Israel's unauthorized infringement into Uganda's territory. Some countries took even firmer stances, attacking other Global North states and furthering the divide between the two broad alliances on the international stage.

Angered by Israel's mission, the Libyan government became one of the harshest critics of Israel's Western allies. Libya's Tripoli domestic service questioned what it considered "the zenith of terrorism... gained the immediate support of the U.S., British, German, Swiss, and perhaps the

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<sup>100</sup> "'Piratical Action.'" *Moscow*, July 5, 1976. Translated in *DAILY REPORT. SOVIET UNION*, no. FBIS-SOV-76-130, July 6, 1976: H6-H7. *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports.*

<sup>101</sup> "Government Condemns Israeli Raid At Entebbe Airport," *Dar es Salaam Domestic Service*, July 5, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Sub-Saharan Africa*, no. FBIS-SSA-76-130, July 6, 1976: B2-B3, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports.*

French governments,” recognizing them as the most powerful states.<sup>102</sup> The North Korean government described the raid with a more direct attack: “a vicious, brigandish act committed with the active support of active cooperation of U.S. imperialism.”<sup>103</sup> Shortly after, Uganda and Romania echoed North Korea’s concerns over imperialism.<sup>104</sup> Global South states had voiced concerns over potentially imperialistic standards in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) since the late 1960s during discussions to define aggression out of concern for national liberation movements;<sup>105</sup> however, the slight differences in these claims are significant. Instead of claiming that proposed international policies supported imperialism, the Global South now directly accused the United States and other Western nations of engaging in active imperialism. Historians should note the timing of this attack as significant: It followed an unprecedented counterterrorism mission and years of failed UNGA discussions to develop anti-terrorism measures. The direct attack showcases greater hostility from the Global South nations to the severity where these states disregard innocent hostages. Therefore, it implies an even greater reluctance to engage in meaningful discussions regarding terrorism, much less sign effective international anti-terrorism agreements. Instead of conceding to the Global North’s efficient military prowess and economic superiority, the Global South states upheld their forceful position against the influence of Western governments.

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<sup>102</sup> "Tripoli Radio Comments on Israel's Entebbe Raid," *Tripoli Domestic Service*, July 7, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Middle East & North Africa*, no. FBIS-MEA-76-132, July 8, 1976: I3-I4, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>103</sup> "Nodong Sinmun Comments," *Pyongyang KCNA*, July 7, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Asia & Pacific*, no. FBIS-APA-76-131, July 7, 1976: D2-D3, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>104</sup> "Delegate Condemns Israeli Raid In Un Debate," *Bucharest Agerpres*, July 15, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Eastern Europe*, no. FBIS-EEU-76-137, July 15, 1976: H3, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*, "Uganda Radio Sees U.S. Complicity In Entebbe Raid," *Kampala Domestic Service*, July 13, 1976. Translated in *Daily Report. Sub-Saharan Africa*, no. FBIS-SSA-76-136, July 14, 1976: B12. *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations General Assembly Official Records, “Agenda item 86: Report of the Special Committee on the Question of Defining Aggression (continued),” Sixth Committee 1079 meeting, 25 November 1968, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/864026?v=pdf#files>.

#### IV. The Global North Provides Support in Varying Levels for Entebbe

As some Global South states noted, Israel quickly received support from many Western countries in the United Nations, successfully blocking any attempts to condemn Israel's actions. Sweden's U.N. envoy strikingly defended Israel's action by noting the severity of the situation and focusing on the circumstances of the raid more than the raid itself. Swedish Representative Kaj Sundberg blamed the crisis on "a despicable act of terrorism carried out by a group of Palestinian Arab extremists."<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, he made Sweden the first nation to suggest Uganda's complicity in the terrorist attack publicly: "When the decision to resort to action was taken, the Israeli government was also in possession of evidence which, in its opinion, strongly suggested that the government, which had the responsibility of protecting the hostages, was not doing everything in its power to fulfill this obligation."<sup>107</sup> France also released a statement of implicit support, highlighting that the French government did not have prior knowledge of Israel's plans.<sup>108</sup> International tensions further rose as the United Kingdom questioned the status of Dora Bloch, a British victim of the French airliner hijacking. British officials familiar with the situation suggested "Mrs. Bloch was taken from her room in Mulago hospital... on July four and that she is no longer alive" and affirmed they were "not satisfied with the results of any inquiries the Ugandans may have made."<sup>109</sup> The support of this action provided credibility to Israel's action, and combined with additional conflict between the United Kingdom and Uganda, contributed to the irresolvable split between Global North and Global South nations. While

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<sup>106</sup> "UN Envoy Sees Justification For Entebbe Raid," *Stockholm Svenska Dagbladet*, July 13, 1976, translated in *Daily Report. Western Europe*, no. FBIS-WEU-76-137, July 15, 1976: P2, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>107</sup> "UN Envoy Sees Justification For Entebbe Raid," *Stockholm Svenska Dagbladet*.

<sup>108</sup> "Foreign Ministry Issues Statement On Israeli Action In Uganda," *Paris AFP*, July 4, 1976. Translated in *Daily Report. Western Europe*, no. FBIS-WEU-76-130, July 6, 1976: K1, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

<sup>109</sup> "High Commissioner Returns." *London LPS*, July 13, 1976, published in *Daily Report. Western Europe*, no. FBIS-WEU-76-136, July 14, 1976: Q1, *Readex: Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Reports*.

unfortunate for diplomatic purposes, the split helped usher in a new method to combat terrorism through forceful counterterrorism.

Notably less vocal than other Global North states, the United States drifted from its role as Israel's most firm, outspoken ally as President Gerald Ford's administration reacted hesitantly. Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger intended to release modest statements about Israel's actions. A conversation between the two leaders five days after the raid reveals that the U.S. did want to avoid the condemnation of Israel but without emphasizing too much direct support. When Ford asked Kissinger, "What should the answer [about condemning Israel] be," Kissinger suggested calling it a "hypothetical question" with a resolution still being developed.<sup>110</sup> This more temperate approach to a typically hostile issue shows that American leaders did not want to anger Global South countries in the U.N., nor were they committed to unilateral responses to terrorism.

American delegates to the U.N. Security Council conveyed similar messages. During a council debate, the American delegates "[supported] texts that would condemn terrorism itself while affirming the need to uphold the sovereignty of states."<sup>111</sup> The text would not condemn Israel explicitly, and American diplomats affirmed they would veto any proposed condemnation, but still, this response lacked the firmness seen by some states, such as Sweden and West Germany. Like the Global South, many historians have assumed the United States government had the most favorable reaction to Israel's actions in Entebbe. However, that firm support did not immediately come from American decision-makers. The assertion from McAlister that the U.S.

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<sup>110</sup> President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, memorandum of conversation, 9 July 1976 from 10:26-10:30 a.m., Ford Presidential Library, [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553502.pdf](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553502.pdf).

<sup>111</sup> Special to The Washington Post. "Uganda, Israel Clash at U.N." *The Washington Post* (1974-), Jul 10, 1976. <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/bc.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/uganda-israel-clash-at-u-n/docview/146602857/se-2>.

employed anti-terrorism methods similar to Israel immediately following the raid<sup>112</sup> oversimplifies the U.S. government's response.

The American press, however, did respond with overwhelming favorability throughout 1976. In an article titled to draw on American patriotism, the Chicago Tribune details a narrative-esque account of the mission in their article "The Rescue: Israelis' 4th of July Freedom Party," with notable criticism of Ugandan ruler Idi Amin.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, writers followed Sweden's lead to mention Uganda's complicity in the raid. The Christian Science Monitor published an article from Dr. Robert O. Freedman where he argued that "[in] the absence of any international convention dealing with hijacking, or any actions of terrorism, each nation, under international law, is left to defend itself" while criticizing those who "overlooked the fact that the available evidence would seem to indicate that Uganda cooperated with the terrorists."<sup>114</sup> Less reserved than their government, the American press called for firm support for the action.

U.S. newspapers had also grown frustrated with the United Nations' inability to develop firm measures to combat terrorists. Unconcerned with the Global South's claims of sovereignty violations, Gerald Holton of the Boston Globe criticizes international discussions on terrorism, arguing that without an "unlikely act of international will," the international organization will not develop any meaningful strategies.<sup>115</sup> The Chicago Tribune defends U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim for his intent to address international terrorism in the United Nations but attacks Global South nations: "The secretary-general has no power to compel governments to act."<sup>116</sup> Their article shifts the blame for the failure to create effective international methods to combat

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<sup>112</sup> McAlister, "A Cultural History of the War without End." p. 445.

<sup>113</sup> *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)*. "The Rescue: Israelis' 4th of July Freedom Party." August 25, 1976, sec. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Freedman, "Israel and Terrorism," *The Christian Science Monitor (1908-)*, 29 July 1976, 27.

<sup>115</sup> Gerald Holton, "Dark Age of Terrorism," *The Boston Globe (1960-)*, 30 November 1976, 25.

<sup>116</sup> William B Buffin, "Voice of the People: Waldheim on Terrorism," *Chicago Tribune (1963-1996)*, 23 July 1976, A2.

terrorism from the U.N. secretary-general to governments of the Global South. Overall, the American press had given up on employing international law to fight terrorism and voiced greater support for Entebbe than its government.

## **V. Global North States Reassess Their Strategies to Combat Terrorism**

In *To Deter and Punish*, Zoller considers this period the shift from international law to militarized counterterrorism. She emphasizes an intense increase in West Germany's dedication to developing a "multilateral, crime-focused approach to international terrorism."<sup>117</sup> While multilateral agreements encompassing all major international states had failed to establish effective counterterrorism measures, Global North countries could create forceful treaties among themselves by consulting only allied states. Zoller cites the G7 states' 1978 adoption of a resolution threatening sanctions against states that did not exert reasonable efforts to apprehend hijackers.<sup>118</sup> The polar opposite reactions to Entebbe and Uganda's terrorist-aligned actions forced the G7 states to abandon the United Nations and Global South.

This split between the Global North and Global South allowed the Global North to develop more forceful measures against terrorism through collaboration. For example, the British military shared new weaponry, "flash-bangs," with West Germany ahead of a complex counterterrorist raid.<sup>119</sup> Historians should use Israel's actions in Entebbe to explain the shift Zoller discusses, as the raid showcased both the effectiveness of unilateral response and the refusal of the Global South to combat terrorism forcefully. Scholars also note that some Western States further specialized their counterterrorism methods with the development of specialized forces and, after Entebbe, adjusted their purpose.

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<sup>117</sup> Zoller, "International Law to Militarized Counterterrorism," 199.

<sup>118</sup> Zoller, "From International Law to Militarized Counterterrorism," p. 201.

<sup>119</sup> Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 117.

Like the Israelis, the German, British, and French governments had dedicated resources to developing specialized counterterrorist forces. Four years before Entebbe, what scholars now refer to as the Munich Massacre became the most widely publicized terrorist attack of its time. Palestinian terrorists shocked the world at the Munich Olympics when they captured Israeli athletes and, following a failed German rescue operation, executed all of them. In an in-depth account of British strategies to combat international terrorism, Geraint Hughes describes a significant reformation of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service (22SAS), the U.K.'s specialized forces unit: "[Shortly after Munich] Captain Andrew Massey... produced a paper recommending that 22SAS set up a specialist hostage rescue unit, and this provided the basis for the regiment's anti-terrorism troop."<sup>120</sup> Following the Entebbe raid, leaders of the 22SAS asked Israeli commandos to meet in the British city of Hereford to learn from the successful raid.<sup>121</sup> Although plagued with domestic terror issues with the IRA, British leaders had responded with a clear intent to possess strong counterterrorist forces that, if necessary, could exert their strength unilaterally like the Israelis. Moreover, Paul Pillar examines West Germany's unilateral counterterrorism practices. After recognizing that the U.S. fell behind other Western states' development of specialized forces, he explains that, like the British, the failure in Munich inspired the West German government to develop commando units to combat terrorists.<sup>122</sup> This unit would become the GSG-9 and conduct the Lufthansa hijacking rescue raid, a raid with many similarities to Entebbe and another crucial moment in the history of counterterrorism.

In October of 1977, about 15 months after Entebbe, Palestinian terrorists took control of a Lufthansa airline flight and held passengers hostage in demand for the release of prisoners held

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<sup>120</sup> Hughes, Geraint, "Skyjackers, Jackals and Soldiers: British Planning for International Terrorist Incidents during the 1970s," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 5 (2014): 1019.

<sup>121</sup> Hughes, "British Planning for International Terrorist Incidents," 1025.

<sup>122</sup> Pillar, Paul R, "Counterterrorist Instruments," 98.

by West Germany in Somalia. Following Israel's lead, the German government responded decisively by deploying special forces days after the attack, saving 86 hostages and four of five crew members. However, the German raid included one stark contrast from the Israelis: the Somali government authorized and supported the German offensive in their state. Still, the German's actions highlighted the effectiveness of a unilateral (albeit, this time, diplomatic) counterterrorism approach and further vindicated the Entebbe raid. This vindication became clearer when *The New York Times* reported that the German press believed the leader of the Lufthansa raid, Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich Wegener, had participated in the Entebbe raid.<sup>123</sup> Like the United Kingdom, West Germany appreciated the Entebbe raid, as seen through their own raid and similar counterterrorism practices.

The Lufthansa operation also received a different response from the U.S. government, now led by President Jimmy Carter instead of Gerald Ford. Unlike after Entebbe, American leaders joined their press in praising the raid: “[President Carter] feels that the West Germans have struck a blow for all of us who are vulnerable to this kind of terrorism,” the *New York Times* reported.<sup>124</sup> Obviously, the Lufthansa raid created less controversy than Entebbe because of the Somali's approval, but Carter's vocal approval also revealed a shift in U.S. counterterrorism policy. After the Ford administration failed to do so, Carter's administration would take action to align American counterterrorist forces and strategy more closely to more advanced American allies.

## **VI. The United States Initially Fails to Recognize the Significance of Entebbe**

As Pillar had noticed, the U.S. government lagged behind other Global North States' progress in establishing counterterrorism methods; their focus on counterterrorism had been on

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<sup>123</sup> *The New York Times*, “Head of German Raid Is Linked to Entebbe,” October 22, 1977, sec. Archives, 7.

<sup>124</sup> *The New York Times*, “Carter Praises Raid by Bonn Commandos,” October 18, 1977, sec. Archives, 12.

the United Nations since the Munich Massacre. Throughout his administration, Ford believed the U.N. could provide the most effective solutions to terrorism because it was “truly an international problem.”<sup>125</sup> In a State Department memo from January 23, 1975, over a year before the Entebbe raid, the State Department (again) intended to “call upon all responsible people, organizations, and government, and civil air commerce itself, to strengthen their resolve to prevent... criminal acts.”<sup>126</sup> The State Department’s goals would not change substantially after the raid.

A memo to the Working Group to Combat Terrorism from July 26, 1976, demonstrates this: The group’s acting chairman, Edward Hurwitz, voiced his hope that “the hijacking might make the atmosphere more receptive, in the U.N. and elsewhere, to some kind of international cooperative action against terrorism.”<sup>127</sup> Curiously, this State Department interpretation came over a month after the Israeli rescue mission, and by then, the Global South had voiced frustration and reluctance to collaborate with Western states. In addition, the Ford Administration’s notes on the U.N. debate over Entebbe reveal that while not condemning Israel of violating international law, they “[did] not see it as a precedent which would justify any future unauthorized entry into another state’s territory.”<sup>128</sup> Unlike the German or British governments, the United States would not develop or enhance specialized forces for hostage situations like Entebbe under the Ford administration. This decision contradicts the United States’ tendency to

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<sup>125</sup> “Terrorism: Ford Position,” in *Box 2 Second Debate: National Security Council Briefing Book*, Ford Presidential Library, [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0010/1554428.pdf](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0010/1554428.pdf), 15.

<sup>126</sup> U.S. Department of State Executive Secretary George Springsteen to Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft and The White House, “Proposed Presidential Statement Condemning Acts of Terrorism Against Civil Air Commerce,” memorandum, 23 January 1975, Ford Presidential Library, 3 (attached).

<sup>127</sup> *Minutes of the 113th meeting of the Working Group/Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism 7/21/76, topics include: preliminary discussion; FAA explosives security program*, United States: Department Of State, 26 July 1976, *U.S. Declassified Documents Online* (accessed May 7, 2024), [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349039172/USDD?u=mlln\\_m\\_bostcoll&sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=5995dca2&pg=1, 2](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349039172/USDD?u=mlln_m_bostcoll&sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=5995dca2&pg=1, 2).

<sup>128</sup> “Double UN Resolutions on Terrorism / Entebbe Raid,” 15 July 1976, in *Box 12 United Nations*, Ford Presidential Library, [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0204/1513228.pdf](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0204/1513228.pdf), 35.

exert its power over other states in a hegemonic manner and its role as a leading global superpower. Throughout the 1970s, the U.S. would not act as a leader in counterterrorism strategies.

Though not ready to serve as counterterrorism leaders, American government agencies were not under the false impression that the U.N. had helped combat terrorism. Attached to the same January 1975 memo, the U.S. State Department suggested analyzing why existing international law and the “world community has failed to adopt further measures” to enhance security via combatting terrorism in the declassified report.<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, 18 months later, the U.S. still focused its efforts most intensely on the U.N. This internal focus on global collaboration—which had failed since 1968—contradicts the American press views that expressed an unfortunate reality: The U.N. could not combat terrorism meaningfully. Government officials noticed the press’ complaints, and some even agreed with their opinions. Hurwitz discussed articles from the Washington Post and New York Times criticizing U.S. policies, noting their critiques “had actually been voiced by elements within the Department and elsewhere” in the July 26<sup>th</sup> memo.<sup>130</sup> Although policies regarding international terrorism did not change much, a debate over the matter had. McAlister’s assertion that the U.S. began acting like the Israelis does oversimplify the matter, but she accurately notes the start of the debate.<sup>131</sup>

During the presidential election between Ford and Carter, both candidates prepared for questions about terrorism by emphasizing global cooperation. Still, their responses contained nuanced differences. Prep materials for the second presidential debate from the Ford campaign

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<sup>129</sup> Springsteen to Scowcroft and The White House, “Statement Condemning Acts of Terrorism,” 5 (attached).

<sup>130</sup> *113th meeting of the Working Group/Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism 7/21/76*, United States: Department Of State, 1.

<sup>131</sup> McAlister, “A Cultural History of the War without End,” 445. McAlister also noted a second debate around whether or not the U.S. should negotiate with terrorists, which can be seen in the State Department document from July 6, 1976.

reveal the incumbent's plan to defend his administration's record and note America's challenges in the UNGA. He intended to stress that while in 1972 Global South opposition overpowered any American attempts to develop anti-terrorism resolutions, an Anglo-American resolution to condemn hijackings and punish the terrorists recently passed.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the prep work stresses improving tensions with foreign states through friendly foreign policy and world cooperation.<sup>133</sup> However, shortly after the second debate, the White House released a statement acknowledging an increase in international terrorism over recent months. Ford claimed that signing more conventions "once again demonstrate[d]" American commitment to combatting terrorism and called "upon all nations to join in this vital endeavor."<sup>134</sup> Undoubtedly, Ford would not admit the international agreements had failed, but his emphasis on new conventions suggests the previous methods had not yielded meaningful results. Realizing the limited results of U.N. discussions, Ford contends that the U.S. has also pursued other methods. In line with Zoller's analysis, the Ford administration participated in bilateral agreements with allied countries and increased domestic measures, such as airport security.<sup>135</sup> This claim marked one of Ford's first publicly voiced intentions to move past the United Nations to combat terrorism and shifted U.S. policy away from attempts to create effective agreements with the Global South.

Carter's debate preparation materials noted this failure and intended to exploit it. Attack points include the lack of an effective international agreement following years of global debate and weak enforcement of signed laws to combat terrorism against foreign countries.<sup>136</sup> The materials also reveal Carter's more receptive reaction to Entebbe itself. He considers it a "heroic"

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<sup>132</sup> "Terrorism: Ford Position," Ford Presidential Library, 15.

<sup>133</sup> "Terrorism: Ford Position," Ford Presidential Library, 6-9.

<sup>134</sup> President Gerald Ford, "Statement by the President," press release, Ford Presidential Library, [www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0248/whpr19761010-010.pdf](http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0248/whpr19761010-010.pdf).

<sup>135</sup> "Terrorism: Ford Position," Ford Presidential Library, 17-18.

<sup>136</sup> "Terrorism," in *Records of the 1976 Campaign to Elect Jimmy Carter*, Carter Presidential Library, [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf\\_documents/digital\\_library/campaign/564806/79/76C\\_564806\\_79\\_06.pdf](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf_documents/digital_library/campaign/564806/79/76C_564806_79_06.pdf), 2.

action, but due to Entebbe's complexity, he still stresses international cooperation over unilateral specialized forces raids for a "permanent solution."<sup>137</sup> Overall, neither candidate viewed the Entebbe raid as the new procedure for counterterrorist operations. Carter's more vocal support for Entebbe and frustration with Global South nations foreshadow his decisive counterterrorism actions as president. Overall, Ford's minor additions to his terrorism policies and Carter's slightly more rhetoric did not bring any decisive actions, but still, these changes do reveal a shift in terrorism policies after Entebbe. Contrary to his reputation as a human-rights-focused and passive liberal, Carter employed more aggressive, unilateral counterterrorism policies than his predecessors.

On the day of his inauguration, Carter reorganized the National Security Council (NSC), a group heavily involved in counterterrorism measures. The reorganization made the NSC "the principal forum for international security issues requiring presidential consideration" through participation from senior foreign policy and military officials, regular meetings, and the intention to appoint case-specific Ad Hoc Groups.<sup>138</sup> This reorganization made the NSC more flexible and effective at applying U.S. forces to international security crises such as terrorist attacks. Shortly after, Carter authorized the army to employ limited electronic surveillance in Berlin for intelligence-gathering purposes on terrorists and other crimes.<sup>139</sup> These changes show the shift towards unilateral preparation for counterterrorist purposes after Entebbe, but the most substantial American shift would come after the Lufthansa hijacking rescue mission. Carter's more robust counterterrorism policies included a defining moment in U.S. military history: the

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<sup>137</sup> "Terrorism," Carter Presidential Library, 2.

<sup>138</sup> U.S. President Jimmy Carter, "The National Security Council System," Presidential Directive, 20 January 1977, Carter Presidential Library, [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf\\_documents/assets/documents/directives/pd02.pdf](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf_documents/assets/documents/directives/pd02.pdf).

<sup>139</sup> U.S. President Jimmy Carter, "Army Special Operations Field Office in Berlin," Presidential Directive, 30 March 1977, Carter Presidential Library, [www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf\\_documents/assets/documents/directives/pd09.pdf](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf_documents/assets/documents/directives/pd09.pdf).

December 1977 creation of the first American dedicated counterterrorist unit: the Special Forces Operations Detachment-Delta. While the press attributed the group to Carter and the NSC,<sup>140</sup> it was Colonel Charlie Beckwith who, after training with the British 22SAS, had long stressed the need for special forces and spearheaded the creation of the Delta Forces.

In his memoir *Delta Force*, Beckwith recalls the group's formation and what led him to advocate for its necessity. In June 1962, Beckwith departed from the U.S. to join the British military forces as part of the 22SAS. He details his time with the unit<sup>141</sup> that culminated in a paper arguing for the U.S. to develop a small special forces unit capable of operations outside of typical military functions that could disrupt and surprise an enemy.<sup>142</sup> At the time, Beckwith had observed the unit's preparation for missions that could counter another government military force; a decade later, terrorists had revealed a renewed need for special forces. In 1975, General Bob Kingston requested that Beckwith write another paper to describe the SAS functions<sup>143</sup> and, unbeknownst to Beckwith at the time, passed it to General Edward Meyer, a high-ranking Washington General who identified the need for a specialized counterterrorist unit.<sup>144</sup> Broadly, the Nixon and Ford administrations had failed to recognize this need, but fortunately, others in Washington had. However, the top Washington officials began assembling the American counterterrorist force only after the GSG-9 Lufthansa raid. Beckwith recalls Army Chief of Staff Bernard Rodgers and President Carter's desire for the West German's capabilities and how he received authorization to create the Special Forces Operational Detachment–Delta upon his return from meetings with leaders of the GSG-9 and 22SAS forces.<sup>145</sup> Finally, after years of

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<sup>140</sup> *The Associated Press*, "US to Train Force to Fight Terrorism," *The Boston Globe*, 3 March 1978, 40.

<sup>141</sup> Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 11-35.

<sup>142</sup> Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 36.

<sup>143</sup> Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 93.

<sup>144</sup> Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 108.

<sup>145</sup> Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 116-118.

failure in the United Nations, the United States would join other major Western powers in developing specialized counterterrorist forces.

## VII. Legacies and Conclusion

Unfortunately, developing these specialized units took time before becoming effective. The West Germans had trained the GSG-9 since the 1972 Munich Massacre—seven years of preparation went into their debut on the world stage. By October of 1977, only a few days after the German raid, the Associated Press found 12 other nations “maintain highly skilled commando units trained to rescue hijacking hostages.”<sup>146</sup> (The report’s exact accuracy is questionable, as the article cites the U.S. as one of 13 nations with these units, but it reveals many other Global North states had begun developing counterterrorist special forces.) Evidently, the United States special forces were far behind those of the IDF, 22SAS, and GSG-9.

In April of 1980 this became clear. Despite the intense training of some of the most skilled American soldiers, Operation Eagle Claw, the attempted rescue mission of American hostages held in the Iranian embassy, and Delta’s international debut, ended in failure. The operation endured equipment malfunctions, never breached the embassy holding the hostages, and led to the death of 8 members of the Delta Force. The Carter administration had long debated the rescue mission and acknowledged the difficult circumstances surrounding it.<sup>147</sup> When the mission failed, it devastated an administration and team of Delta Force members who had worked tirelessly on the raid. Beckwith recalls crying as he felt he had embarrassed his

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<sup>146</sup> *The New York Times*, “13 Nations Training Commandos to Save Air-Hijackings Hostages,” sec. Archives, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> For example, see the following sources: William Odom of the National Security Council to President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski), “Military Options for Iran,” memorandum, Office of the Historian, [www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d9](http://www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d9). “Editorial Note,” in *Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1977–1980, Volume XI, Part 1, Iran: Hostage Crisis, November 1979–September 1980*, Office of the Historian, [www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d261](http://www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d261). “Record of a National Security Council Meeting,” in *Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Middle East File, Box 97, Meetings File, 11/6/79: NSC re Iran*, Office of the Historian, [www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d8](http://www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v11p1/d8).

country;<sup>148</sup> Carter considered the responsibility of the mission “fully [his] own” when informing the nation of its failure.<sup>149</sup> Undoubtedly, Operation Eagle Claw did not achieve the administration’s goals, but it did set a new precedent for American responses to terrorism.

Under President Jimmy Carter, the soft-voiced, peanut farmer president focused on human rights, the United States exercised its first forceful counterterrorism policies. Zoller credits the Reagan administration as primarily responsible for the U.S. practice of “relying first on military rhetoric and then on military units and tactics,”<sup>150</sup> but Carter had established precedent (and received harsh criticism for doing so)<sup>151</sup> and means for the militarized response. Despite the new method, and to the frustration of the press, American diplomats still stressed international cooperation in the United Nations. However, unlike Ford’s sole policy of returning to the United Nations following the Entebbe raid, Carter developed counterterrorist forces and attempted an Entebbe-like mission. Whereas the United Kingdom, West Germany, Israel, and others noted Entebbe as a turning point towards unilateral policies, the United States would wait until the GSG-9 operation, another 16 months, before doing so.

Although the United States eventually developed some of the most impressive special forces in the world and did make slight policy changes after Entebbe, its relatively passive response to the raid warrants the attention of historians. During one of the most consequential and controversial eras of terrorism, the United States did not take a leading role in improving anti-terrorism measures on the global stage. Throughout the 1970s, the United States made many

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<sup>148</sup> Beckwith and Knox, *Delta Force*, 281.

<sup>149</sup> U.S. President Jimmy Carter, “Address to the Nation on the Rescue Attempt for American Hostages in Iran,” Presidential Address, The American Presidency Project, [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-the-rescue-attempt-for-american-hostages-iran](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-the-rescue-attempt-for-american-hostages-iran).

<sup>150</sup> Zoller, Silke. “Introduction.” In *To Deter and Punish: Global Collaboration Against Terrorism in the 1970s*, 1–22. Columbia University Press, 2021, 4.

<sup>151</sup> Carter received harsh treatment in the press, as demonstrated by the following sources. Phil McCombs, “Reaction: Anger, Sadness at a Failed Mission,” *The Washington Post* (1974-), Apr 26, 1980. Stanley Hoffmann, “Carter’s ‘Fiasco’ in Iran,” *New York Times* (1923-), Apr 26, 1980.

honorable attempts to negotiate with hostile foreign countries when it could have taken decisive unilateral steps far earlier. Although honorable, the result of this patience is unclear. Had the United States developed counterterrorist commando units earlier, they may have prevented more terrorist attacks than the toothless initiatives created in the UNGA. Conversely, the immediate use of aggressive forces against hostile nations may have led to more state-sponsored terrorism. Regardless of the outcome, historians should note this rare moment in American history where the U.S. followed other nations' direction—arguably to a fault—rather than lead an international charge benefitting the world's most powerful nations.

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Volume XI | Issue I

Article III

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**Marriage: Protection or Imprisonment?:**

**Domestic Violence Legislation in the 1850s**

Madeline Carr

## **Marriage: Protection or Imprisonment?**

### **Domestic Violence Legislation in the 1850s**

#### **Introduction:**

In the mid-1800s, British society was rocked by a drastic change. The fundamental social unit was the family, and the 1851 census revealed that there were thirty percent more women of marriageable age than men. This was referred to as the “redundant woman problem.” Many feared that the demographic change would disrupt the gender hierarchy that British society was built on, primarily by challenging the institution of marriage. Many women no longer had the option to marry, causing a collective reevaluation of life within and outside of marriage.

The “redundant woman problem” prompted the re-evaluation of marriage as the bedrock of society. The Bill for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults Upon Women and Children, which became known as the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853, illuminated the fact that marriage was a living hell for some women, yet the social and legal climate hindered its intended progress. The Bill was ineffective because women did not have adequate social or legal structures to support them outside of their abusive marriages. Even those who attempted to alleviate the situation were unable to make significant change because of the gender hierarchy in British society.

Traditionalists at the time believed the best way to address this issue was to reinforce marriage as the cornerstone of British society, while feminists advocated for a woman’s right to become financially independent outside of marriage. Within this discourse, advocates like Frances Power Cobbe and Henry Fitzroy saw that women’s lack of independence affected their lives within marriage, leaving them subject to violent abuse without legal protections or an

escape. Modern literature written about domestic abuse in 19th century England tends to overlook the different societal norms and attitudes that influenced the inadequate legislation. This paper is unique because it directly connects the redundant woman problem to domestic violence and the argument is constructed through a close reading of the Parliamentary debates and the Bill.

This paper argues that, due to compounding societal factors, the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 was ineffective at deterring domestic violence. The paper is broken up into three sections. The first explains that the “redundant woman problem” served as a catalyst for the re-evaluation of marriage. As the institution of marriage came under the spotlight, politicians like Henry Fitzroy began to acknowledge the abuse that sometimes occurred within marriages. The second section describes Fitzroy’s motivations for proposing the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 through the Parliamentary debate documents that recorded his justification. He was rightfully shocked by the minimal punishment given to abusers and advocated for the protection of women, yet his solution, supported by the rest of parliament, reinforced the institution of marriage as the bedrock of society. Lastly, the final section explains that women could not be adequately protected by the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 because the law did not challenge the gender hierarchy embedded into society. Women were supposed to be controlled by their husbands yet the punishment for domestic violence forced women to exercise independence they did not legally have. For those reasons, the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 did not effectively protect women from domestic violence.

### **Section 1: The State of Marriage Inside and Outside of the Home**

In nineteenth-century English society, marriage was arguably the single most important aspect of creating and maintaining a rigid social structure. Women in this period viewed marriage

and family building as the ultimate goal. In preparation for marriage, middle and upper-class women were taught only the necessary skills to become the “Angel in the House,” a term that originated in Coventry Patmore’s poem of that same title about the ideal wife. He described her as a modest, chaste, innocent woman who loves and cares for her children and is completely subordinate to her husband.<sup>152</sup> She was always good – never angry or selfish. Patmore’s description seems rather unrealistic, yet it became the domestic model of the middle class.<sup>153</sup>

The ability to keep the wife and kids at home was a sign of respectability in Victorian Britain. As a result, women and girls were not entitled to the same education as men. Instead, women were coached in “accomplishments,” such as drawing, modern languages, music, singing, dancing, and having an overall elegant manner of being.<sup>154</sup> The goal of their studies was to enhance their desirability for marriage.

Marriage exemplified the gender-related, domestic social contract that dominated England and was crucial for maintaining social morality. Victorian society widely accepted that the responsibilities of men and women fell into separate spheres. Women were meant to stay in the home and care for the children while men were expected to work and provide for the family.<sup>155</sup> Men and women fulfilling their respective duties satisfied the social contract because it ensured society maintained its morals and structure. Middle and upper-class girls were raised and educated in the home, then were quickly married off when they came of age. This rigid structure allowed fathers to protect their daughters’ innocence and purity. Marriage was also seen as virtuously beneficial for men because their wives acted as the “pious [ones] who kept the family on the Christian Path,” ensuring the children and husbands stayed pure and loyal despite the

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<sup>152</sup> M. Jeanne Peterson, “No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (1984): 173, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1856121>.

<sup>153</sup> Peterson, 171.

<sup>154</sup> Kathryn Hughes, “Gender Roles in the 19th Century | The British Library,” British Library, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century/>.

<sup>155</sup> Hughes.

prominence of vice in an industrializing world.<sup>156</sup> In 19th century Britain, marriage was seen as a natural, fundamental institution that the majority were obligated to partake in. It reinforced social hierarchy and promoted moral standards that were viewed as essential to society, making it the foundation of British life.

With the publication of the 1851 census, the institution of marriage was under threat. In 1869, William Rathbone Greg published an essay titled “Why are Women Redundant?” It described the aforementioned social phenomenon known as the “redundant woman problem.” As England gained more territory, it sent around 5,000,000 people to their various colonial holdings.<sup>157</sup> More men were sent to the colonies than women, leaving mainland Britain with 405,000 extra women.<sup>158</sup> Greg described the nearly half a million women as “redundant” because there were not enough men for them to get married to, rendering them useless, and therefore a problem.

Returning to the idea of a social contract, Greg declared “The union of one man to one woman is unmistakably indicated as the despotic law of life,” explaining how the deviation from the one man to one woman ratio threatened the bedrock of British society.<sup>159</sup> It left many concerned about what life would look like for women outside of marriage. He acknowledged that many feminist reformers saw this as an opportunity for women to have increasingly lucrative opportunities for employment in conjunction with newly established personal rights and protections as a single person.<sup>160</sup> However, Greg feared that increasing rights for women would encourage them to leave the domestic sphere, which they were not mentally equipped for. If women viewed marriage as an option instead of the only option, the maritaly focused structure

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<sup>156</sup> Peterson, “No Angels in the House,” 677.

<sup>157</sup> William Rathbone Greg, *Why Are Women Redundant?* (Trübner, 1869), 13, <http://archive.org/details/whyarewomenredu00greggoog>.

<sup>158</sup> William Rathbone Greg, 13.

<sup>159</sup> William Rathbone Greg, 8.

<sup>160</sup> William Rathbone Greg, 31.

of Victorian life would be severely threatened.<sup>161</sup> British society was so afraid of “redundant women” that many organizations promoted female emigration to alleviate the consequences of this social crisis.<sup>162</sup>

While many in this era were concerned about what life for women outside of marriage would look like, some started to question what life was like within marriage as well. Frances Power Cobbe, a social reformer and suffrage activist, wrote “What shall we do with our Old Maids?” a satirically titled piece addressing the “redundant woman problem” from a feminist perspective. Cobbe agreed with Greg, saying that marriage was likely “the happiest and best condition for mankind,” but acknowledged that women in this era often married out of necessity.<sup>163</sup> While commenting on the inescapable nature of marriage, Cobbe said

Is it not to the conclusion that to make it a woman’s interest to marry, to force her, by barring out every means of self support and all fairly remunerative labour, to look to marriage as her sole chance of competency, is precisely to drive her into one of those sinful and unhappy marriages?<sup>164</sup>

As Cobbe explained, women did not have the legislative rights to independently sustain themselves if they wanted to maintain their social conditions and way of life.

For middle-class women, marriage led to a loss of financial and political freedom because wives were legally controlled by their husbands, but not getting married appeared to be worse. According to historian Phillipa Levine, “Women who did not marry... dubbed ‘surplus women’ – were seen as doomed to an unhappily penniless and lonely existence.”<sup>165</sup> As a central part of middle-class socialization, women could not imagine their lives without marriage, and even if they could, there were very few opportunities for them to independently support themselves

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<sup>161</sup> William Rathbone Greg, 32.

<sup>162</sup> William Rathbone Greg, 17.

<sup>163</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, “What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?,” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, 1830-1869 66, no. 395 (November 1862): 595.

<sup>164</sup> Cobbe, 595.

<sup>165</sup> Phillipa Levine, “So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks’: Marriage and Feminism in Later Nineteenth-Century England,” *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 1989): 151, <https://doi.org/10.1086/385931>.

without sacrificing material comforts. These factors led women to settle for marriages that were socially and economically beneficial to them rather than for love.

When marriage is done for external goods and protection instead of love or affection, as Cobbe mentioned, the inner workings of those relationships may breed unhappiness and sin. Cobbe promoted increased opportunities for women outside of the home so they could avoid suffering in a troubled marriage and could wait to marry for love instead. Frances Power Cobbe determined that the necessity of marriage increased the likelihood of unhappy, unfulfilling lives both inside and outside of marriage.

Within the framework of the social contract and gender hierarchy, domestic abuse against wives was a common yet overlooked aspect of life within marriage. In *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in the Nineteenth-Century Married Life* by historian A. James Hammerton, he explores two main types of marriages. The first is the patriarchal marriage, where a man holds overt domination over his wife and children, and the second is the companionate marriage, the typical image of bland yet easy domestic intimacy.<sup>166</sup> Hammerton explains that men aimed to be “Masterful at home, as at work,” especially within the patriarchal marriage.<sup>167</sup> Men often used the home and the workplace as an opportunity to exercise dominance and assert their masculinity over others. Legally, married women and everything they owned were the property of their husbands until the 1870 Married Women’s Property Act, leaving her “completely at his mercy.”<sup>168</sup> Although not all women were abused as a result of the protectiveness placed upon them by their husbands, this issue was still significant. Not only were

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<sup>166</sup> A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (Routledge, 1992), 142, 138.

<sup>167</sup> Hammerton, 139.

<sup>168</sup> Peterson, “No Angels in the House,” 176.

men exercising their masculinity in the home, but the law enforced and encouraged a level of ownership over their wives.

Some men abused this power by committing acts of physical violence against their partners. A certain level of discipline and chastisement was seen as natural and expected between a husband and wife. In her essay “Wife Torture in England,” Frances Power Cobbe stated that the public was largely indifferent to cases of domestic violence because they thought the women “deserved” their abuse.<sup>169</sup> If wives abused their husbands, they were subjected to much harsher punishments than their husbands were for abusing them because a woman exhibiting power was not part of the social contract.<sup>170</sup> Due to the legal and colloquial view that married women were naturally owned and controlled by their husbands, wives sometimes endured physical punishments from their husbands.

## **Section 2: Parliamentary Attitudes and Motivations for Domestic Violence Legislation**

The 1851 census and the so-called “redundant woman problem” were obvious catalysts for the spotlight on women’s lack of opportunities outside of marriage, but what brought domestic violence to the forefront of the public’s mind? In this case, it was Henry Fitzroy, a Member of Parliament representing Lewes, who brought the crisis of abuse to the state’s attention. He proposed the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853, successfully enacting the first legislation explicitly protecting women from domestic violence.<sup>171</sup>

Domestic violence has occurred since the concept of legal partnership began, so what caused Fitzroy to propose this Bill? As seen through the language of the Parliamentary debate, Fitzroy’s motivations for enacting this Bill were rather complex as he placed an obvious

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<sup>169</sup> Cobbe, “What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?,” 58.

<sup>170</sup> Anna Clark, “Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood, and Sexuality*, 1992, 188.

<sup>171</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853.

emphasis on decreasing instances of domestic violence but did so through means that reinforced the institution of marriage and the subordinate position of women in English society.

Although it was rare, men could be prosecuted for abusing their wives under this Bill, but it was typically under general assault charges because this framework did not exist yet. It was difficult for domestic abuse cases to come to light because most abuse took place inside the home. For that reason, police officers were often not aware of the abuse, and if it was brought to their attention, they did not view it as their place to interfere because the marriage was the husband's domain. Only when the assault reached a certain level of brutality, before or after death, did police typically find it reasonable to intervene.<sup>172</sup> This Bill created a new legal framework, ideally making it easier to prosecute cases of domestic violence with increased punishment.

Fitzroy was abhorred by the current state of laws regarding violence against wives. As described by the parliamentary records, Fitzroy began his speech in the House of Commons by declaring “the evil which the Bill was intended to remedy was one so generally felt, so universally acknowledged, so rapidly growing, and constituted such a blot upon our national character” that no one would oppose the passage of the Bill.<sup>173</sup> Fitzroy stated that the level of violence committed against the “weaker sex” by “brutes who call themselves men” required a punishment that adequately fit the crime.<sup>174</sup> Fitzroy acknowledged that the House did not like to increase the powers of the magistrate, but he argued that “the cases he brought before them [were] exceptional cases” and needed to be dealt with differently than other instances of

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<sup>172</sup> Godfrey B Richardson and S Walklate, “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales 1770-2020. Working Paper No. 2,” July, <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/law-and-social-justice/3research/Working,Paper,No2,-,Domestic,Abuse,in,England,and,Wales,1770-2020.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>174</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

domestic violence.<sup>175</sup> His statement indicated that some forms of domestic abuse are acceptable while others are not, again connecting to the idea of the social contract and the cultural acceptance of violence against wives.

What makes the cases Fitzroy listed so “exceptional” compared to accepted versions of domestic violence? He gave six examples of domestic violence that involved extreme brutality with the potential loss of life, fitting the “exceptional” criteria. First, he described an incident in December 1852 where a man, Henry Bennett, brutally assaulted his estranged wife. He returned the morning after the initial assault and attempted to slit her throat but failed, instead severing the fingers that protected her throat.<sup>176</sup> A month later, James Coghlan was arrested for beating his wife. She saw Coghlan outside of the house with his friends, presumably about to go for a drink. She came outside and begged him not to go, causing him to take her inside and beat her. He justified his actions by saying “She made him appear little in front of in the eyes of the persons” he was with.<sup>177</sup> A policeman heard the wife screaming and saw her getting struck, so he entered the home and arrested James for wife-beating.

Another example is the case of Frederic Giles, who was arrested in November 1852 for beating the partner whom he lived with. His partner, Susannah Preston, came home to find him packing up some of the food she had made. She forcefully tried to stop him from taking it, which resulted in him beating her so badly that her body was “a mass of bruises” and she was “covered in blood.”<sup>178</sup> An officer heard her screams and took her to get medical attention. The ring on her finger had been beaten to the bone and needed to be cut off. In each of these cases, the men were sentenced to two months in prison.<sup>179</sup> The majority of these cases involve horrific, near-death

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<sup>175</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>176</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>177</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>178</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>179</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

violence and show how far the abuse had to go before police decided to intervene, and before Fitzroy and Parliament thought it was necessary to create a Bill to specifically address these incidents.

Based on the language of the Parliamentary debate and the severity of the violence that piqued the interest of Fitzroy and Parliament, Fitzroy's motivations for establishing domestic violence legislation were questioned by Victorian-era and present-day feminist scholars alike. Just as there were two responses to the "redundant woman problem" – one trying to maintain the institution of marriage as the cornerstone of British society and the other trying to expand the opportunities for women outside of marriage – there were two similar perspectives on who to blame for the epidemic of domestic violence and how to properly deter violence from occurring in the first place.

In her journal article, "Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," historian Anna Clark examines the motivations for the creation of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853. She critiques Fitzroy, arguing that the "limited legal sanctions against domestic violence functioned more to bolster the legitimacy of state power and conventional marriage than to stop the crime."<sup>180</sup> Her assessment is supported by Fitzroy's characterization as to why domestic violence needs to be addressed via legislation.

Fitzroy thought the frequency in which brutally violent assaults were punished by a fine or two months of jail time made the English state look weak. As previously quoted, he claimed that the inadequate punishment marred the "national character" of England, making the judicial system appear ineffective and, therefore, worth addressing legislatively on a national level.<sup>181</sup> Instead of grounding his reasoning in the humanity of women, he emphasized how the reputation

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<sup>180</sup> Clark, "Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," 187.

<sup>181</sup> 'AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,' HC Deb 124, 1853

of having a poor moral compass and a lack of control over its citizens would fare in England's international relations. This justification, often used by men in power, complicates the suggestion that Fitzroy proposed this Bill purely with women's safety in mind.

Continuing with Clark's claim about Fitzroy's motivations, it is clear that Fitzroy intended to address the issue of domestic violence by reinforcing existing patriarchal social structures. Fitzroy was particularly upset by the violence committed by husbands because, according to the domestic social contract, men were responsible for protecting their wives. He characterized women as the "weaker sex" who are being let down by "men who one blushed to think were Englishmen" and "brutes who called themselves men."<sup>182</sup> He used the construct of the "weaker sex" to emphasize the fact that women needed protection from the "stronger sex." He wanted men to protect their wives without society questioning the inequalities that existed in marriage.

Fitzroy did not think that a husband's right to protect his wife contributed to abuse. Instead, he thought morally reprehensible men were at fault for tainting the social hierarchy within the institution of marriage. Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill, advocates for early women's rights, recognized the danger that sometimes arose when husbands exercised power over their wives in the name of "protection." In an article the Mills wrote in the *Morning Chronicle* (1851), they described two cases where men brutally beat and killed their wives. The judge decided that the men had merely made a mistake by letting their temper get the best of them. The court sentenced the first man to six months in prison and the second to transportation for life – likely to Australia. The Mills suggested that if each man had killed a woman who was not their wife, they would have likely been hanged by the state and convicted of murder. They

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<sup>182</sup> 'AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,' HC Deb 124, 1853

claimed that “The vow to protect thus confers a license to kill.”<sup>183</sup> Some men abused their role as their wives’ protectors, but Fitzroy wanted to perpetuate these systems, blaming instances of violence on the rare distortions of classic English gentlemen.

Not only did Fitzroy overlook the potential for some husbands to abuse the position of dominance they were given over their wives in the name of protection, but he and other elites blamed the working class for committing the majority of domestic abuse. Fitzroy implied that a proper Englishman would not exhibit such morally reprehensible behavior. According to Clark, “Politicians blamed working-class disorder for wife beating, deflecting attention from the inequalities of marriage itself.”<sup>184</sup> This narrative was perpetuated by middle and upper-class men who wanted to make lower-class men appear violent, therefore unworthy of gaining suffrage and forcing them to shoulder the blame for the domestic abuse epidemic.<sup>185</sup> In reality, the upper and middle classes also committed domestic violence. The number of reported cases may have been less because upper and middle-class husbands were less likely to commit visible abuse in fear of ruining their reputation, and upper and middle-class wives were also less likely to report their husbands to protect their social status and their economic comfortability.<sup>186</sup> Shifting the blame allows men in power like Fitzroy to propose increased punishments for perpetrators instead of the structural change needed to support women inside and outside of the home. Upper and middle-class men did not want this structural change because their domestic domination was based upon inequalities in marriage.

It should now be clear that Fitzroy was motivated to create legislation for the “Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults Against Women and Children” after

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<sup>183</sup> “THE MORNING CHRONICLE,” *Morning Chronicle* (1801), August 28, 1851, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>184</sup> Clark, “Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” 187.

<sup>185</sup> Clark, 201.

<sup>186</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, “Wife-Torture in England.,” *The Contemporary Review*, 1866-1900 32 (April 1878): 55–87.

encountering some of the most egregious cases of violence against women. He condemned the violence committed against women and wanted to develop legislation to better protect wives. However, he attempted to create change from within the system that allowed the unchecked abuse to thrive in the first place. He was concerned with the perceived morality and judicial strength of England by foreign nations and reinforced the institution of marriage as the bedrock of English society. He saw that husbands were not properly fulfilling their role as their wives' protectors, but Fitzroy avoided addressing the flaws within that system of marriage, instead blaming brutish working-class men. So, this legislation was important for creating new legal recognition for domestic violence, but as seen by its motivations as well as its effectiveness, it did not address the root of the problem. Women were still not supported within and outside of the institution of marriage.

### **Section 3: The Ineffectiveness of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853**

After analyzing Fitzroy's scattered motivations for creating the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853, the legislation itself successfully created a framework to address issues of domestic violence, but women did not reap the benefits. Passing the law did not do much to help women who were experiencing domestic violence because they still existed within the patriarchal structures that ensured that they possessed little to no personal rights. Although Fitzroy's bill increased the prison sentence for convicted abusers, there was no way for women to permanently separate from their husbands for reasons of abuse due to the divorce laws at the time. Many women also did not want their husbands to be convicted because they would face economic and social distress while their husbands were in jail. The social situation that existed for women was not conducive for them to start a life outside of marriage, and there were little to no entities meant to support women who were enduring the trauma of violence.

Fitzroy attempted to address the issues described in the parliamentary debate by increasing the fines and prison sentences of those convicted of domestic abuse. At its core, the Act was intended to criminalize domestic violence and impose a limit on the level of “chastisement” men were allowed to use on their wives and children for disciplinary purposes.<sup>187</sup> Fitzroy did not think that two months was a long enough standard sentence, so the Bill increased the fine to twenty pounds and the prison sentence to six months maximum, with or without hard labor. The Bill stated that indictments should not be removed by writ of certiorari, meaning that cases should not be overturned and tried by a higher court unless there is evidence that the original trial was conducted unfairly. The magistrates created probation for convicted abusers, so long as they promised to “keep the peace and be of good behavior” for a maximum of six months after their initial jail time.<sup>188</sup> If the stint of good behavior was violated, the abuser was sentenced to prison for up to 12 months. The Act also mentioned that the prosecution would occur “either upon the complaint of the party aggrieved or otherwise,” implying that the victim did not always make the final choice of pursuing the trial.<sup>189</sup>

The Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 increased the fine and the length of the prison sentence for convicted abusers because Parliament and Fitzroy thought the increased level of punishment would deter husbands from committing domestic abuse. However, compounding social circumstances made the increased prison sentence ineffective at deterring abusers. *The Morning Post*, a London-based newspaper, released an article two months after the Bill was approved by The Crown to examine its immediate effects. They attempted to demonstrate its

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<sup>187</sup> Lucy Williams and Sandra Walklate, “Policy Responses to Domestic Violence, the Criminalisation Thesis and ‘Learning from History,’” *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* 59, no. 3 (2020): 305–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12378>.

<sup>188</sup> ‘Bill for better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults on Women and Children,’ House of Commons Sessional Papers, HC 405, 1852-1853, 2.

<sup>189</sup> ‘Bill for better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults on Women and Children,’ House of Commons Sessional Papers, HC 405, 1852-1853, 1.

ineffectiveness by listing examples of brutal assaults that had taken place a week before the article was published that were not properly prevented or punished. On August 9th, 1853, John Welch assaulted his wife and the mother of his three children. Ann Welch had a lucrative fruit-selling business, and when she came home after work, he “beat and kicked her [face] into one mass of wounds and bruises.”<sup>190</sup> John, who had a history of abusing Ann and had served six months of prison for abuse in the past, was sentenced to another six months with hard labor for his actions. With her husband gone, Ann was the sole provider for her children. She was severely injured, so the judge offered her funds from the “poorbox,” the charity money primarily gathered at churches, to support her family until she was well enough to return to her fruit business.<sup>191</sup>

The Welch case demonstrates that the increased sentence did not deter offenders from repeating their abuse, or from committing the abuse in the first place. Beyond the increased sentence, Fitzroy advocated for corporal punishment, such as caning or flogging, but it was not approved.<sup>192</sup> When speaking about the Welch case, the author of the *Morning Post* article stated

If six months’ imprisonment with hard labor cannot restrain the perpetration of such offenses – let us try to experiment with the lash – let us throw upon women that protection which by the law, is given to objects of art exhibited in our public museums.<sup>193</sup>

The author agreed that a more severe type of punishment, such as “the lash,” could more effectively deter abusers and that the safety of women was valued less than that of inanimate objects. Both the author and Fitzroy tried to increase the severity of the punishment, not merely by time but by force, but Parliament did not allow that. The extended prison sentence, which was

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<sup>190</sup> “On the 14th of June, in This Present Year, the Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children Received the Royal Assent,” *Morning Post*, August 19, 1853, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>191</sup> “On the 14th of June, in This Present Year, the Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children Received the Royal Assent.”

<sup>192</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>193</sup> “On the 14th of June, in This Present Year, the Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children Received the Royal Assent.”

the main provision of the Bill, was not enough to deter domestic violence on a wide enough scale to consider the Bill effective.

The Welch case also introduced one of the core reasons that the Criminal Procedure Act was ineffective—what were women supposed to do without their husbands? As previously discussed, life for women outside of marriage contained minimal opportunities, especially for women with children. Women often did not report their husbands for domestic abuse because they did not want to endure the economic difficulties and social isolation that came from living without the support of their husbands. If a woman’s husband was sent to jail for six months, they would lose their primary breadwinner. Circling back to section one, reputation was extremely important for the middle class, and if a woman’s husband was sent to jail for abuse, she was subjected to social subordination and ostracism. Additionally, women often feared that their husbands would be more violent upon their return from prison.<sup>194</sup> While the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 created a legal framework for women to report their husbands, many women did not because the social and economic implications of living without their husbands were worse than enduring the abuse.

Women often wanted to stop their abuse through physical separation and protection from their husbands. However, divorce on the grounds of abuse was not legal in the 1850s. It was not until the Matrimonial Act of 1878 that women could divorce their husbands on the grounds of violence without adultery.<sup>195</sup> Frances Power Cobbe’s essay “Wife Torture in England,” published in 1878 was widely credited for influencing the language in the Act that considered physical violence against wives to be regarded as torture.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Williams and Walklate, “Policy Responses to Domestic Violence, the Criminalisation Thesis and ‘Learning from History.’”

<sup>195</sup> Richardson and Walklate, “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales 1770-2020. Working Paper No. 2.”

<sup>196</sup> Maxwell Jacob-Oliver, “The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878,” Text, October 2, 2020, <https://editions.covecollective.org/chronologies/matrimonial-causes-act-1878-0>.

Even after divorce based on domestic violence was permitted, a lot of women did not choose to use the divorce legislation because it was not always effective. A lot of the same issues existed with the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 and the Matrimonial Act of 1878. Married women had trouble obtaining work, so their divorce led to financial instability and a decline in social status.<sup>197</sup> Steps were taken to help women separate from abusive partners and give them increasing protection under the law, but these changes happened slowly. Women were still considered dependent, “incapacitated persons” that were comparable to children in the Income Tax Act of 1918, over fifty years after the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853.<sup>198</sup> When the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 was enacted, structures for permanent or even temporary separation, effective or not, did not exist for victims of domestic abuse. This left women living in fear of their abusive partner, whether they were in or out of jail.

Additionally, many women did not want to use the framework Fitzroy created because the judicial system did not treat victims of abuse kindly. Some women were forced to prosecute. In 1857, a woman named Ellen Smith was publicly beaten by her husband, John Smith, causing her to go to trial under the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853. She did not want to press charges and claimed that the abuse was her fault. He had been jailed for abuse in the past, so she was likely afraid of losing her family's breadwinner again. Despite her wishes, he was charged with six months of hard labor. The Act required women to testify, even if they did not want to.<sup>199</sup> The legislation assumed that all women would benefit from their husbands' arrest, but the social systems did not exist to facilitate independent married women.

Much like twenty-first-century sexual assault cases, some women did not report their trauma because the courts were unlikely to believe them without witnesses or obvious signs of

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<sup>197</sup> Jacob-Oliver.

<sup>198</sup> Richardson and Walklate, “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales 1770-2020. Working Paper No. 2.”

<sup>199</sup> Richardson and Walklate.

abuse. In the debates leading up to the 1853 law, Fitzroy argued for increased powers of the magistrate so that domestic abuse cases could be dealt with quickly. He said if the jury waited too long, “The marks of the assault would be greatly obliterated, and it was probably, therefore, that the jury would be induced to place less importance on the case.”<sup>200</sup> There was a chance that women would be taken less seriously if they did not look the part of an abuse victim. Again, a reason why women would hesitate to use the framework established by the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853.

The forcible nature of the act removed the victim’s power in court and complicated her ability to engage in a historically effective way of deterring domestic violence – public shaming. Public shaming was an important aspect of the early 19th century domestic violence narrative, most prominently seen through rough music. Rough music, the banging of pots and pans, was created when neighbors would hear signs of abuse on their street in an attempt to shame the perpetrator into stopping. The shaming was effective as a pseudo-system of policing because of the scarce police involvement in domestic matters.<sup>201</sup>

Victims of abuse used this concept of shaming and exercised it in court. Women would expose their husbands for abusive behavior on the stand, then withdraw the allegations because “the act of shaming [was] punishment enough.”<sup>202</sup> The ability that wives possessed to shame their husbands was a form of power they held in their otherwise powerless social state. However, Anna Clark argues that publicly shaming abusers does not decrease instances of violence, claiming that “many men who believed they had the right to beat their wives could not be

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<sup>200</sup> ‘AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS BILL,’ HC Deb 124, 1853

<sup>201</sup> Richardson and Walklate, “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales 1770-2020. Working Paper No. 2.”

<sup>202</sup> Richardson and Walklate.

shamed.”<sup>203</sup> Clark returns to the idea of the social contract, explaining that you cannot shame someone for something they do not believe is wrong.<sup>204</sup>

After the 1853 Bill, women were required to follow through with the prosecution for the accusations they made against their husbands, effectively ruining women’s ability to publicly shame their husbands without enduring the consequences of their husbands’ prison sentence. The long-utilized tactic of public shaming for domestic violence, whether or not it was effective at deterring domestic violence, was decentered, depriving women of the outlet and agency they were previously entitled to.

The Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 effectively criminalized domestic violence and created a framework for victims of abuse to prosecute their abusers. However, the criminalization was not positive or effective for wives because of the lack of social systems in place to support them. Historians from the University of Liverpool, Lucy Williams and Sandra Walklate, posed the idea that

Cases like that of John and Ellen Smith illustrate that seeking to better criminalise domestic violence could, and still may, unintentionally drive violence further underground, silencing victims who are in need of assistance but fear the ordeal and results of such prosecutions.<sup>205</sup>

On the surface, criminalizing domestic violence seemed like it could only help victims of abuse. However, as Williams and Walklate pointed out, women had such negative experiences with the framework created by the criminalization that they did not want to report their abuse. Thus, driving victims further into silence. If the abuse was discovered by an officer, the wife was forced to testify, despite her wishes. If her bruises were not raw enough, she was dismissed. If her husband was arrested, she would lose her income and social capital. When he came back

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<sup>203</sup> Clark, “Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” 196.

<sup>204</sup> Clark, 196.

<sup>205</sup> Williams and Walklate, “Policy Responses to Domestic Violence, the Criminalisation Thesis and ‘Learning from History.’”

from prison, she would likely experience worsened abuse. She could not divorce him because of the violence. Instead of supporting victims of abuse, the criminalization of domestic violence backed women into a corner, causing them to feel isolated and forcing them to choose the least destructive option.

Unfortunately, a lot of the structural changes that were needed to make the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 effective were not passed for decades. To recap, women could not legally separate from their husbands on the grounds of abuse until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878.<sup>206</sup> Given the overwhelming importance of reputation and adherence to the gender hierarchy of marriage, if working was not destigmatized, middle-class women were unlikely to partake. Working for middle class women while married was not prevalent until the post-World War II era when, in 1957, fifty percent of married women worked.<sup>207</sup> Women were not given even a semblance of financial independence from men until the 1922 Family Allowances Act, passed by Member of Parliament Eleanor Rathbone.<sup>208</sup> Without financial independence, prosecuting their husbands felt like an impossibility for many wives. In the late 19th century, some prosecution agencies like the Associate Institution for Improving and Enforcing the Laws for the Protection of Women helped wives utilize the Act to their benefit.<sup>209</sup> Women were not allowed to be elected to parliament until 1918 and were not granted suffrage until 1928, which excluded them from the majority of policy decisions.<sup>210</sup> Due to the lack of an inclusive legislative framework in the 1850s, it was nearly impossible for the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 to successfully protect women from domestic violence.

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<sup>206</sup> Jacob-Oliver, “The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878.”

<sup>207</sup> Helen McCarthy, “Social Science and Married Women’s Employment in Post-War Britain\*,” *Past & Present* 233, no. 1 (November 1, 2016): 269–305, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtw035>.

<sup>208</sup> Richardson and Walklate, “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales 1770-2020. Working Paper No. 2.”

<sup>209</sup> Richardson and Walklate.

<sup>210</sup> “Women and the Vote,” accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/>.

The Bill was not a feminist law. Fitzroy saw a hot-topic issue that negatively affected the English states' reputation and corrupted the sacred institution of marriage, and he created a law that had virtually no legislative framework to support it. Anna Clark critiques his attempt by saying "Codification required sustained, unglamorous political effort, while parliament preferred to react to 'moral panics' about crime such as garroting or obscenity."<sup>211</sup> Fitzroy saw this as a "moral panic" instead of a complex problem that required the reworking of social and political systems to give women the ability to protect themselves.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the pressing issue of the "redundant women problem," the institution of marriage, the bedrock of English society, was brought into question. Life inside and outside of marriage for women in this era was reassessed, causing domestic violence to be brought into the conversation. Something had to be done about the violent acts committed within marriage, but different reformers had opposing solutions. Some, like Henry Fitzroy, tried to alleviate the problems surrounding marriage by reinforcing it as the cornerstone of English society. Affirming the idea that husbands should be dominant figures that protect their wives and discipline sparingly. He focused on the reputation of the English state and blamed "brutish," working-class men for this violence, ignoring the systems of inequality that left many women vulnerable in the first place. Others, like Frances Power Cobbe and the Mills, believed that the best way to protect women and preserve happiness in marriage was to give women increased rights inside and outside of marriage, connecting back to the "redundant woman problem."

The Criminal Procedure Act of 1853, created by Henry Fitzroy, established a legal framework to prosecute abusers for domestic violence and increased the maximum sentence to six months instead of two. However, due to the social and economic disadvantages that women

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<sup>211</sup> Clark, "Humanity or Justice? Wifebeating and the Law in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," 200.

faced at the time, the Act was rarely used, thus rendered ineffective. Little evidence exists that the increased prison sentence decreased the amount of domestic violence cases in England. Women did not want to use this legislation or report their abuse because they knew they would either face economic hardship and social isolation or be dismissed by the jury for not looking the part of an abuse victim. After the criminalization of domestic violence, women lost the ability to decide what they wanted the outcome of their case to be. If their husbands were arrested for abusing them, they were forced to testify, taking away their control in the situation. Fitzroy's main goal when creating the Criminal Procedure Act of 1853 was the protection of women, but the only way to do that was to give women legal and social support to separate from their abusive husbands, gain financial independence, and be protected from violence.

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Oracle: The History Journal of Boston College

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Volume XI | Issue I

Article IV

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**Soviet Holocaust Memory in Lithuania:**

**Case Study of Skuodas**

Ingrida Morkevicius

## Soviet Holocaust Memory in Lithuania:

### Case Study of Skuodas

On June 22, 1941 the German occupation of Lithuania began. By the end of August 1941, most Jews in rural Lithuania had been shot.<sup>212</sup> By October, 25% of all the country's Jews had been killed.<sup>213</sup> And by November, 80% of the total Jewish population was murdered.<sup>214</sup> Lithuania has been described as “the deadliest place on a deadly continent,”<sup>215</sup> with “about 94.5 percent to 96 percent” of Lithuanian Jews being killed.<sup>216</sup> The killing occurred at an unprecedented rate, not comparable anywhere outside the Baltics.

The story of the small city of Skuodas in particular shows the quick speed, the intimately brutal killings, and direct participation of local murderers that set the Holocaust in Lithuania apart from the rest of Europe. Within three months, only 30 Jews from Skuodas survived.<sup>217</sup>

After the war, Skuodas was one of three Lithuanian massacres that resulted in a trial. In fact, there were two Skuodas trials, first in 1945 and then again in March 1964. Seven individuals, including a Catholic priest, were charged with the crimes committed at Skuodas in June and August of 1941. The Klaipeda Trial for the Skoudas Jews shows how the USSR politicized Holocaust memory for State gain and control.

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<sup>212</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *The Holocaust in Lithuania: Background and Overview*. Washington, D.C: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2005.  
[https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication\\_OP\\_2005-07-03.pdf](https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_2005-07-03.pdf).

<sup>213</sup> Dina, Porat. “The Holocaust In Lithuania” in David Cesarani, ed. *The Final Solution Origins and Implementation*. Oxford: Routledge, 2002, pg 161.

<sup>214</sup> Dina, Porat. “The Holocaust In Lithuania” in David Cesarani, ed. *The Final Solution Origins and Implementation*. Oxford: Routledge, 2002, pg 161.

<sup>215</sup> Daniel, Brook. “Lithuania’s Startling Campaign to Erase Its Ugly History of Nazi Collaboration.”

<sup>216</sup> Dina, Porat. “The Holocaust In Lithuania” in David Cesarani, ed. *The Final Solution Origins and Implementation*. Oxford: Routledge, 2002, pg 160.

<sup>217</sup> Shtetl Shkud. *Jews in the Memory of Shkud: A History of the Jewish Community of Shkud*. Accessed December 8, 2024. <https://shtetlshkud.com/wp-content/uploads/Jews-in-the-Memory-English.pdf>.

This paper will first provide historical context (part one), before describing the murders (part two) and analyzing the trial (part three). It will then discuss the way the USSR used the trial for propagandistic purposes by exploring the way the trial emphasized the guilt of the Catholic priest (part four) and the role of the media (part five).

### **Part 1: Historical Context**

To understand the impact of the Skuodas trial it is first important to understand what occurred in the summer of 1941. This section will briefly discuss the social and political climate prior to the Holocaust, as it had an effect on the motivations for the killings and on the way the USSR prosecuted them.

Lithuania's Jewish population was large before WWII: "220,000 Jews were living in Lithuania when the Germans invaded in June 1941" about 10% of the total population.<sup>218</sup> Their relationship could be described as peaceful, but the Lithuanian and Jewish communities mostly kept to themselves. In 1941, Skuodas (Shkud in Yiddish) was a small city of approximately 6000 citizens located in Klaipeda County.<sup>219</sup> In 1939, the Jewish population was 2500, nearly half of Skuodas' total population.<sup>220</sup> The community had several synagogues. Jews made up most of the middle class, and local Jews primarily worked in crafts, trade, industrial enterprises or agriculture.<sup>221</sup> In 1931, "there were 81 stores and businesses in Skuodas, 66 (80%) of which were Jewish-owned."<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Yad Vashem. "The Final Solution: The Beginning - The Baltic States." Accessed December 8, 2025. <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/final-solution-beginning/baltic-states.html>.

<sup>219</sup> JewishGen KehilaLinks. "History of the Jewish Community of Škud." Accessed December 8, 2025. <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/skuodas/History.html>.

<sup>220</sup> JewishGen KehilaLinks. "History of the Jewish Community of Škud." Accessed December 8, 2025. <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/skuodas/History.html>.

<sup>221</sup> JewishGen KehilaLinks. "History of the Jewish Community of Škud." Accessed December 8, 2025. <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/skuodas/History.html>.

<sup>222</sup> JewishGen KehilaLinks. "History of the Jewish Community of Škud." Accessed December 8, 2025. <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/skuodas/History.html>.

The fact that Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union one year before the Nazi invasion likely contributed to how violent the Holocaust was in Lithuania. The Molotov Ribbentrop pact, signed August 23, 1939, stated that Germany and the USSR would split Eastern Europe, and Lithuania would fall into the hands of the Soviets.<sup>223</sup> The Soviet occupation of Lithuania lasted from June 1940 until the Nazi invasion in June 1941. During the occupation, the “the myth that Jews betrayed independent Lithuania and collaborated with the Soviet administration en masse” was created.<sup>224</sup> Antisemites claimed “[Jews] took control of the State Security and Public Police, occupied all major posts in nationalized industry and trade.”<sup>225</sup> Jews made up 36% of the Communist party membership in Lithuania during the first occupation period.<sup>226</sup> However, in reality, Jews suffered under Soviet occupation too, “since they ran a disproportionate number of businesses, newspapers, and civic organizations.”<sup>227</sup> 35,000 Lithuanian citizens were deported to Siberia during this period; 20% of these were Jews. Yet the Jews were only 7% of the total population. Skuodas had several families deported to Siberia during the June 1940 deportations, both Jewish and Lithuanian.

As the Soviet Army retreated from Lithuania, they killed 1000 civilians, further fueling antisemitic sentiments. At the time, Lithuanians claimed that “many Jews fled with the Soviets as

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<sup>223</sup> Timothy, Snyder. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010, pg 147.

<sup>224</sup> Daniels, Brooks "The Interplay Between Memory and Trauma: Examining the Legacy of the Holocaust in Lithuania," *Journal of Ethnic and Political Studies* 45, no. 6 (2019): 478-495, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419844820>, pg 263.

<sup>225</sup> Liudas, Truska. "Preconditions of the Holocaust: The Upsurge of Anti-Semitism in Lithuania in the Years of the Soviet Occupation (1940-1941)," published online by the International Commission for the Evaluation for the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, 2002.

<sup>226</sup> Dina, Porat. “The Holocaust In Lithuania” in David Cesarani, ed. *The Final Solution Origins and Implementation*. Oxford: Routledge, 2002.

<sup>227</sup> Daniel, Brook. “Lithuania’s Startling Campaign to Erase Its Ugly History of Nazi Collaboration.” *Slate Magazine*, July 26, 2015. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/07/lithuania-and-nazis-the-country-wants-to-forget-its-collaborationist-past-by-accusing-jewish-partisans-of-war-crimes.html>.

the Germans invaded served as evidence of their guilt and complicity with the Soviets.”<sup>228</sup> The Jewish collaboration myth meant that some individuals were more willing to kill their neighbors, as revenge.

Furthermore, as Timothy Snyder has argued, “the high level of violence and lawlessness happening under Soviet rule, set the stage for a brutal display of hostility and vengeance toward the Jews,” because this violent instability accustomed people to criminality.<sup>229</sup> In addition, those who had collaborated with the Soviets feared the Nazis and wanted to prove their loyalty to the new regime<sup>230</sup> and “to make the best for themselves.”<sup>231</sup>

The nationalist and antisemitic motivations for killing would be considered a dangerous ideology by the USSR, and it affected their handling of Holocaust memory. Juozas Vyšniauskas, a historian, stated in reference to Skuodas that “Hitlerism and fascism destroyed the Jews physically. This work, the destruction of what remained, was continued by Stalinism and communism.”<sup>232</sup>

## **Part 2: The Murder of the Skuodas Jews**

June 28, 1941 was the beginning of the end for the Jews of Skuodas. By the end of the first day of killing, “the Lithuanians were saying that the color of the river was red the whole time from the blood of the murdered Jews.”<sup>233</sup> Just two weeks later, on August 15, 1941 all but

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<sup>228</sup> Taly, Matiteyahu. *Strategies of Survival: Lithuanian Jews and the Holocaust*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2019, page 86.

<sup>229</sup> “Holocaust in Lithuania.” Facing History and Ourselves, 2025.  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/holocaust-lithuania>

<sup>230</sup> Timothy, Snyder. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010, pg 190.

<sup>231</sup> Michael MacQueen, "Lithuanian Collaboration in the Final Solution: Motivations and Case Studies," in *The Holocaust and Its Aftermath: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020), page 1.

<sup>232</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 106.

<sup>233</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2024. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

30 Jews from Skoudas were dead.<sup>234</sup> In the span of three months, an entire city's Jewish population was annihilated.

The killing was not only rapid, but brutal, often involving torture. Berl Yelovich testified that on June 28, 1941, “they hitched Dr. Lev and Chatze Karb to carts.”<sup>235</sup> Following this public humiliation, men and women were gathered from around town. “They brought everybody to the Shaul Hall, tortured them insanelly, and murdered them. The victims had no food or drink, and they were murderously beaten.”<sup>236</sup> The murderers stood outside the hall, shooting through the windows at the victims: “on account of every small thing (and even not such small things), even for standing or sitting.”<sup>237</sup>

The ruthless killers showed no mercy. Witnesses of the event state that when a pregnant woman was beginning to give birth she “asked for help, and the Lithuanian murderer stabbed her in the belly with a knife and said, “here, you snake, is your help.”<sup>238</sup> Along with adults, children were also murdered. “They were taken from their poor mothers and their heads were smashed against the rim of a nearby well. Then they threw the bodies into the well or threw the children alive into the well.”<sup>239</sup> Adolfina Kaubriene states “the murderers had killed [a woman’s] husband, and, to spite her, they brought her his teeth.”<sup>240</sup> Thus, the brutal murders also showed that the killers had an intimate familiarity with their victims.

A week later, on July 10, twenty Jewish men were led to the cemetery and shot by the same partisan group, led by Kostas Vasaris. Days later the same group completed two rounds of

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<sup>234</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>235</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>236</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>237</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>238</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>239</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>240</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

killing, in a nearby village of Kulai, of approximately 65 Jewish men. By this point, only 500 Jewish women and children, and 20 men remained in Skuodas.<sup>241</sup>

On July 17 1941, a second major killing occurred, followed by the forced 41km march to Dimitravas labor camp. The brutality again was well documented. “A woman was in labour, and she leaned on a tree to give birth to her baby. The murderer grabbed the baby and smashed its tiny head against the tree-trunk. And the mother was finished up with the butt of a gun.”<sup>242</sup> The women and children were marched on foot to Dimitravas concentration camp. Those unable to keep pace were shot. Witnesses of the event state “the road from Shkud to Dimitravas was covered with the murdered bodies of children and women. The murderers shot them and buried them alive; they trampled them, beat them with gun butts, pitchforks, and clubs.”<sup>243</sup> Further testimony from a passerby during the march to Dimitravas that “Kazys Vysniauskas (the murderer) took the bicycle from him, ran over a woman, and killed her. He killed three more women and wounded a fourth.”<sup>244</sup>

At night the terror continued: “they rested in the forest for the night. Girls of 13 and 14 years were taken, raped, and killed. Their heads were bashed against the tree-trunks.”<sup>245</sup> Those shot during the two day walk were buried by the Lithuanian peasants they passed. In Skuodas, it is documented that rape occurred several times.

After almost a month in the German-run concentration camp Dimitravas, on August 15, 1941 the remaining women from Skuodas were killed by the same group led by Kostas Vasaris.<sup>246</sup> Witnesses state that several Germans were present but the majority of shooters were Lithuanian. The murderers told Genya Solovichik, a local, that “after the shooting we heard

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<sup>241</sup> Arūnas, Bubnys. *Holokaustas Lietuvos provincijoje: 1941 metais*. Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2021.

<sup>242</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>243</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>244</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>245</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>246</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

screams and moans from the pit. And we were told to bury them even though many were still alive. We covered the pits at night.”<sup>247</sup> Almost half the victims were buried alive instead of shot.

The horrific testimony given by witnesses at the trial show the brutality of the personal killing. It further shows the killers were local Lithuanians. Throughout the witness testimony, German presence is rarely mentioned and it is heavily emphasized that the killing was led by the Lithuanians of Skuodas, including the partisan group from Skuodas that traveled to Dimitravas to finish what they had started.

### **Part 3: The Trial**

Some of the trials conducted in this period were rushed with questionable methods of collecting witness testimony and evidence. Skuodas, however, had a thoroughly conducted investigation. The individuals brought to trial in 1963 were most definitely guilty of cruel murders and torture, but the trial wasn't aimed only at pursuing justice for the victims. Its main purpose was to serve as Soviet propaganda. This section will explore the context prior to the trial that directly motivated the trial and the trial itself. Showing the motivations behind opening an investigation, the investigation itself, and the trial. It will also show how the trial was handled to promote the Soviet Union as an anti-facist State motivated by justice.

#### *Context of the Trial*

As in other places in Europe, “war crimes trials were very often used to legitimize new regimes and influence the attitudes of postwar societies.”<sup>248</sup> Part of the uniqueness of the Skoudas case is that it is one of only three trials that occurred in Soviet Lithuania, despite the extent of killing that occurred. The trial was meant to serve two purposes, serving as:

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<sup>247</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>248</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 9.

an instrument of patriotic education and [to] restore confidence in the police and judiciary after the period of the Stalinist repression and ‘to undermine the ideological appeal of the revanchist West, unmasking the complicity of its local agents in war crimes.’ Yet, these courts focused mostly on local non-German collaborators.<sup>249</sup>

Across the 1960s, a second wave of Holocaust trials occurred. Wanting to regain control over Soviet States, the trials were conducted in order to reestablish power. The defendants were primarily Soviet citizens, who had already been prosecuted immediately after the war and “in the 1960s, they were put on trial for a second time for the same accusations.”<sup>250</sup>

At the time, the regime struggled with “the return of political prisoners and deportees, who were perceived as “anti-Soviet elements,” as well as with the increased influence and international visibility of the Lithuanian exile community in the United States.”<sup>251</sup> The exile community was spreading anti-Communist messages asking the international community for aid in getting freedom for Lithuania. And the returnees were viewed as a potential threat in overthrowing the government. So one purpose of the trials was to show Lithuanians as undeserving of self-governance.

Prior to the 1964 Skuodas trial, several of the defendants had already been convicted for the same crimes. In this case specifically, “a local resident of Skuodas, Kazys Vyšniauskas, who participated in the killings, was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment in 1947 and was released in 1956. Likewise, Jonas Mockus, who came from a village next to Skuodas, was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment in 1947 and was discharged in 1956.”<sup>252</sup> The defendants were “released

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<sup>249</sup> Malinauskaitė, Gintarė. “Reflections on the Historiography of Post-War Justice and the Holocaust in Lithuania.” De Gruyter Brill, June 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2024-0018>.

<sup>250</sup> Gintarė Maiinauskaite: Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context. The Case of Soviet Lithuania in the 1960s HOLOCAUST AND SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS IN THE COLD WAR CONTEXT, pg 263.

<sup>251</sup> Malinauskaitė, Gintarė. “Reflections on the Historiography of Post-War Justice and the Holocaust in Lithuania.” De Gruyter Brill, June 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2024-0018>.

<sup>252</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 103.

from incarceration between 1955 and 1956, since by late 1955 amnesty had been granted to thousands of prisoners in the Soviet Union.”<sup>253</sup>

A year prior to the start of the trial, all the defendants were sent to prison in Vilnius and held there. This is significant because it raises questions as to the torture or coercion that occurred in the prison. Evidence presented in some Soviet trials has been considered questionable because of the intense KGB interviews, and the fact that “witnesses often provided a general description of German terror.”<sup>254</sup> For example, “Aldona Arbačiauskienė...remembers that she had to testify at this trial: ‘They were unhappy. [...] They wanted me to testify that I saw them [defendants] and that I recognized them.’ However, she explained to the Soviet authorities that, after more than 15 years, she could not recognize them because during the execution she had been lying on the ground.”<sup>255</sup> The process was not up to Western standards of gaining witness testimony, but nonetheless, in the Skuodas case, survivor testimony and the physical evidence collected by the Soviets still proves the guilt of the accused men.

The trial investigation was led by the LSSR’s (Lithuania Soviet Socialist Republic) KGB. The “evidence was mostly collected from exhumations, oral testimonies delivered during the interrogations as well as archival documents from the legal proceedings related to the mass murders in Skuodas and its environs, which were conducted in 1944 by the Soviet military tribunal.”<sup>256</sup> These exhumations corroborated what witness testimony had reported. For example, a certificate about the killings that occurred at the camp on August 15, 1941, made by Soviets after the war, stated that “on Alka Hill and at its foot, 510 people were shot, tortured to

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<sup>253</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 103.

<sup>254</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 110.

<sup>255</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 110.

<sup>256</sup> Malinauskaitė, G. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>, pg 64.

death, and buried: 31 babies, 94 children, and 395 women; 289 had been buried alive.”<sup>257</sup>A second burial place of 149 people was also found. “When the skulls and bones were investigated the medical justice experts of the committee could not find any remnants of bullets or injuries caused by blunt or other instruments. The committee concluded that all 149 people were buried alive in the ground.”<sup>258</sup> The numbers given by the Soviet committee matches those from the survivors' testimony.

Beyond the need for forensic evidence from the bodies, literature on the Holocaust and memory suggests that “uncovering the bones can ... also stand for ‘the recovery of lost memory.’”<sup>259</sup> Recovering the lost memory results in a need to heal the wounds. Following this investigation, there was a reburial of the victims on June 13, 1963. “This ceremony functioned as a symbolic act, publicly demonstrating the victims of the accused culprits. The reburials materialized both the victims and the void left by their deaths.”<sup>260</sup>

However, during the reburial, the Jews of Skuodas were remembered as ‘victims of fascism' and not as victims of the Holocaust. This means that the victims were not properly recognized as victims of antisemitism and Nazi violence. Thus began the politicization of the murders for the benefit of the Soviet state. The Soviets didn't want to commemorate the victims as Jews because they wanted to focus on the ‘universal suffering’ of the Soviets in the war against fascism. Additionally, the Soviet Union was antisemitic in practice, and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 (which was seen as a nationalist project) made expressions of Jewish identity even more a perceived threat.

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<sup>257</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>258</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>259</sup> Malinauskaitė, G. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>, pg 68.

<sup>260</sup> Gintare, Malinauskaitė. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>, pg 68.

## *The Trial*

The way the trial was actually conducted reveals that the Soviet authorities were as interested in promoting the image of an anti-fascist State motivated by justice at least as much as they were in actually accomplishing justice.

Most of the men on trial were described by historians as “small- or medium-sized farmers, aged between 20 and 40, with a four-year primary education, married, apolitical, but often former members of the paramilitary organization Lietuvos šaulių sąjunga [Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union] which, by 1940, was one of the largest organizations in the country. Later, during the Nazi occupation, its former members created underground organizations, and some of them collaborated with the Nazi regime in executing Lithuanian Jews.”<sup>261</sup> The KGB described them in their notes as “descended from peasants, often landless, farmers, and blue-collar workers. Few of them were self-educated and low literate; therefore, most probably, they could not even read properly the legal records related with their court case.”<sup>262</sup> The men, all local to the area, were familiar with the victims. Despite their intimate relationships with the victims, who had been their neighbors or relatives, they aided the Nazis and committed the murders. Afterwards, locals were aware of who had participated, and yet the killers continued to live in Skuodas. During the trial, the defendants testified against one another and showed no remorse for their crimes.

The majority of defendants were convicted to fifteen years in penal colonies for their crimes. This was somewhat conventional for perpetrators outside the USSR. However, usually such short sentences were for those that committed murder from their desks as opposed to

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<sup>261</sup> Gintare, Malinauskaitė. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>, pg 92.

<sup>262</sup> Gintare, Malinauskaitė. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>, pg 96.

face-to-face murder. In this way, the outcome of the trial was less harsh than might be expected. However, they had previously already served prison time after the 1945 conviction, for the same crimes.

It is important to note that during the trial, it is never stated that the victims were killed explicitly on the basis that they were Jewish.<sup>263</sup> The USSR did not want to accent the Jewishness of the victims, because of fears of Jewish nationalism. It is clear that the Soviet Union was not leading the trials out of care for the Jews because although “Soviet authorities allowed Jewish victims from Skuodas to speak about the mass murder of Jews and they erected monuments to the victims in the town and its surroundings,” in the early 1970s, “the Soviet authorities destroyed the Skuodas’ Jewish cemetery.”<sup>264</sup>

#### **Part 4: The USSR vs The Catholic Church**

The trial focused heavily on the Catholic priest in Skuodas, Lionginas Jankauskas-Jankus, who was tried in absentia, because he had been living in the United States since the 1950s. Although there were six other defendants, the trial heavily focused on villainizing Jankauskas in particular, which added to its propaganda value. However, Jankauskas was the perfect villain: he was legitimately guilty of crimes during the Holocaust, was living abroad and also a Catholic priest – two personal details that made him fit the Soviets’ anti-Lithuanian, anti-religious narrative.

The USSR was strongly against religion as religious organizations opposed their Communist State values. During the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, religion was banned because of the aim to create ‘separation of church and state.’ In June of 1940 all religion was

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<sup>263</sup> Gintare Mainauskaite: Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context. The Case of Soviet Lithuania in the 1960s HOLOCAUST AND SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS IN THE COLD WAR CONTEXT.

<sup>264</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 106.

removed from both secular and religious schools.<sup>265</sup> By October 5, 1940, all property and buildings belonging to the Catholic church were nationalized by the government.<sup>266</sup> During the 1940-41 occupation, “39 priests were arrested and imprisoned, and 21 priests [were] tortured to death or killed when the Soviet army was retreating from Lithuania.”<sup>267</sup>

The focus on Jankauskas-Jankus was a propaganda strategy to show how the US was harboring ex-Nazi collaborators instead of holding them accountable. More generally, “perpetrators who lived in exile or belonged to the Catholic Church were the main targets of Soviet post-war justice in the 1960s.”<sup>268</sup> In the courtroom, a seat with Jankauskas-Jankus’ name was marked. Throughout the trial he was referred to as the “ringleader” of the murders. The majority of the “blame” was placed on him.



For example, mentioned in witness testimony were Kazys and Kostas, both described as committing horrific crimes.

It is important to note that Jankauskas was in fact guilty of the crimes he is accused of. Witness statements (from the Skuodas Yizkor books) described different incidents of violence committed by the priest, asserting that in Skuodas “the organizer of the gang of 33 murderers was the priest from the Lithuanian gymnasium.”<sup>269</sup> For example, Pranas Guze “saw the priest

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<sup>265</sup> Spengla, Vidas. *The Church, the Kronika, and the KGB*, pg 8.

<sup>266</sup> Spengla, Vidas. *The Church, the Kronika, and the KGB*, pg 8.

<sup>267</sup> Spengla, Vidas. *The Church, the Kronika, and the KGB*, pg 8.

<sup>268</sup> Gintare Mainauskaite: Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context. The Case of Soviet Lithuania in the 1960s HOLOCAUST AND SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS IN THE COLD WAR CONTEXT, pg 275.

<sup>269</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

wearing the clothes of murdered people and looting their possessions.”<sup>270</sup> The priest was also seen at the hospital where he (Jankauskas) “ripped the bandages from a wounded Russian soldier and shot him. The Germans stood by, photographed the event, and enjoyed the “work” of their Lithuanians.”<sup>271</sup> The brutality of the killing in Lithuania, a primarily Catholic country, raises the question of the role of the Church in the Holocaust.

Although Jankauskas-Jankus was certainly guilty, the way Soviet authorities emphasized his guilt thus reduced the blame placed on others. During the trial “the Soviet legal authorities in their correspondence often referred to this court case as the legal process against Jankauskas and the others,” rather than listing all the defendants’ names.<sup>272</sup>

The trial carried two propagandistic messages. First, focusing on the involvement of ethnic Lithuanians in the Holocaust would put at risk Lithuanian exile community efforts to get Western support for Lithuanian independence. Thus, the defendants “were presented as both a group of fierce enemies of the Soviet system and as scum, alcoholics, hooligans, and morally bankrupt persons.”<sup>273</sup> Additionally, an official letter from the deputy chairman of the LSSR KGB in 1966 to those KGB divisions “dealing with the prosecution of war criminals, [confirmed] that it was the KGB that ordered its divisions to collect information about the accused war criminals and to discredit suspected or alleged emigrants.”<sup>274</sup> This shows how the USSR was focused on vilifying emigrants (like Jankauskas-Jankus) for State gain.

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<sup>270</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>271</sup> JewishGen. “Skuodas Yizkor Book.” JewishGen, 2025. <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skuodas1/sku001.html>.

<sup>272</sup> Gintare Mainauskaite: Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context. The Case of Soviet Lithuania in the 1960s HOLOCAUST AND SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS IN THE COLD WAR CONTEXT, pg 87.

<sup>273</sup> Pg 87, Malinauskaitė, G. (2024). *The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781003852858>

<sup>274</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg. 112.

However, this strategy was not successful in persuading the US government to pursue charges. Instead, the US government was more concerned with whether Jankauskas-Jankus supported Communism or not. In April of 1964, a month after the trial, Jankauskas was interviewed by the FBI about the charges. He denied the charges, “however, the FBI was less interested in this proceeding than in Jankauskas’ stance towards Communism as he maintained correspondence with people in the LSSR.”<sup>275</sup> After determining that his correspondence was with his family that remained in Lithuania, the FBI had no further interest in investigating the claims of his involvement in the murder of the Skuodas Jews.

This Lithuanian exile community in the United States similarly tried to deflect criticism by playing into fears about Communism. Exiles “claimed that the mass atrocities against the Jews should be perceived as ‘a kind of retribution for the activity of Jewish communists during the Sovietization.’”<sup>276</sup> This shows how Cold War politics combined with Lithuanian antisemitic myths dating to the first Soviet Occupation to downplay the Holocaust. Because the US government couldn’t be seen siding with Communists, it didn’t pursue the justice victims deserved. Only after the Cold War ended did the FBI reopen the investigation, determining that Jankasukas was involved in the Holocaust. However, by that point he had passed away.

### **Part 5: Media Portrayal of The Trial**

The Soviet media amplified the trial creating propaganda films and news articles about it. Thus, the USSR exploited the media to further push Soviet propaganda surrounding the trial domestically and internationally.

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<sup>275</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 115.

<sup>276</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 119.

Media portrayal of the trial is significant and representative of a greater media movement in Soviet Lithuania. Other films were created on political trials of the time, prior to the Skuodas (Klaipeda) Trial. Such films include two about trials that occurred in Kaunas, *Apkasų Gėlė (Flower of The Trenches)*<sup>277</sup> in 1961 and *Kodėl Akmenys Netyli (Why Stones Don't Keep Silent)*<sup>278</sup> in 1962. *Nebaigtas Dienoraščio Puslapis (The Unfinished Diary Page)*<sup>279</sup> is based on the Klaipeda trial. This film from 1964, includes clips from the trial overlapping with the story of Estera Kverelytė, a young Jewish girl often referred to as the ‘Anne Frank of Lithuania.’<sup>280</sup> In this film, it is never explicitly stated that Estera is Jewish, but the narrator talks about her brown eyes.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, the defendants from the trial are referred to as ‘her killers;’ however, Estera lived 40km away from Skuodas.<sup>282</sup> In fact she was killed by her local mailman, not the men from Skuodas.

This film, created as a propaganda piece on the trial, represents the greater meaning of the trial. It shows how the Soviet Union repressed Holocaust representation in order to gain better control. The Soviet Union was antisemitic because it considered Jewish nationalism a threat.<sup>283</sup> Therefore portraying the Skuodas defendants as Lithuanian nationalists who had committed crimes against unspecified “Soviet Citizens” would benefit the USSR’s political agenda. Beyond the messages meant for the domestic audience in the USSR, the “films served as

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<sup>277</sup> *Apkasų Gėlė*. E-Kinas. <https://www.e-kinas.lt/ekinas-movie/movie/8003>.

<sup>278</sup> *Kodėl Akmenys Netyli*. E-Kinas <https://www.e-kinas.lt/ekinas-movie/movie/8021>.

<sup>279</sup> *Nebaigtas Dienoraščio Puslapis*. E-Kinas. <https://www.e-kinas.lt/ekinas-movie/movie/8198>

<sup>280</sup> Davoliūtė, Violeta. 2021. "Local Testimony and the (Un)Silencing of Sexual Violence in Lithuania under German Occupation during WWII" *Humanities* 10, no. 4: 129. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h10040129>

<sup>281</sup> *Nebaigtas Dienoraščio Puslapis*. E-Kinas. <https://www.e-kinas.lt/ekinas-movie/movie/8198>

<sup>282</sup> *Nebaigtas Dienoraščio Puslapis*. E-Kinas. <https://www.e-kinas.lt/ekinas-movie/movie/8198>

<sup>283</sup> Andreas, Umland. 1999. “Soviet Antisemitism after Stalin.” *East European Jewish Affairs* 29 (1–2): 159–68. doi:10.1080/13501679908577900.

visual evidence showing that the Soviet justice system, in contrast to the Western countries, not only prosecutes but also punishes war criminals.”<sup>284</sup>

In the 1960s, other kinds of media in the Soviet Union began to emerge about the Holocaust as well. Witness testimonies and diaries were published. In this era, several important publications appeared in the LSSR about the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews, initiated not only by the state authorities but also by Jewish survivors.”<sup>285</sup> The first books showing that the purpose of the mass murder was to annihilate the Jewish population were not published until the 1960s. While the Soviet media discussed the Holocaust, they focused on the fascist killers and not their motives behind selecting the victims, thus erasing Jews from the Holocaust.

### **Conclusion**

The Skuodas murder trial reveals the view of the Holocaust by the Soviet Union. The specifically Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust was suppressed and covered up, in order to gain control over the narrative. Controlling the narrative behind the murders allowed the further suppression of religion and nationalistic beliefs by the USSR.

This Soviet history has had long term effects on Holocaust education in Lithuania. Lithuania began requiring Holocaust education in 1995, however it has been ineffective. In 1998, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania was established, with the goal of helping with Holocaust education. However, it has failed because of the focus on Soviet history instead. The myth of the Jewish role in abiding the Holocaust continued even after the second Soviet occupation. In 2008 “Lithuania made it illegal to display both the Soviet hammer and sickle and the Nazi swastikas

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<sup>284</sup> Gintare Mainauskaite: Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials in the Cold War Context. The Case of Soviet Lithuania in the 1960s HOLOCAUST AND SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS IN THE COLD WAR CONTEXT, pg 275.

<sup>285</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, Gintarė Malinauskaitė, and Hektoras Vitkus. *Making Justice Visible War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2025, pg 104.

as equally representative of regimes of terror.”<sup>286</sup> Lithuania has struggled with establishing its own curricula that doesn’t have a strong nationalist agenda due to a long history of being occupied. As a result, Holocaust education is very poor and the context is often misrepresented.

Ignoring the real history of the events is also dangerous because of the lack of accountability and the twisted narrative can result in history repeating itself. Today less than 3,000 Jews live in Lithuania; other minorities include Russians, Poles, and Belorussian and Ukrainian refugees. It is important to recognize the past to prevent disaster in the future.

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<sup>286</sup> Anna Christine, Beresniova. *Holocaust Education in Lithuania : Community, Conflict, and the Making of Civil Society*. New York: Lexington Books, 2017, pg 1-2.

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