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The Powers of Perception: An Intimate Connection with Elizabeth Dilling

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A thesis

Presented to

The faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

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by

Amy Dye

May 2009

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Dr. Elwood Watson, Chair

Dr. Stephen Fritz

Dr. Tom Lee

Keywords: Anti-Communist, World War II, Elizabeth Dilling

## ABSTRACT

The Powers of Perception: An Intimate Connection with Elizabeth Dilling

by

Amy Dye

This thesis examined Elizabeth Eloise Kirkpatrick Dilling Stokes, an American anti-war writer of the 1930s who attempted to get rid of the possible threat of Communism from spreading to the United States. Outside of her written works, she knew that it was important to introduce herself to persons of great importance to receive praise from the far-right community. Without these types of personal connections, Elizabeth Eloise Kirkpatrick Dilling Stokes might not have been an important figure among members of the far-right. It was through these intimate connections that her fan base began to grow. Her various books, articles, and pamphlets reached well over 100,000 people throughout the world. Today, her work is no longer in print but is found in many libraries. In this thesis, one will find the details of Elizabeth Eloise Kirkpatrick Dilling Stokes' life in connection with the various personal encounters in relation to her speeches and writings.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Kirkpatrick Dilling, a woman of the middle class, left her comfortable suburban Chicago lifestyle to become an anti-Communist crusader as well as an well-known author who went on to publish four books and a monthly magazine. Historians can connect her with major events such as the Mass Sedition trial of 1942-1944. A biography has yet to be published on Dilling and her work within the far-right movement. Despite this fact, her work was known in all far-right circles from the 1920s to the 1940s. However, her work is no longer in print but can be found in many libraries around the country. Today, members of the far-right community as well as anyone interested in her work are still reading her work.

This thesis project discusses Elizabeth Dilling and the personal contacts she made to achieve her goal of becoming a famous figure within the far-right community. Chapter 1 discusses the personal background of Elizabeth Dilling. Chapter 2 discusses Elizabeth Dilling's unique relationship with Father Charles Coughlin. Chapter 3 discusses Elizabeth Dillings connection with the Mothers Movement in relation to the March on Washington to discredit the Lend-Lease Bill. Without the National League of Mothers and Father Coughlin, Dilling might not have been as successful in her attempts to recruit mothers of draft age boys to take part in the Washington D.C. protest once the Lend-Lease Bill passed. Chapter 4 discusses The Great Sedition Trial of 1944. This trial was significant as Dilling was one of the prominent far-right members who were under investigation for conspiring against the government. Chapter 5 concludes my

thesis by discussing the remainder of Elizabeth Dilling's life and the personal contacts that she used until her death on May 26, 1966.

Elizabeth Eloise Kirkpatrick Dilling was born in Chicago on April 19, 1894, to a well-known surgeon (Dr. Layette Kirkpatrick) and to a homemaker, Elizabeth Harding." A second generation American with English, Irish, Scottish, and French roots, Dilling's paternal relatives had fled political prosecution in Ireland and had left the Kirkpatrick estate at Rathfreeland, County Down to settle in Virginia in the early 1800s."<sup>1</sup> Dilling's maternal grandmother, Jane Musquet Harding, had immigrated to the United States as a child and settled in Cherry Oaks, Ohio at approximately the same time. Later, Elizabeth's grandmother would relocate to Chicago to be with the entire family.

At a young age, Elizabeth Kirkpatrick's life quickly began to change as her father, Dr. Layette Kirkpatrick, passed away unexpectedly. His death introduced Elizabeth to the idea that a woman was the dominate figure both inside and outside of the household. If her father had not died, she would have not been exposed to such a strong independent woman as her mother. Before Dr. Layfette Kirkpatrick's death, he strongly believed the woman belonged in the home and away from both politics and business. "In contrast, her brother Lafayette was encouraged to pursue a business career and at the age of twenty-three had acquired financial security through land development in Hawaii. He subsequently traveled around the world for three years with Baron Von Zeppelin and continued to lead a privileged life until his death in 1948."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stastia Von Zwisler, "Elizabeth Dilling and the Rose-Colored Spyglasses, 1931-1942"(Master's Thesis, The University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee, 1987)

<sup>2</sup> Zwisler, 1-2

As a young child, she was described as “highly emotional, eager girl with a dramatically sculptured face, enormous brown eyes and a quick giddy laugh, somewhat lonely, and casting about in search of a career.”<sup>3</sup> In terms of her education, she attended “A grammar and secondary school student, where she attended the Chicago Normal School, began studying the concert harp at the Catholic Academy of Our Lady, and graduated from the Startlett School for Girls. A bright and self-motivated student with a nearly photographic memory, Dilling became fluent in French and studied with both Walfried Singer, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s harpist, and the world-renowned Alberto Salvi who prepared her to play concertos for the symphony orchestra.”<sup>4</sup> She continued to excel in the harp and French Studies at the University of Chicago for three years, but it remains unclear whether she received her bachelor’s degree or not. “In addition to music, Elizabeth became quite interested in Bible study. At Our Lady, Bible study was mandatory; therefore, Elizabeth retained a faithfulness and loyalty to Catholicism and its teachings throughout her life. “Her maternal great-uncle was a Catholic priest in Paris and the nuns at the Academy inspired her to pursue knowledge within a religious context.”<sup>5</sup>

By early 1917, Elizabeth met a young army officer from Arizona who introduced her to a completely new way of thinking. This army officer, never mentioned by name, opened Elizabeth to the world of forward thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. After introducing Elizabeth to these foreword thinkers, he contradicted himself by saying, “women did not count as human

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<sup>3</sup> Zwisler, 2

<sup>4</sup> Zwisler, 2

<sup>5</sup> Zwisler, 2



beings”<sup>6</sup>; therefore, Elizabeth refused his marriage proposal. A few months later in the summer of 1917, Elizabeth met her future husband, Albert Wallwick Dilling.

Albert Wallwick Dilling was an engineer who earned his law degree by attending night classes. “Born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1892, Albert attended the Chicago Kent College of Law in 1917 after earning his engineering degree at the Armour Institute of Technology, also in Chicago. Upon completing further work at the University of Chicago, he entered the Illinois bar in 1917.”<sup>7</sup> After a nine-month courtship, the couple married in “LaPorte, Indiana in May 1918, followed by an Episcopalian service in Chicago the following August. Her marriage at age twenty-four in 1918 symbolized both an end and a beginning.”<sup>8</sup> Once married, Elizabeth found herself caught between society’s expectations for an upper-class woman and her own personal desires for a career. For a short time, Elizabeth found some satisfaction within her new status as a married woman.

After the honeymoon, the couple moved to Wilmette, a small quiet suburb outside of Chicago, and began to settle down. According to Albert, they “started from scratch, I having had nothing to offer but a good education, bright prospects, good health, and some sizable debts... We borrowed money and bought a home in Wilmette, Illinois. Which Elizabeth remodeled and rented a portion of to roomers to help repay the loan.”<sup>9</sup> “Within two years Albert had secured a position as the Chief Engineer of the Chicago Sanitary District and

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<sup>6</sup> Glen Jeansonne. *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers’ Movement and World War II*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 11

<sup>7</sup> Zwisler, 3

<sup>8</sup> Zwisler, 3

<sup>9</sup> Zwisler, 3

they were expecting their first child, Kirkpatrick. Later, he worked for the City of Chicago as the Acting Engineer of Bridges, the City Engineer for Union Station Development and the Engineer Assistant to the Commission of Public Works.”<sup>10</sup>

Soon after, Elizabeth received substantial legacies from the estates of two aunts and in the mid-1930s from her mother. These large inheritances allowed the Dillings to travel much more frequently than they had ever done in the past. “These inheritances contributed to their growing financial stability and allowed the Dillings to indulge in their flair for travel. The desire to travel came from Elizabeth, who as a child heard about her mother’s and aunts’ experiences in Europe. Dilling traveled abroad ten times between 1923 and 1939. Although these trips provided pleasure and relaxation, Dilling increasingly used them as opportunities to gather information about Communism.”<sup>11</sup>

“In 1923, Elizabeth, Albert, and Kirkpatrick traveled to Europe aboard an English steamer and toured extensively in England, the Low Countries, France, and Italy where they attended an audience with the Pope.”<sup>12</sup> The couple wanted a firsthand account of the aftermath of the First World War. Dilling became frustrated by the anti-American attitudes that she had encountered amongst the British and the French. The former allies often gave the United States no credit for helping win the First World War and often complained that the United States had not entered the war sooner. On a steamship back home, an Englishman saw Kirkpatrick wearing a sailor suit with “U.S Navy” on it and commented that the Navy was a joke. “Oh, I don’t know that it is such a joke.” Dilling retorted. “It has been able to lick Great Britain twice and I think it could

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<sup>10</sup> Zwisler, 4

<sup>11</sup> Zwisler 4

<sup>12</sup> Zwisler, 4

do it again.” She vowed that if there were another war in Europe, she would work to keep her country out.”<sup>13</sup> During the fall and early winter of 1928, the now family of four (Elizabeth Jane “Babe” was born in 1926) traveled all across Europe and continued to North Africa and even the Middle East where the family attended a midnight Christmas service that was held at the Church of Nativity of Bethlehem. By the winter of 1931, the family took a cruise that expanded to both the West Indies and Venezuela.

Each trip the Dillings took overseas showed their growing interest in the new Communist system. By the summer of 1931, the Dillings traveled to both Moscow and Leningrad. Elizabeth describes her trip to Russia in complete detail in her last book, *The Plot Against Christianity*. Elizabeth nearly gushes with pride when she discusses it to any type of audience.

“Our family trip to Red Russia in 1931 started my dedication to anti-Communism. We were taken behind the scenes by friends working for the Soviet Government and saw deplorable conditions, first hand. We were appalled, not only at the forced labor, the squalid crowded living quarters, the breadline ration card workers’ stores, the mothers pushing wheelbarrows and begging children of the State nurseries besieging us. The open virulent anti-Christ campaign, every-where, was a shock. In public places were the tirades by loud speaker, in Russia, (our friends translated). Atheist cartoons representing Christ as a villain, a drunk, and the object of a cannibalistic orgy (Holy Communion): as an oppressor of labor; again as trash being dumped from a wheelbarrow by the Soviet. “Five- Year- Plan- these lurid cartoons filled the big bulletin boards in the churches our Soviet guides took us to visit.”<sup>14</sup>

Elizabeth’s first thought was “Oh NO! Not THAT”.<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth strongly felt that something be done about the way Christ was being portrayed to the country as a whole. Elizabeth viewed the city of Moscow as a city that Christ would have loved. Elizabeth imagined “our savior washing the feet of His

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<sup>13</sup> Jeansonne, 12

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Kirkpatrick Dilling. *The Plot against Christianity*. Lincoln, (Nebraska: The Elizabeth Dilling Foundation, 1964), 5

<sup>15</sup> Dilling, “The Plot Against Christianity”, 5

Disciples as an example, and telling them that he would be great among you should be the servant of all.” I glanced up at the exquisite stained glass window of Christ, about to be demolished and a little tear trickled down my cheek as I thought: “I can never hate you like that. (I did not know that the Pharisee Talmud gives Him FIVE sadistic deaths today).”<sup>16</sup> The Dillings came in as tourists but walked out as budding anti-Communists who would fight for America and Christianity at any costs.

Prior to her visit to Russia, “Dilling claimed that prior to her visit she had no knowledge of any World Revolution and that she has been sound asleep as were most good Americans.”<sup>17</sup> “Her reactions to the Soviet Union rested on two levels; one cultural and the other ideological. Culturally shocked at the basic living conditions, she lamented the ‘dirty, drab dilapidation of Russia, with its uncurtained, broken windows and unrepaired roofs...with idle crowds roving the streets.”<sup>18</sup> “Offended by the economic chaos, Dilling described the foodless shelves as wild children who lost private ownership and individual initiative.<sup>19</sup>” “She warned that no American could ‘conceive of the Soviet despotic regulation of the smallest personal matters... nor understand the haunting fear of the terrorist secret police which even the American tourist in Russia sensed.”<sup>20</sup> According to a Soviet tour guide, he boasted that the Red Revolution would start in China and end in the United States. After returning home, she started that over one-fourth of China was already under the leadership of Sun Yat Sen and the Soviets.

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<sup>16</sup> Dilling, “The Plot Against Christianity”, 5

<sup>17</sup> Zwisler, 5

<sup>18</sup> Zwisler, 5

<sup>19</sup> Zwisler, 5

<sup>20</sup> Zwisler, 5.

Beyond these descriptions of living conditions in the Soviet Union, Dilling was horrified by the blatant anti-Christian stance of the Marxist government. “The antireligious museums established in former cathedrals and monasteries constituted the most repugnant part of the Soviet Union atheistic campaign for Dilling. Established in Moscow, Leningrad, and provincial centers, anti-religious museums contained exhibits exposing ‘falsity’ or ‘crimes’ of various religions including Catholicism, showing the irreconcilability of religion and science , and mocking religious beliefs and rituals. By 1930 forty-four of these museums existed in the Soviet Union and millions of people visited them each year.”<sup>21</sup>

Great points of interest for the Dillings while on their trip to Russia were the visiting of the Moscow’s Church of the Redeemer and St. Isaac’s Cathedral in Leningrad. Once the Dillings were inside of the church, feelings of anger were found upon their faces. As the Dillings quickly left both churches, Elizabeth wrote down some important thoughts that would be recapped in her book, *The Red Network*, and her weekly magazine, *The Bulletin*. Elizabeth explained that it was “filled with displays ridiculing Jesus Christ as a bootlegger, Christian Holy Communion as cannibalism, and Christianity as rubbish impeding the Five Year Plan.”<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth described herself as a devout reader of the Bible and claimed that the church was in direct violation of God’s word. “Dilling loathed this state-directed atheism and the threat it and Communism posed to both Christianity and patriotism. Stirred to study the subject further after going home to the North Shore, she turned to the Bible for guidance and answers.

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<sup>21</sup> Zwisler, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Dilling, *The Red Network*. (Chicago, Ill: Ayer Publishing Co, 1935) 11; Dilling Bulletin, August, 1941, 2.

Dilling began to study its relationship to current events and to seek the relevance of its prophecies.”<sup>23</sup>

To match this interest, Dilling instantly became a student of Iris McCord, a Moody Bible Institute teacher who broadcasted religious programs on the institute’s radio station, WMBI. After speaking with Dilling, McCord arranged for her to speak on WMBI to audiences that were interested in hearing about her adventures to Russia. “She also was encouraged by invitations to speak and to show the films she had taken in the Soviet Union to the North Shore chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) and the American Legion. Under WMBI auspices, she would later speak before the Knights of Columbus, Catholic’s women’s clubs, and Catholic colleges and convents.”<sup>24</sup>

“Lecturing without fee to these patriotic organizations, Dilling achieved local notoriety and further inspiration to continue her research beyond the cursory level.” She stated, “One need not go to Russia, nor to the slums, to find Communism. Its influence flourishes in... our own North Shore ‘society.’”<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth explained to her audiences that Communist propaganda could appear anywhere even in their own city of Chicago. Elizabeth also strongly felt that any students who attended either a college or a university were in direct danger. She felt that it was up to her to get rid of these types of Communistic threats from hurting good Christian citizens of the United States. For each of her lectures on the radio, Elizabeth spent several hours researching the various

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<sup>23</sup> Zwisler, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Zwisler, 7. Zwisler recaps that 35 millimeter films are in frail condition and in the process of being preserved by the Dilling family. The films could not be viewed at that time.

<sup>25</sup> Dilling, “Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?” 5.

Communist movements that were taking place across the United States. She often contacted local Communist groups in Chicago and implored to the group that she was interested in supporting their cause. Once Elizabeth was seen as a valued member of the group, she would receive exclusive inside information.

“Between 1931 and 1933 Dilling regularly received information on Communist gatherings and the possible infiltration of propaganda into the higher education system from Harry Jung, director of the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, and Nelson E. Hewitt, director of Chicago Advisory Associates.”<sup>26</sup> Stastia Von Zwisler of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee explains that “it appears that Hewitt’s organization, was an information clearinghouse for several actives and it seems likely that Dilling later patterned parts of her Patriotic Research Bureau after it”.<sup>27</sup>

During the research process, Elizabeth discovered filmmaker Harry Jung (maker of the film *The Protocols of Zion*). She instantly contacted him in hopes that he would advise her on how to deal with these types of Communist threats. Jung agreed to help Dilling by letting her look at any of his files that she deemed important to fight the Communistic threat. Later, both Jung’s films and research came into the hands of the federal government. The Department of Justice deemed Jung’s work as un-American as it featured several racial prejudices that offend most American citizens. “Hewitt also provided Dilling with professional advice, and supplied and checked information for her. She commended him for twelve years as he was devoted to the active statistical

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<sup>26</sup> Zwisler, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Zwisler, 8.

work and studies on Red subversive activities and his editorship of the Advisory Associated weekly bulletins which every super-patriot needs.”<sup>28</sup>

After several discussions with Jung, Elizabeth began contacting Francis Ralston Walsh of Philadelphia and Colonel Edwin Marshall Hadley of Chicago to gain a deeper understanding of the Communist movement. “Welsh, an investment broker, had assisted the United States Department of Justice during the First World War in investigating subversive activities and conspicuous radicals’.”<sup>29</sup> “From 1917 until 1938, Welsh had spent substantial time and money collecting information about Communism, suspected sympathizers and their organizations. He had several employees collecting and organizing this information for him. Most important, however, Welsh expressed the desire prior to his death that his files be give to someone who would be able to sustain them with continued research. Elizabeth Dilling was that person.”<sup>30</sup>

In comparison to Walsh, Edwin Headley differed in both his intent and purpose. In 1932, Hedley and Dilling combined forces to organize the Paul Reveres “a patriotic organization to uphold Americanism in opposition to all other “Isms” such as Socialism and Communism.”<sup>31</sup> Naturally, the headquarters were in Chicago but local chapters were found throughout the United States. The organizational goals were to stop Communist ideals from spreading to schools, churches, etc. “Ostensibly, all men and women over the age of eighteen of any race, creed, or color and who pledged loyalty and adherence to the purposes of the Reveres were eligible for membership. Local

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<sup>28</sup> Zwisler, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Zwisler, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Zwisler, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Zwisler, 9.



chapters were not expected to collect membership dues or to pay any dues to the national office and each chapter would finance its own activities through free-will offerings and contributions.”<sup>32</sup>

Elizabeth recaps the time that she spent with the Paul Reveres in her pamphlet, “Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?” Elizabeth writes that she served as the national treasure to the organization. In 1933, The Reveres decided that the only limitation to membership was that one could not be a part of the Jewish faith. However, this denial of membership based on limitation of faith did seem to backfire in some cities across the nation. “The San Diego chapter reportedly refused to admit Jews and Hadley supported its actions. Ultimately, the chapter withdrew and she resigned.”<sup>33</sup>

Elizabeth’s experiences with the Paul Reveres at this time coincided with her literary career. Elizabeth had very little experience with the publication world but knew that it was important for her to write more books and articles in hopes of eliminating Communist threats from taking place across the United States. Several members of the Paul Reveres and her fans insisted that she write down her personal opinions and publish them for the whole world to see. In response, she published a compendium of articles that she had written for a local newspaper, The Wilmette Announcements. For example, the pamphlet, “Red Revolution Do We Want It Here, “represented the results of her initial research and the conclusions she drew concerning alleged local Communist activity.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Zwisler, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Dilling, “Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?”, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Zwisler, 11

The pamphlet recaps her trip to Russia and the anger she felt for its political system. She often voiced her concern about the economic Depression in the United States and felt that it was the breeding grounds for Communist activity. She once again felt that the weak could not defend themselves from such a strong powerful force as the Communist party. It was important for her to become a powerful voice amongst the scared public to lead them against temptations of joining the Communist party. Dilling describes that most Americans would just give in to Communism whether they wanted to or not. She felt that only a divine spirit could help fight the demons (“Communists”) from taking hold of any more innocent victims. Dilling sought to achieve this goal.

Dilling also warned in this same pamphlet that the so-called “Parlor Pinks” had “delicately sugar coated raw Communism for the literary North Shore society.”<sup>35</sup> She also claimed that these individuals “usually posed not as ‘gutter’ adherents,’ but as ‘neutrals, liberals, and lovers of mental freedom,’ she charged them with conspiring to violently overthrow the government, weaken the military and promote free sexual relations among individuals of all ages.”<sup>36</sup>

More importantly, Dilling felt that the Reds existed within the Chicago higher education system that included the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and even Crane Junior College. Elizabeth preached to “Independent’ young’ intellectuals and their parents were generally ignorant”<sup>37</sup> She felt that the youth of Chicago were pure and innocent before they were sent to a college or university. She claims that she would “prefer to expose my children to a

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<sup>35</sup> Zwisler, 11

<sup>36</sup> Zwisler, 11

<sup>37</sup> Dilling. Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?, 5

disease by sending them through the contagious ward of a hospital rather than expose them to the contagion of atheism and Communism.”<sup>38</sup>

Dilling finishes the pamphlet by discussing those individuals who adhered to a more sympathetic view of the Communists. She felt that these young “pinks” did not have what it takes to fight as the “reds” do. “She compared them to a narrow gorge, but when allowed to broaden out over the plain, it could become a malarial swamp, spreading disease and death.”<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth personally felt that it was her duty to inform the public of any type of Communist activity that might be going on in their town that they might be unaware of. She wanted the public to stand up and tell the truth about what was really going on behind closed doors. To encourage the public to tell the truth, she started petitions to have various state and federal representatives prosecuted for taking part in Communist activities. She asked the public on Election Day to know which representatives were “Red” and which ones were “White”. Elizabeth also voiced her own opinions on the right thing for a voter to do if one could not make up his or her mind. For example, she supported the “Bachmann Bill (House Resolution 1967) which strengthens immigration and deportation laws against Communists, and the Jeffers Bill (House Resolution 8594) which would make it a crime to advocate or promote the violent overthrow of the United States government.”<sup>40</sup> This type of interfacing with the public would bring more fame and recognition in the coming years.

In conclusion, Elizabeth used her connections with various members of society such as Colonel Edwin Marshall Hedley and Francis Ralston Walsh to

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<sup>38</sup> Dilling. *Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?*, 5

<sup>39</sup> Zwisler, 12. I also found the information in the Dilling’s “Red Revolution Do We Want It Here? 7.

<sup>40</sup> Dilling. “Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here? 16

become an important figure within the far-right community. One will see in the chapters to come that Elizabeth needed these intimate connections if she was to survive for any length of time in the political world. This idea of using personal connections to gain some type of fame in order to raise awareness for her cause would be pertinent in the chapters to come.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMBINING THE POWERS OF HATE: AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHER CHARLES COUGHLIN AND ELIZABETH DILLING

In Chapter 1, personal connections were emphasized as they became the driving force behind Elizabeth Dilling's quest for fame amongst the members of the far right. In the late 1920s, Elizabeth made several important connections such as Marshall Hedley and Francis Ralston Walsh. However, Elizabeth knew that she needed a larger name than that of Hedley and Walsh to become a success amongst the members of the far right. After some serious thought, Elizabeth decided to use some of the important connections she had made in the past in hopes that she might connect with Father Charles Coughlin. What drew Elizabeth's attention to Father Coughlin was his radio show that was broadcasted by CBS. His use of the mass media enticed Elizabeth to do the same thing in her quest for fame. This personal connection with Coughlin would prove to be an important one as it would affect her relationships with other members of the far right for years to come.

On October 25, 1891, Charles Edward Coughlin was born in Hamilton, Ontario to Thomas Coughlin, a sailor, and Amelia Mahoney. Both of his parents were devout Catholics who encouraged his interest within the church. In June of 1903, thirteen-year-old Coughlin entered preparatory seminar at St. Michael's College in Toronto to begin his studies for priesthood. By 1911, Coughlin became president of the first graduating class of the University of Toronto and the newly established St. Michael's College. Coughlin then proceeded to a more intense preparation for priesthood at St. Basil's Seminary.

While attending St. Basil's Seminary, Coughlin began working with the Basilian Order in Waco, Texas in order to become ordained. By June 29, 1916, Charles E. Coughlin was official ordained at St. Basil's Church in Toronto. Despite his official ordainment, Coughlin did not begin his theological career as a priest until later on. Instead, Charles began teaching psychology, English, and logic at Assumption College in Ontario near the Canadian border neighboring Detroit. By 1918, changes within the Basilian Order in Canada began requiring that all men take a vow of poverty; the priests were given three different alternatives. One of the three options was to leave and join a diocesan clergy. Coughlin did not wish to take the vow of poverty; therefore, on February 6, 1923, he became part of the diocesan clergy.

Soon after his incardination, Coughlin moved to Detroit and joined Bishop Michael J. Gallagher at his parish in 1926. After a series of three successful assignments from Gallagher, Coughlin asked to build a new parish in a suburban area of Detroit called Royal Oak named after the St. Therese of Lisieux, "the little Flower". To raise money for the new parish, Father Coughlin negotiated his first radio program, which aired on October 17, 1926, over WJR in Detroit. This broadcast inspired others such as Elizabeth Dilling to focus on his message about the spreading of Communism throughout the United States. "At first, Dilling's crusades against Communism were motivated by religion, not politics. Elizabeth sympathized with Protestantism, fundamentalism, and conservative Catholicism. She was an admirer of Coughlin and of such Protestant ministers as Smith, Gerard B, Winrod, and W.B. Riley."<sup>41</sup> Coughlin

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<sup>41</sup> Glen Jeansonne. *Women of the Far Right.*( Illinois, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14

influenced Elizabeth to the extent that she even quit her own church. “She became nauseated by her church’s attitude toward Communism, had to restrain herself to avoid being thrown out, and had no time to waste in a church activities.”<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth personally believed that Jesus had commanded Christians to fight infidels, quoting Matt. 10:34: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I come not sent peace, but a sword. Christianity was the only force that could defeat communism, yet even Christians were vulnerable.”<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth stated that “It is great to covert people but it is also important to keep them from walking into Satan’s Red pits of Bolshevism disguised as humanitarianism-and the greatest suckers in the world for doing this are Christians.”<sup>44</sup> This thought echoed the same sentiment of Coughlin’s speeches in the years to come.

Coughlin’s first speech on October 17, 1926, gave rise to a powerful voice that was heard for generations to come. It was during this particular program that Coughlin changed from delivering a Sunday sermon to attacking the American government. He attacked Bolshevism and vowed to become an authority on the subject of Communism. By the 1930s, CBS began to pick up Coughlin’s program nationally and had approximately forty million listeners by the end of the year. By 1933, Coughlin had four personal secretaries and 106 clerks in attempts to answer mail from his loyal following. “The Royal Oak Post Office revealed that in 1935 the Radio League of the Little Flower had cashed four million dollars in money orders in a twenty month period.”<sup>45</sup> The majority of the money came in smaller sums, but all money was appreciated no matter

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<sup>42</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right* ,14

<sup>43</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right* ,14

<sup>44</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*,14

<sup>45</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 155

the size for this very worthy cause. It was estimated that the cost of Coughlin's radio program was around 14,000 to 15,000 dollars a week. This large sum showed that Father Charles E. Coughlin was no longer a minor priest in Royal Oak.

As the 1930s progressed, Coughlin became a strong supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and hoped to have a place in his new administration. Coughlin had met the presidential candidate in the spring of 1932. It was during this first meeting that Roosevelt promised Charles that he would be a valued confidante in terms of economic and social issues during his campaign for the presidency. In turn, Coughlin promised to use his voice to win influence within his campaign for the presidency. It was during this campaign that Coughlin began coining the phrases, "Roosevelt or ruin!" as well as "the New Deal is Christ's Deal".<sup>46</sup> Soon after FDR's inauguration, Roosevelt chose to no longer look to Coughlin for support. Immediately, Father Charles Coughlin began rejecting FDR because of his disloyal behavior.<sup>47</sup>

By 1936, Coughlin began publishing his own weekly newspapers entitled *Social Justice*. Within this same year, Coughlin joined the Townsend Plan, which formed the Union party in relation to the opposition of Roosevelt's winning bid for reelection. It was within this group that Coughlin joined the likes of Huey Long, Reverend Gerard L.K. Smith, and Dr. Francis Townsend. After the discussion of this plan, an argument broke out concerning the nomination for presidency. The Union Party finally voted on Congressman William Lemke of North Dakota and the vice-president candidate Thomas O'

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<sup>46</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 14

<sup>47</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 14



Brian, District Attorney of Boston.<sup>48</sup> Father Charles Coughlin backed this nomination and would do whatever it takes to deny Roosevelt the presidency. “At the closing of the Townsend Convention, Coughlin ripped off his Roman collar and called, FDR ‘Franklin Double-Crossing Roosevelt,’ a liar and a betrayer. This language shocked Catholics and non-Catholics alike and exceeded the limits of respectability.”<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Dilling found Coughlin’s manner very inviting as she too felt it was important to save Christianity through the powers of the media.

By 1931, Elizabeth began adopting the anti-Communism crusade as a type of therapy, as instructed by her doctor after she almost had a nervous breakdown. Both traveling and writing would prove to calm Elizabeth’s nerves for years to come. After her first appearance with Iris McCord at the Moody Bible Institute’s radio station, public speaking became a hobby for Dilling. Word of mouth began to spread about the woman who spoke out against the threat of Communism. Like Coughlin, Elizabeth was known for her ability to capture her audience with a single word. As demanded by her fans, she began to speak more than once a week. “She expanded her schedule to include women’s clubs, chambers of commerce, veteran’s organizations and Kiwanis and Rotary clubs. Within a year, she was speaking as many as five times a week. She lectured through the Midwest, in the Northeast, and occasionally on the West Coast. She typically received money for railroad fare, meals, and hotel expenses, plus fifty percent of the collections taken at her talks, where sold pamphlets and tracts. Sometimes she was paid an honorarium, usually less than a hundred

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<sup>48</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*,156

<sup>49</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*,156

dollars.”<sup>50</sup> The hundred dollars was considered a lot by 1930 standards. Like Coughlin, Dilling made quite a bit of money for her speaking engagements alone.

Elizabeth Dilling presented her speeches much like Coughlin’s, full of anguish and hateful words. Elizabeth would incorporate “props” into her speeches such as Red Banners, YWCA songbooks, magazines, pamphlets, and of course newspapers. Elizabeth would sing songs about the so-called Red Menace and ridiculed it at every opportunity. Her husband, Albert, would accompany Dilling on the piano and pass out sheet music to provoke the audience. A favorite of the audience attending her speeches was Dilling’s impressions of Eleanor Roosevelt. Elizabeth would speak in a Yiddish accent ridiculing the First Lady at every opportunity. Elizabeth’s speeches would normally last around two hours and the audience loved every minute of it. “The audience sat raptly, fearing it might miss a good story or important reference. No one seemed to question her expertise as an anti-Communist, even though she modestly called herself “just a woman with a mouth”. <sup>51</sup> Unlike Coughlin, Dilling did not fill football stadiums; she did however draw crowds of at least a hundred people. People were starting to recognize this woman from Chicago and her brave attempts to end Communism. “After one lecture, about fifty people from the audience arose to pledge their lives to Jesus as the antidote to communism.”<sup>52</sup> This rapid advancement would lead Elizabeth into the financial backing that she and Albert longed to have.

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<sup>50</sup> Jeansonne ,*Women of the Far Right* 15

<sup>51</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 16

<sup>52</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*,16

Outside of her speaking engagements, her literary works became another form of financial stability for the Dillings. The pamphlet entitled *Red Revolution: Do We Want It Here?* became such a success that the DAR purchased over 10,000 copies to distribute to local chapters. Dilling went from being a part-time agitator to a fanatic who worked until midnight seven days a week. With this thought in mind, Dilling began collecting over one hundred file cards; each note card contained the name of a person with pro-Communist affiliations. These file cards sparked her to purchase a “large library of books about politics, history, law, philosophy, Jews, Communism, organized labor, economics, revolution and foreign policy.”<sup>53</sup> Little snippets of what she heard on the radio such as Coughlin’s speeches would often end up in her writings.

After researching this type of literature for a long time, Dilling grew nervous and irritable. The more she read about Communism the more she feared it. She often operated under the principles that “all Reds are liars. If a Red denied being Red, that is part of the Red camouflage and make him Redder than ever.”<sup>54</sup> Like Coughlin, Dilling would become exhausted from her work. Her office was in a constant state of disarray and filled with outstanding requests for more information on her various programs. For example, “one man sent her a list of twenty-seven people he wanted her to look up; another wanted several documents. Some days she did not nothing expect make photocopies of material and search for information to mail. She complained that most people did not offer to pay for the information, did not send stamps, and did not thank

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<sup>53</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 17

<sup>54</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 17

her. But Dilling read and answered as much of her mail as she could, working even when exhausted or ill.”<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to Coughlin, Dilling had such a small budget that she could not employ any workers to assist her with the research. Her husband, Albert, was the only person who helped Elizabeth. Albert helped Elizabeth so much that he often neglected his practice of law. No matter what, Elizabeth would not stop enlisting more people to join in the campaign against Communism. By 1935, Elizabeth solicited famous celebrities such as drugstore owner, Charles R. Walgreen, to become a member of her crusade against Communism at the University of Chicago. Walgreen’s niece attended the university and he immediately withdrew her from the university once he found out about the interworking of the Communist professors. Dilling accused several professors and university-affiliated persons of being Communists. One of the most notable accused university affiliated staff was Harold Swift, a member of the famous Meatpacking Company and president of the university’s board of trustees. Elizabeth thought of Swift as a “cream puff type of Red, Swift was one of the millionaires who like to play around with radicals. Some rich men turn to booze, some to chorus girls, and others to Communism. When the revolution came, his throat would be slit. The invective did not persuade the committee, which concluded the charges by Dilling and Walgreen’s niece were unfounded. No action was taken.”<sup>56</sup> By 1936, Dilling would continue to be influenced by

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<sup>55</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 17

<sup>56</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 19

Coughlin. She was especially interested in his career after he spoke out against Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After Father Charles E. Coughlin called FDR “Franklin Double Crossing Roosevelt”, the Catholic population began distrusting Coughlin altogether. The Vatican ordered Coughlin to apologize to the President of the United States. Bishop Gallagher, a close confidant of Coughlin’s, was instructed by the Vatican to retrain him to the best of his ability. Upon Gallagher’s return, Coughlin stated, “It’s the voice of God that comes to you from the great orator in Royal Oak. Rally round it.”<sup>57</sup> Pope Pius XI was very angry at the words spoken by Gallagher; however, nothing was done. “Shortly after that, the Vatican Secretary of the States Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XI), on a trip to the United States, instructed Gallagher that he should exercise more control over Coughlin, and that after 1932 election the ‘radio priest’ was not to participate in future political campaigning. According to Gerard L. K. Smith, Coughlin interpreted this action as a Roosevelt political maneuver to get Rome to silence him.”<sup>58</sup> Coughlin would not go silently and displayed many manners unfitting for a man of the cloth. On one occasion, a reporter became to speak unkind words to Coughlin after he exposed David Dubinsky and Felix Frankfurter, deeming them Communists. Coughlin immediately lunged at the reporter, ripped his glasses off, and punched him in the face. Another instant would be when Coughlin spoke out against Roosevelt and called him “a scab president”. It was apparent that Coughlin only fancied his opinions and no one else’s. By the end

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<sup>57</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 156

<sup>58</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 157

of the 1936 campaign, Coughlin began suffering from physical and emotional exhaustion. These factors plagued Coughlin for the remainder of his life.<sup>59</sup>

Like Coughlin, Elizabeth began campaigning against FDR's reelection for the presidency immediately. Elizabeth believed that if FDR was reelected as president, there would be no chance of having another free election in this nation. She would stop at nothing to find a more viable alternative. Her first plan of immediate action was to defeat the candidacy of Idaho's Senator William E. Borah. If Borah were indeed nominated, the voters would have to choose immediately between two Communists (Borah and Franklin D. Roosevelt). Dilling saw him as Communist because he supported the following: diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, Social Security, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, and the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). Both the public and Chicago Tribune would call him the "Idol of Moscow". To sway votes against Borah, Elizabeth wrote a pamphlet entitled *Borah from Within*. The Grand Old Republic Party distributed 5,000 copies at its national convention in Cleveland. Soon after, Elizabeth started taking credit for denying Borah the presidential nomination. After basking in the glow of Borah's defeat, Elizabeth eyed another presidential nominee whom she deemed as being "unworthy". That person would be none other than Kansas Governor Alfred M. Landon.

Elizabeth saw Alfred M. Landon as a night clerk trying to appear as a serious candidate for the oval office. Due to his apprehension, Landon had a hard time speaking in front of a large crowd. Elizabeth feared that Roosevelt would out talk Landon; therefore, FDR would win the presidency. After much

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<sup>59</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 157

discussion with her husband Albert, Elizabeth became a supporter of Landon. She felt that anyone was better than FDR. In relation to Landon's poor speaking skills, Dilling saw him as an impossibly stupid man. The Dillings (Elizabeth and Albert) gave the middle name of Landon to their stupid cocker spaniel who fused entirely too much. Elizabeth saw Landon's running mate, Chicago Publisher Frank Knox, as being far worse. Knox was a liberal who printed a series of Red propaganda in his newspapers and employed a Red book previewer to praise Franklin D. Roosevelt. In addition, the Jewish people ran Landon's presidential campaign. Dilling was quiet frightened by all of these prospects in one presidential nominee.<sup>60</sup>

The presidential election of 1936 came down to two choices: Landon and FDR. The Dillings had no choice but to support Landon. Albert quickly went to the campaign headquarters in Chicago to work. Once he arrived, he was told that must work under two Jewish males. Elizabeth was convinced that only overconfident executives supported Landon. Elizabeth made this assumption after she and Albert dined with six executives who claimed that they did not need to campaign because Landon would win easily. "She complained that neither Landon nor Roosevelt discussed the real issue, which was 'Marx versus Washington.' After Roosevelt won and Landon carried only two states, Dilling's solace was to say, 'I told you so' to the industrialists who had predicted Landon would win. They got what they deserved, she said".<sup>61</sup> Coughlin did feel the same way as Elizabeth in terms of considering Borah and or Landon for the presidency. The pair would agree that anyone was better suited for the

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<sup>60</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 25

<sup>61</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 25

presidency than Franklin D. Roosevelt was. By the end of 1936, Elizabeth would continue being involved with politics. As for Coughlin, he could not decide to give up his radio priesthood or stick it out for another presidential election in 1940. In relation to this decision, Elizabeth hoped that Coughlin would stay around for another presidential election so both could destroy the powers of Communism together.<sup>62</sup>

The reason for this tough decision was Coughlin's promise to the Union party to retire from the radio and political life if he could not deliver the party nine million votes for presidential candidate William Lemke. Lemke received "fewer than a million out of more than forty-five million votes cast. For a brief time, Coughlin did leave his radio show (November 1936-January 1937). After Bishop Gallagher's death on January 20, 1937, Coughlin returned to the radio stating that it was the bishop's deathbed wish."<sup>63</sup> Soon after Gallagher's death, the city of Detroit chose a new archbishop, Edward Mooney. Coughlin was shocked when he discovered the new archbishop to be less than enthusiastic about his religious endeavors. Soon after, Coughlin began making statements that the CIO was incompatible with Catholicism, believing that the Communists had infiltrated important offices in that particular organization. Right after Coughlin made this statement, Mooney announced that Coughlin's views did not express those of an archdiocese. This event marked the beginning of a series of incidents that occurred between Coughlin and Mooney. Both Catholics and non-Catholics alike knew how to perceive Coughlin. After a long series of arguments, Coughlin had lost the backing of the Catholic Church to Edward

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<sup>62</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 25

<sup>63</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 157



Mooney. The Catholic Church decided that it was in the church's best interest to stay on the side of Mooney and alienate Coughlin for good. This alienation from the Catholic Church sparked Coughlin to cancel his radio series. By cancelling his radio series, it did not mean that he would step out of the spotlight. Coughlin planned on making several personal appearances if requested by his loyal following.

Elizabeth Dilling felt the repercussions of Father Coughlin quitting his radio show. She felt that it was due to the thousands of Communist sympathizers in the United States. She felt that it was necessary to redeem Father Coughlin's good name. In his defense, Elizabeth began working on a periodical entitled the Patriotic Research Bureau. The Patriotic Research Bureau, a monthly bulletin, was sent to those on Dilling's mailing list. Dilling would often accept contributions from readers; however, most contributions were five dollars or less. Like Coughlin, Elizabeth's influence on the public became so strong that people began leaving things to her in their wills. For example, "One woman whose income was \$40 a month and who was going blind sold a \$100 bond for \$77 and sent \$75 to Dilling. An elderly man who worked as a cement mixer sent her \$100 and left everything he owned to Dilling in his will."<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth was quiet grateful to these individuals and found them to be her closest confidants. Elizabeth wrote that, "The very poor people out of work or on WPA relief who have sent in their precious mites with sincere prayers for the cause, are what touch and keep me going to slave daily and to take more kicks!"<sup>65</sup> Dilling knew that most of her successes would have not

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<sup>64</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 19

<sup>65</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 19

happened if she did not have the support of Coughlin. Dilling encouraged members of the Catholic Church to write letters to the Vatican to reinstate Coughlin's radio show.

Coughlin's loyal Catholic following wrote several letters to the Vatican in hopes of getting Coughlin's radio show back on the air. If a person of the Catholic faith wanted to support Coughlin and did not know how to write such a letter, a form letter was used. The form letter looked something like this:

Holy Father, we plead for our Father Coughlin- Have him continue his Radio Broadcasts in the same heartfelt way, not in censored platitudes which defeat the dignity God bestowed on man, but as an "Alter Christus", fearless and outspoken, going about doing his Father's business, spreading the doctrine of the Mystical Body- a brotherhood of man with a fatherhood in God-to confute the Atheistic Communism and other Godlessims to continue to espouse the cause of the poor, for the rich have ample means. Holy Father, many of us were ticked by artful propaganda, but now we humbly ask Your Holiness to give us back our Father Coughlin, as he should be- free and unrestrained in preaching the doctrine of Christ to the poor and to all who will listen.<sup>66</sup>

As for the non-Catholics, they would just have to sit around in hopes that Coughlin would return to the radio. After the Vatican received several letters from various members of the Catholic Church in support of Coughlin's return to the radio, the Vatican began to consider having his radio series returned to the airwaves. One of the first steps to having his radio show back on the airspace was for Coughlin to meet with the Apostolic Delegate in December 1937. The result was that Coughlin would resume broadcasting on January 9, 1938. Both the public and certain members of the Catholic Church were elated to have their radio priest back in the spotlight, as they felt lost without him. This particular decision from the Vatican meant that Archbishop Mooney would have to accept Coughlin's return to the radio. It can be said that

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<sup>66</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 158

“neither Mooney not any other Catholic ecclesiastic would be quick to confront Coughlin after that incident. As will be discussed later, the ‘radio priest’ became more radical and more anti-Semitic in 1938 and thereafter.”<sup>67</sup>

After returning to the radio, Coughlin prided himself as a social reformer who popularized the papal social encyclicals, in particular the *Rerum Novarum* (“On the Condition of the Working Classes”) enunciated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 and the *Quadragesimo Anno* (“On Reconstructing the Social Order) issued by Pope Pius IX in 1931. Both were concerned with needs of the working classes. In relation to these efforts Coughlin came out with the “Sixteen Points for Social Justice”, which he wrote on November 11, 1934. He was preparing to found a new organization entitled the National Union for Social Justice. Despite his personal views, the public was still in love with the manner in which he spoke about the threat of Communism in the United States.<sup>68</sup> “Although he spoke loudly for the right of private ownership of ‘all other property’, his third point states: “I believe in nationalizing the public resources which by their very nature are too important to be held in the control of private individuals.”<sup>69</sup> Coughlin wanted to abolish the privately owned Federal Reserve Bank and establish a new government owned Central Bank. In addition, Coughlin spoke out for a living family wage, demanding for a fair profit for the farmer, and constantly lobbied for the rights of a laboring man to organizing unions in his best interest. Another point of interest to the public was Coughlin’s interest in the fluctuation of money.

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<sup>67</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 158

<sup>68</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 159

<sup>69</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 159

Coughlin's theories on money were at best inconsistent and often took a very simplistic view. As time passed, he considered himself an expert as he was called to testify before the Banking Subcommittee in the U.S. House of Representatives in March of 1934. He once again broke sides with FDR over his unwillingness to back the monetization of silver. As long as Coughlin lived, he never came to terms with FDR on this issue. In April 1937, Coughlin stated, "The President promised me that the country would go on the silver standard. It turned out that he was lying to me. But he was so damn charming that you couldn't help but like him."<sup>70</sup> Roosevelt was indeed charming, but Coughlin would never see him as anything more than a deceitful human being. Coughlin's ideas of reviving the economy and the growing interest of self-government were just two of the many reasons for Coughlin's popularity. These two issues would convince the public that they needed to listen to both Coughlin and Dilling. The pair was confident that they could both make a decision that would render a successful verdict during the 1940 presidential campaign.

The 1940 presidential campaign seemed to be doomed in the eyes of Coughlin and Dilling from the beginning as the United States just emerged from the Great Depression. The public grew anxious when it came to finding out who would become the next president of the United States. The candidates for the presidency included Democratic Candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Republican Candidate, Wendell Willkie. The public was divided on who would be the best candidate for the president; the Americans were not the only ones

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<sup>70</sup> Athans, *The Coughlin- Fahey connection*, 159

interested in this election. Since the early 1940s, the German government, through the United States jurisdiction offices, had received large funds from the city of Berlin to influence the direction of American foreign policy. To this effect, the German government was undertaking a secret operation to affect the outcome of the presidential and congressional elections that were to take place in the coming months.

In July 1940, a message sent from the German Charge of Affairs in the United States to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. “It referred to the necessity in ‘our information activities in America to employ a great variety of methods, for which it will probably be possibly to render normal accounting after the war.’ Reference was made to an earlier secret directive, which had described ‘special methods’ for ‘prevent[ing] the country from entering the war and to exert direct political influence.”<sup>71</sup> O. John Rooge, a Justice Department attorney who traced the documents after World War II, proclaimed that it was “the biggest single scheme the Nazis had involving the United States.”<sup>72</sup> Soon after, a multi-million dollar campaign was launched by the Nazi regime that included the subsidizing of magazines, pamphlets, and newspaper articles. The regime often created new publications aiming to shape the American public’s opinion leading them to complete isolation. The ultimate goal was to defeat Franklin Roosevelt by whatever means possible.

During the 1940 presidential election, both Dilling and Coughlin became extremely involved with the presidential campaign and would do whatever it

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<sup>71</sup> Warren, Donald. *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin The Father of Hate Radio*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 239

<sup>72</sup> Warren, Donald. *Radio Priest*, 239

took to defeat FDR. Just as in 1936, she wanted the Grand Old Republican Party to nominate a true nationalist. To add to Elizabeth's despair, many Republicans were Red as Roosevelt and were manipulated by the Jewish population. For example, Thomas E. Dewey had prosecuted Fritz Kuhn, the patriotic leader of the German-American Bund, and to some extent had supported an ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) conference. Another example would be Robert A. Taft of Ohio, who had been an attorney for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. Even Elizabeth's beloved Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan proved to be a New Dealer. Elizabeth became depressed with the thought of having Dewey, Taft, Vandenberg, or Willkie winning the presidential nomination that she wrote an essay entitled *wanted- A Presidential "Man on a White Horse."* She proclaimed in her essay that there had to be a better candidate out there who could defeat Roosevelt. Elizabeth encouraged the democratic nominee to step forward and let it be known that he could end Communism single handily. The public enjoyed her so much that they felt encouraged to take up arms and look for a better presidential candidate. Eventually, Elizabeth came to terms as she did during the 1936 election that she must support the candidate who opposed Roosevelt. Without any type of enthusiasm, Dilling supported Wendell L. Willkie for President.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the essay, Elizabeth purposely timed her third book, *The Octopus*, to influence the public to vote against Roosevelt. She was devastated when she found out the book had little effect on the country itself. Like Coughlin, Elizabeth began fearing Roosevelt more than she ever had. "The book

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<sup>73</sup> Warren, Donald. *Radio Priest*, 239

was so anti-Semitic that she had to publish it under a pseudonym, the Rev. Frank Woodruff Johnson. When people wrote to Dilling with questions about the Jewish faith, she often referred them to Johnson's fine book. 'The Jews can never prove that I'm anti-Semitic', she said. 'I'm too clever for them.' Dilling arranged for Hudson, a Jew-baiting pamphleteer in Omaha, Nebraska, to distribute the book."<sup>74</sup> Despite the public's lack of response, she did not give up on the fight against the rise of Communism in the United States.

In contrast to Dilling, Coughlin began to use inside connections to gain information about the Nazi party. For example, Father Coughlin was in direct contact with Hans Thomsen of German Affairs. Thomsen wrote this to

Coughlin:

"As effective and particularly favorable opportunity presented itself in connection with the Republic Party Convention, which takes place next week, and the election organization with who I am in constant touch. As I have already reported... In strict confidence some 50 Congressmen will be going to Philadelphia to explain our views to the delegates at the party convention... I have recently initiated the following propaganda campaign... Speeches [of isolationist congressmen] will be printed... In the *Congressional Record*... and then an edition of 50,000 to 1 million copies will be sent...to specially chosen persons."<sup>75</sup>

A few months later, Thomsen once again wrote to Coughlin discussing the German hostility towards the Irish Catholics. Thomsen had "already made efforts in this direction: By spending considerable sums from the War Press Fund we make use of the Irish-American newspaper, the *New York Enquirer*, whose circulation we have in various ways greatly increased." Thomsen then added this reference: "We maintain relations with Father Coughlin and his

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<sup>74</sup> Jeansonne *Women of the Far Right*, 25

<sup>75</sup> Warren, Donald. *Radio Priest*, 240

newspaper, *Social Justice*.<sup>76</sup> In 1940, Roosevelt was elected once again for the third term to a less than enthusiastic Coughlin and Dilling.

In conclusion, Father Charles E. Coughlin and Elizabeth Dilling were two separate human beings who combined their powers to show the world the dangers of Communism within the United States. Various members of the general public saw these two individuals as being their saving grace that would help them through this emotional turmoil. The pair worked hard for their voices not only to be heard in the United States but throughout the entire world. This intimate connection with one another would prove to be important as it lasted a lifetime.

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<sup>76</sup> Warren, Donald. *Radio Priest*, 240



### CHAPTER 3

#### IF YOU CANNOT BEAT THEM, JOIN THEM: AN EXPLANATION ON HOW THE MOTHERS MOVEMENT COMBINED FORCES WITH ELIZABETH DILLING TO CRUSADE AGAINST THE LEND-LEASE BILL

From her connection with Father Coughlin, she began joining various far-right organizations in hopes of achieving her goal of getting rid of Communism within the United States. The most beneficial group in the eyes of Dilling appeared to be a group of mothers who were protesting the deployment of their beloved sons into the Second World War. “The phrase “woman’s place is in the war” evokes the traditional slogan concerning a woman’s relationship to the home and yet suggests a very real need for the participation of women in a war economy.”<sup>77</sup> If this definition by Leila Rupp is correct, the women of the National Legion of Mothers of America fit this definition exactly. Mothers of draft age sons were distraught with the thought of their beloved sons having to fight an “unnecessary war”. It is with this thought in mind that the National League of Mothers was created. Dilling saw the National League of Mothers as an organization that would be beneficial in terms of eliminating the Lend-Lease Bill.

The league began after Hitler invaded Poland, three California mothers, each having sons who were of draft age, decided to do something about their sons taking part in as they deemed a “very unpopular war”. Frances Sherrill, Mary M. Sheldon, and Mary Ireland did just that. These women created the first chapter of the mothers movement entitled: The National League of Mothers. The

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<sup>77</sup> Leila Rupp. 1978. *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press), 3

league began in Los Angeles and quickly spread throughout the United States. To get more members to join the organization various newspapers across the United States began to publish a membership form. William Randolph Hearst spoke passionately about the National League of Mothers and declared that it was “motivated solely by patriotism and composed of the common place mothers, the type familiar in story and song... but grimly determined to fight any attempted to send their sons to fight on foreign soil”.<sup>78</sup> Demand for this organization was so great that women who had sons of the draft age would often line up extremely early in the morning at the Los Angeles headquarter, just to sign up. For example, one Los Angeles mother of a 21-year-old skipped breakfast just to sign up to participate in this particular group. “I feel it is a great honor to be the first mother to sign up to fight for my boy”, she said. “I have a 21-year-old son and I’m going to fight for him. It was too much trouble to bring him into the world and bring him up all these years to have him fight the battles of foreign nations.”<sup>79</sup> After this article was published in the *Los Angeles Herald Express*, thousands of women around the country began requesting registration forms to take part in the National League of Mothers. All women were welcomed in this group as long as they could prove that they had American citizenship and a son of draft age. The next major step after establishing membership was to begin the process of finding effective leadership for the organization itself.

The National League of Mothers began as a type of grass roots enlistment process that proved to be much more than just rallies, broadcasts, and

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<sup>78</sup> Gordon W. Allport and Janet M. Faden, “The Psychology of Newspapers,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 4 (1940), 695

<sup>79</sup> *Los Angeles Herald- Express*, October 12, 1939.

marches. The structure of the NLMA resembled a pyramid that started with small local groups and expanded to a nationwide organization. Each chapter would have to elect a leader and seven other women to constitute a panel. Sentry posts were to create an outlet for Blacks, Italian Americans, German Americans, and high school girls to gather and discuss the organization. These so-called patrol representatives went on to create a community council that went on to elect state councils. Then the state councils went on to elect a national committee that would represent the organization as a whole. This pyramid structure established a chain of command within the organization itself.<sup>80</sup>

After establishing effective leadership, the leaders of the organization would have to decide where the meetings were held. Since the organization was just starting out, it had very little money to reserve a large hall. The meetings took place in schools or churches. Once a meeting place was established, the members would often start by debating with one another about the pressing matters that took place within the organization itself. The organization also held study groups for the members to understand about the mission of the organization itself. Members of the organization often acted as recruiters, going door to door to recruiting new members in addition to putting advertisements in the local newspapers. To pay for the advertisements women of the organization would often go door to door asking for donations.<sup>81</sup> For example, “Most of the NLMA funding came from businessmen such as Hearst, but there were other

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<sup>80</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 46

<sup>81</sup> Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 46

donations, revenue from subscriptions to the legion newspapers, and from sales of pins featuring an American flag and a white dove of peace.”<sup>82</sup>

Once the organization was fully funded, the National League of Mothers went on to create a newspaper entitled the *American Mothers National Weekly*. The *American Mothers National Weekly* newsletter often discussed American money and the brains that had subsidized the Bolshevik Revolution. To put it in simple terms, the NLMA mothers felt that European refugees were Communists. The group would often use scare tactics to get more people involved with the organization itself. A specific editorial in the *American Mothers National Weekly* claimed that atheists were in our churches and something must be done about it now! To the group’s dismay, only seven million people read this newspaper throughout the United States as a whole.<sup>83</sup> If The National League of Mothers were to survive, readership would have to improve or the group would quickly disband.

The first step in evoking effective leadership within the organization was to elect a new president. Elizabeth Dilling would have been a perfect president in the eyes of the National League of Mothers. However, she did not have any children who were of draft age. Despite this fact, Dilling would become vocal within the organization itself, as the NLMA needed her support. The next choice was Kathleen Norris. Norris was a teacher, journalist, and secretary. In addition to these roles, Norris helped support her five siblings when her parents suddenly died in 1899. This proved to the National League of Mothers that she could take control of such an organization. On the political side, “Norris

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<sup>82</sup> *American Mothers National Weekly*, September 7, 1940; Los Angeles *Herald-Express*, June 15, 1940.

<sup>83</sup> An estimation of the readership was given in the September 7, 1940 issue in the *American Mothers National Weekly* newsletter.

attracted a readership of millions and became the highest-paid writer of her time, publishing eighty-five novels and selling ten million copies between 1911 and 1959.”<sup>84</sup> In addition to her family values, Norris would become a strong voice for the organization and would do whatever she deemed necessary to make the organization as effective as possible. This is exactly what the members of the National League of Mothers wanted.

Shortly after taking office, Norris began to schedule conferences to promote the NLMA; she did so exclusively in California as it was the home state for the organization. After promoting the organization in California, Norris discovered that she must create a national tour to encourage mothers throughout the United States to join. In one of her national speeches, Norris proclaimed “No woman, not even if she were a queen, has ever been heard when men talked of making war,” she said. “In all the twenty years since the last European war, no man has risen to stop the tide. In this organization, after twenty years of work with peace movements, I see for the first time a gleam of hope.”<sup>85</sup> Norris helped calm the various feelings of paranoia across the United States by telling women that they had nothing to fear because the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were to act as our watchdogs. Soon after this speech by Norris, the organization became nonpartisan. Despite this fact, most members of the organization such as Norris, Dilling, and several other leaders made it known, that they opposed the New Deal. Dilling often encouraged members to take part in the political rallies and support a cause that could save their children from being slaughtered on the front lines.

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<sup>84</sup> Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. ( Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 47

<sup>85</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, January 25, 1940.

By July of 1940, Hannah M. Connors of Milton, Massachusetts began to carry a testimony before the House of Military Affairs Committee. Connors represented the New England district of the National League of Mothers, which she claimed had well over 14,000 members in her state alone. Her district proclaimed that young American boys should volunteer not be drafted into war. During Connors speech, she often discussed how a draftee would not make a good soldier because his heart was not truly into it. Meanwhile, in California it held a national convention in San Francisco to unite all the mothers under one roof. Reported by the *San Francisco Examiner* over a thousand people attended. Another large branch of the organization was located in Elizabeth Dilling's home city of Chicago. It was in Chicago that the National League of Mothers found the song entitled, "Let's Stay Home". Soon after the League expanded to thirty-nine states and proclaimed itself the largest women's organization.

In the fall of 1940, the women of the organization did not take part in any protests or marches that denounced President Roosevelt's reelection campaign, as they were non-partisan. Soon after receiving word of Roosevelt's reelection, Dilling and Norris began to feud with one another over the leadership of the organization. Dilling made it clear that if Norris was to stay in control of the National League of Mothers, she wanted nothing to do with organization. "When a woman wrote to ask her (Dilling) what she thought of the NLMA, Dilling responded she would not join because Norris was soft on communism." <sup>86</sup> Outsiders of the organization did not feel this way as Coughlin, Pelley, Smith, and Viereck endorsed the National League of Mothers. Not long

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<sup>86</sup> Dilling to Lillian E. Fiss, December 30, 1940. Dilling Paper. Quote can also be found in Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 50

after the feud, Dilling would need the help of the organization to get rid of the Lend-Lease Bill. Even though Norris did not see it at the time, she did resemble Dillings mannerisms. “Like Dilling, she reflected the early feminists’ belief that women were more superior to men and could influence politics by setting a moral example. Unlike, Dilling, she thought women should influence politics by exerting pressure as a bloc.”<sup>87</sup> These two women needed to settle their differences if the organization was to prosper.

“The NLMA was significant because it suggested the potential of mobilizing conservative women who opposed American involvement in the war. It was the first major organization to use maternal arguments effectively against the war and Roosevelt’s foreign policy.”<sup>88</sup> Dilling realized this and proceeded to let go of her personal feud with Kathleen Norris. It is important to remember that the National League of Mothers needed Dilling’s support as she had a large following. Dilling’s books and periodicals made her a household name within the far-right movement. In contrast, Dilling proved that she needed the support from the organization to help win the overall cause of getting rid of the threat of Communism in the United States. Not all of the women in the NLMA shared the same ideas of Dilling, but they were willing to listen to her speeches and read her literature.

To understand Dilling’s relationship with the National League of Mothers, one must look at the important figures in relation to the crusade against the Lend-Lease Bill. These important figures included Catherine Curtis, Lyrl Clark Van Hyning, and Agnes Waters. Each of these women played an

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<sup>87</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, January 25, 1940; *Los Angeles Herald-Express*, April 23, 1940.

<sup>88</sup> Jeansonne, 55

important role in the protest against the Lend-Lease Bill as well as provided Elizabeth Dilling with connections that would last a lifetime. For example, it is important to discuss Catherine Curtis first as she became a dominant figure within the National League of Mothers as she often called for civility amongst the mothers. “Catherine Curtis was distinguished by her shrewdness, energy, charisma, combative-ness, and talent for organizing. Not only did she become a leader in the coalition that included the National League of Mothers of America, but she created and dominated other group, the most prominent being the Women’s National Committee to Keep the U.S. Out of War. She was perhaps the most effective female organizer on the extreme right.”<sup>89</sup> Curtis’s group, The Women’s National Committee to Keep the U.S. out of War, was influenced by both Dilling and the NLMA. Curtis used the same tactics as Dilling. “Curtis’s organization, operating through local clubs, gave financial seminars for women, sponsored talks and lectures by Curtis and other financial experts and issued pamphlets and books, including *Women and Money*, *Women and Taxes*, and *Women and Utilities*. Curtis lectured in twenty-five states within three years and distribution more than one million pieces of literature.”<sup>90</sup> This method may sound familiar as Dilling did the same thing only years earlier.

Like Norris, Curtis clashed with Dilling on the various tactics she used to gain more attention for her cause. “She’s giving the movement a black eye, Curtis lamented.”<sup>91</sup> More importantly, Curtis felt that: “Mrs. Dilling’s escapades on the Hill and her third arrest on Friday have done considerable damage in that it has practically closed the doors of Senators to calls by women. I have

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<sup>89</sup> Jeansonne, 57. It can also be found in Frederickson, 1-4

<sup>90</sup> Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. ( Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 58

<sup>91</sup> John Roy Carlson, 1943 *Under Cover*. (New York: , E. P Dutton), 225



been hoping daily that she would quiet down and go home, but publicity seems to have made her a bit 'heady' "<sup>92</sup> To provoke Dilling even further, Curtis made a direct statement to Dilling about her behavior. "You simply must call off that parade, Betsy! I have done more than anyone for the women's movement and it will ruin everything." <sup>93</sup> Despite her personal feelings against Dilling, Curtis still needed Elizabeth's help with the cause of eliminating the Lend-Lease Bill. Both agreed that they needed each other when it came to pressing issues such as eliminating the Lend-Lease Bill.

On the opposing side, Lyril Clark Van Hyning, president of the We the Mothers Mobilize for America, found Dilling to be an authority on Communism. The group was practically nonexistent until Dilling's Washington Crusade against the Lend-Lease Bill took effect. Like Dilling, Hyning felt that she could control the minds of the undecided American citizens and convince them to pay attention to her every thought and idea. Like Curtis and the other members of the Mothers League, Hyning did have her differences with Dilling." First, the former led a more varied life, whereas Dilling had never worked at a paid job outside her home, Van Hyning had been a schoolteacher. "The second difference was that Van Hyning was organized and proved to be well received by others when she spoke in public."<sup>94</sup> "The third and final difference was that Van Hyning did not attend church or choose to read any type of religious material given to her. Dilling, on the other hand, was quiet religious."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Curtis to Mrs. Jeremiah Millbank, March 2, 1941. R1 . It can also be found in Jeansonne, 65

<sup>93</sup> *New York Post*, July 9, 1941.

<sup>94</sup> Comparisons of this nature can be found in the magazine: John Roy Carlson, "They Praise the Lord and Pass the Poison Leaflets," *The Woman with Women's Digest* (October 1944),10

<sup>95</sup> Comparisons can be found in: *Women's Voice*, July 31, 1952 and McEnaney, "Defending the Family Altar," (MA thesis, University of Madison- Wisconsin, 1990), 44, 50.

In terms of defending one's gender, Van Hyning spent most of her time with women's advocacy groups, whereas Dilling did not care about this issue. "Van Hyning wanted women to seize the instruments of power, to run for office not merely because they were extreme rightists but because they were women, uniquely qualified to role."<sup>96</sup> Dilling, on the other hand, did not feel that it was right for a woman to hold any type of office whether it was political or social. However, Dilling discussed this issue of gender a few years later and said that women could only hold office if they were ultraconservative Christians. Dilling emphasized the notion that a woman must be a product of morality when it came to raising her children. The perfect mother in the eyes of Dilling must encompass Christian and patriotic values. These notions were discussed in Dilling's weekly *Bulletin*. "Dilling's *Bulletin* was limited largely to anticommunist and anti-Jewish invective, yet Van Hyning's *Women's Voice* examined a variety of issues affecting women."<sup>97</sup> If Van Hyning was comparable to anyone in the Mothers League outside of Dilling, it would have to be Catherine Curtis, as she shared the same ideals.

The final woman up for discussion in comparison to Elizabeth Dilling was Agnes Waters. Waters was the woman in the National League of Mothers who most resembled Dilling. Water used the same tactics as Dilling to attract more attention to her cause. Like Dilling, Waters had a reputation of holding grudges and constantly voiced her hatred for Jews, Blacks, Communists, Liberals, Internationalists, and the Roosevelts. First, it is important to understand Waters' background, and then it is important to compare this

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<sup>96</sup> Jeansonne, 99

<sup>97</sup> Jeansonne, 100

background to Dilling's. Waters first became interested in politics when she began researching her family background. For example, Waters claimed that she had ancestors in every American war fought. Whether that is true, no one can be certain. "She also claimed descendancy from the British royalty, saying she was a direct descendant of King James II and was a relative of the first Duke of Marlborough, yet she hated the British and blamed them for dragging the United States into war."<sup>98</sup> Later on during the Second World War, Waters moved to Washington to work in both the War Department and the Justice Department, where she worked as a secretary to Alice Paul. After working with Paul, Waters became interested in real estate and earned "40,000 her first year and 130,000 her second. In the 1920s she closed millions of dollars in land deals in Chevy Chase, Maryland."<sup>99</sup> This particular sum of money helped Waters achieve her goal of taking a more important role in the Mothers League now that she had money to support the group.

Like Dilling, Waters began taking a more important role in Washington politics. By the 1930s and 1940s, Waters mannerisms became so intense that she appointed herself as the Washington representative of the National Blue Star Mothers. Waters felt that she should have a higher profile in the capital than any other woman in the Mothers League. She often spoke very highly of herself when speaking in public. When delivering her testimony in court, she

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<sup>98</sup> Jeansonne, 138. Can also be found in Agnes Waters, *The White Papers* (Washington, DC., np., 1940, 56-7, 70-1, 90; Statement of Agnes Waters at Viereck Trial, March 4, 1942, AJC Vertical File, F; Agnes Waters, Testimony of Agnes Waters on S. 666, Senate Military Affairs Committee 78., 1 Sess., April 8, 1943, *Hearings* (Washington DC; Government Printing Office, 1943), 871-5. That Waters participated in the activities of the National Woman's Party indicates gender consciousness was an important facet of her personality. In *White Papers* she mentions her role in the party, yet does not describe exactly what she did or how long her affiliation lasted. No other primary or secondary source provides specific information about her involvement in the party.

<sup>99</sup> See above note for citation.

was quiet harsh and often shocked the members of the jury. She vowed to “arrest, try, and hang for treason any bureaucracy or other communist guilty of the crime of conspiracy to get us into the war.”<sup>100</sup> It should be noted that Waters was perhaps the most vocal of NLMA members. Waters expressed in public that she did not want “old ‘red’ doodle-wits, doddering old fools, aliens, communists, Nazis, fascists, ‘brain-trusters,’ parlor pinks, radicals, liberals and civilians outstanding for their mistake.” In short, “I want only Americans that are real men and women, no idiots and incompetents and dirty Jews.”<sup>101</sup>

From these examples, Waters did have a lot in common with Dilling. However, the two had distinctive differences as well. In some aspects, Waters did have the same level of patience Dilling had in terms of going through books and periodicals at a rapid pace. Waters was power hungry and felt that her word was the only one that mattered. Her irate behavior made Waters more like Dilling than any other woman in the NLMA. There were other members in the NLMA who were also influenced by Elizabeth Dilling, but none were as notable as Curtis, Van Hyning, and Waters.

Now that we have assembled the important players in the NLMA, it is important to discuss Dilling and her Crusade against the Lend-Lease Bill in connection with the NLMA. “From the earliest indications that Europe might go to war, Dilling’s sympathies lay with the fascist nations. In 1936 Dilling was thrilled at the news that Franco had launched a rebellion against the Spanish Republic, and she hoped the right-winged Catholics would defeat the leftist

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<sup>100</sup> John Roy Carlson, “Daughters of Dissension and Defeat, The Woman with Women’s Digest (October 1944 ), 8-12

<sup>101</sup> Jeansonne, 148. Can also be found in Memo on Bessie Smith and Peace Now, Eastern Regional Office, ADL, New York, January 25, 1944, 1; Louis A. Novins to ADL Regional Offices, January 19, 1944, 1; Dorothy H. Hutchinson, *Must the Killing Go On?* (New York: The Peace Now Movement, 1943), 22, AIC: Peace Now Movement.

Loyalists.”<sup>102</sup> Two years later Dilling went to Spain to find firsthand accounts of the war. Knowing of Dilling’s anti-Communist books, Franco went ahead and let Dilling observe the destruction of war for herself. By using a camera, Dilling displayed “churches ruined by the Reds with the same satanic Jewish glee shown in Russia” and “the bones of the gentle nuns ripped out of their coffins.”<sup>103</sup> In 1939, Dilling once again traveled to Spain to receive an update on the war’s progress. Dilling claimed that Franco “was fighting with Spain’s decent element for Christianity and against typical Bolshevist atheistic murder and chaos.”<sup>104</sup> Later Dilling expressed this same sentiment in her book, *The Octopus*. She asks the question: “Did Americans get a truthful impression from the press about the Communist, Socialist Anarchist church burning Spanish government strongly favored by Jewry?”<sup>105</sup> Once Dilling observed the situation in Spain, she quickly returned home to report what she saw to the NLMA.

Dilling addressed the NLMA about Franco, included a slide show presentation. The Mothers were outraged with the photos that Dilling provided from her firsthand account of the Spanish Civil War. This angered the women of the NLMA and made them more passionate about their work within the group itself. Dilling knew that she needed the women of the NLMA to achieve her goal of destroying “The Reds”. Later on, Dilling provided the mothers with a video tape of Franco doing “good works” for the people of Spain. This included the rebuilding of bomb shelters and various other good work projects. During a

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<sup>102</sup> Jeansonne, 73

<sup>103</sup> “About Elizabeth Dilling,” 3, Dilling to Joy, July 20, 1936, B 7, F; July 17-22, 1936, Joy Papers. Stasia Van Zwiler, 1987. “Elizabeth Dilling and the Spy-Colored Glasses” (Master’s Thesis- The University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee) 57. Also found in Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press),73

<sup>104</sup> Dilling vs Billboard, 22. Also found in Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press),73

<sup>105</sup> Frank Woodruff Johnson. [pseud] *The Octopus*. (Omaha, NE: Privately Printed), 127

close-up of one of the bombed buildings, Dilling shouted: "It was done by the Reds! They bombed the churches and blew up all the houses when they retreated."<sup>106</sup> It was from this trip that she began to express words of kindness about the Nazi party.

Soon after visiting Spain, Dilling traveled to Germany to witness the Nazi parties reign over Germany. "She traveled there in 1938 and was able to report that Germans were happy, industrious, and efficient under Hitler, who had done a great deal for his people and helped Christianity flourish. After he came to power, the Bible outsold *Mein Kampf*, atheist societies were disbanded, the government subsidized the construction of 200 churches, and children were given time off from school for religious education."<sup>107</sup> By 1939, Dilling proved to be both an anti-Semite and a loyal Nazi sympathizer. With this being said, she of course believed that Roosevelt was to blame for the entire war. She claimed that "His Democrat Party and administration were communist controlled; for proof that he was controlled by Jewish communists, one had to look no further than the Torah on display at his library in Hyde Park, New York."<sup>108</sup> "When it came to discrediting Roosevelt, Dilling would do whatever it takes to get him out of office. The Nazis cheered for Dilling. The magazine *World Service* advertised her books and begged Americans to give money to her very worthy cause. Amongst her fans was Johnannes Klapproth, head of the American sector of *World Service*, who praised Dilling highly by saying: 'If there were only more

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<sup>106</sup> Henry Hoke and Time Bomb "It's a Secret (Reynal & Hitchcock 1941), 177. Also found in Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 73

<sup>107</sup> Also found in Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 74

<sup>108</sup> *Bulletin*, August 1941, 12-3

Elizabeth Dillings!”<sup>109</sup> He also made this same remark to the German ambassador. Words like this made her work well known within the far-right movement.

With the help from the Nazis, Dilling began protesting the war to her utmost capacity. At one of the rallies Dilling spoke in New York to an audience of 2,000 people at the Hotel Commodore. Various groups participated such as the German-American Bund and the American Women against Communism. Dilling did receive money from the spectators of this event and her books that were purchased by her loyal fans. It was after this conference that she became increasingly involved with the America First Committee. At first, she was very wary as she thought that only wealthy Jews were involved with this type of committee. However, this turned out to be false. Once this fact was made known to her, she began her work as a valuable member of the organization. However, it was not until 1941 that the NLMA began supporting her cause even though many of the members did not like her high-strung attitude.

By January of 1941, word of mouth began to spread about the proposed bill entitled Lend-Lease. Lend-Lease allowed Britain to purchase weapons or borrow them during the duration of the war. “The battle had its origins in September 1940, when Hudson, writing in *American Danger!* Called for a mothers’ march to impeach Roosevelt.”<sup>110</sup> “Some time ago we suggested the only effective protest against ‘sellout’ by Congress would be a determined ‘March on Washington’ by aroused MOTHERS from all over the nation... Who will be the

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<sup>109</sup> O. John Rogge, *The Official German Report: Nazi Penetration 1924-1942; Pan-Arabism 1930- Today* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961) 170, 187-191

<sup>110</sup> Jeansonne, 76

Joan of Arc in Crisis?” The answer, he believed was Dilling.”<sup>111</sup> By October, Dilling met with Hudson to discuss such a march. Hudson responded by issuing calls to women whom he knew would be interested in helping with Dilling’s cause as well as financing such a march. Once the money was in Dilling’s hand, it was time to march!

After the House passed Lend-Lease on February 1941, Dilling told the NLMA that the time was now and the group must march forward with the protest. To get more Mothers involved with this cause, Dilling began speaking at rallies in her home city of Chicago and other Mid-Western towns that would support this cause. One group that instantly supported her cause was The Mothers Crusade to Defeat H.R. 1776. Instantly joining her cause included Curtis, Stantley, Farber, Fischer, Sherill, Van Hyning, and Waters. When the bill finally made its way to the Senate, Dilling told her fellow mothers that it was time to march to Washington. Dilling stated, “We want to start a cavalcade to Washington that will flood the Capitol with petticoats and cause all Congressmen who are supporting this bill to reconsider,” If necessary, we will lie on our faces on the Senate steps. Praying women exert a strong influence.”<sup>112</sup> Dilling felt the only way to win back the Republic was to start a subterranean organization. “Dilling told women to write to Congress to protest Lend Lease, and as a result, the two houses received more mail than they had on any issue since the fight over the Versailles Treaty.” <sup>113</sup>

The dramatic behavior continued as one young woman took this cause to a completely new level. “On February 5 Margaret Russell, sitting in the Senate

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<sup>111</sup> *Dilling vs. Billboard*, 16

<sup>112</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 5, 1941

<sup>113</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1941; Rogers 24



gallery in a black dress, put on white gloves and a skull mask, rose during a debate on the floor, and chanted “Death is the final victor!” Russell, not affiliated with any organization, had dressed in Senator Wheeler’s office and taken to the gallery by Rankin’s secretary. Capitol police ejected her from the gallery, detained her briefly, and sent her home to New York.”<sup>114</sup> While this was taking place, Dilling and the other members of the NLMA prepared to March on Washington. To help pay the Mothers’ expenses, Dilling arranged round trip fares to Chicago and proceeded to book rooms at the Plaza Hotel. “Women were urged to give money to those who could not afford the trip; those receiving subsidies had to agree to participate in demonstrations and stay at least a week”.<sup>115</sup> On February 11, Dilling and one hundred other women embarked on their journey to Washington. Once in Washington, five hundred women from various states such as Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, New York, and Maryland joined them. What these women did not realize was when they ascended into Washington, they were under Dilling’s charge. A great example of this would be the Mothers’ first night in Washington. Dilling rallied the Mothers together and they all sang, “Our boys’ bodies shall not rot in foreign graves’ to the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.’ After the closing verse-“Down with King Franklin’s Bill, we’ll never be his slaves/While mothers carry on!-some of the women cried”.<sup>116</sup>

Soon after arriving in Washington, the Mothers found themselves putting in long days at the Capital. However, Curtis, not Dilling, encouraged them to

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<sup>114</sup> *PM*, February 16, 1941; *Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1941; *TAF* 1941, 182. *Jeansonne*, 77

<sup>115</sup> *Dilling vs. Billboard*, 68; Carlson, *Under Cover*, 213; *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 1941; *New York Post*, February 27, 1941.

<sup>116</sup> *Bulletin*, March 1941, 5.

visit the senators between the hours of 9 A.M. and 6 P.M. Curtis instructed that they go in groups of two to achieve a more intimate connection with the Senators. The wait to see the Senators proved to be long and hard on the NLMA members. They often had to wait two or three hours for just a five-minute presentation with each Senator. The NLMA Mothers proved that they would do whatever it takes for their voice to be heard throughout Washington, D.C. A great example is when “the women tried several times to see Illinois’ Scott Lucas, a supporter of the bill, who took his name off his door and locked it”.<sup>117</sup> As this effort continued, the Mothers began to grow tired and often turned violent.

Dilling made sure that she participated in almost all the visits and demonstrations, but she was especially interested in Illinois Senator Scott Lucas. The senator proved to be quite important to Dilling as he represented her home state. Dilling felt that she must have his support before any other senator as she valued the state of Illinois the most. After waiting for hours outside of Senator Lucas’s door, he broke down and offered to meet the Mothers one at a time. It was on this occasion that Dilling screamed, “I don’t trust him! We’ll all go in!”<sup>118</sup> The Senator offered nothing but gestures of good towards the women by offering a hand shake to each of the greeters who called upon him. One woman shouted to Lucas: “You dirty dog!”<sup>119</sup> Another yelled, “We’re laying for you and we’ll get you in Illinois”<sup>120</sup> While all of this was going on, another woman seized Lucas by the ankle and asked him to pray. After this incident

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<sup>117</sup> Jeansonne., 77

<sup>118</sup> *New York Daily Mirror*, February 25, 1941; *Dilling Bulletin*, March 1941, 8.

<sup>119</sup> *New York Daily Mirror*, February 25, 1941; *Dilling Bulletin*, March 1941, 8.

<sup>120</sup> *New York Daily Mirror*, February 25, 1941; *Dilling Bulletin*, March 1941, 8.

occurred, Lucas in a statement to the press informed the state and the nation that he has never encountered anyone like the women of NLMA. Dilling simply responded to this statement by saying “Somehow, I don’t believe that Senator Lucas enjoyed our little call”.<sup>121</sup>

After the incident, the NLMA continued with their quest against the Lend-Lease Bill. Finally, Dilling and several other Mothers demanded that they must be let in. When the Mothers refused to stop making commotion, police arrived and arrested both Dilling and her secretary, Jean Lundgreen, for disorderly conduct. Both Dilling and Lundgreen were released only a few hours later on five-dollar bail. The next day, Dilling stood trial for the crime but was soon released when the judge suspended her sentence and returned the bail. Soon after being released, Dilling made the statement that “Pepper is a coward. He is just an old scaredy-cat and won’t talk to us. How much is getting to sell his republic out?”<sup>122</sup>

After Dilling’s brief time in jail, she felt it was important that she continue with the Lend-Lease protest. For example, between February 15<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> Dilling led several parades down Pennsylvania Avenue and included several new followers along the way. “The women marched in twos playing kazoos, singing- they were unable to hire a band-carrying American flags, placards, chest proctors, and umbrellas with slogans such as ‘Kill Bill 1776, Not Our Boys.’” “One pair of women bore a black coffin with a skeleton labeled Fruits of Bill 1776.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *New York Daily Mirror*, February 25, 1941; *Dilling Bulletin*, March 1941, 8.

<sup>122</sup> *PM*, March 30, 1941.

<sup>123</sup> *Bulletin*, March 1941, 5-7; Carlson, *Under Cover*, 211-3.

While taking part in the parade, Dilling overheard one of the Mothers state that Virginia Senator Carter Glass wanted war so badly that he put British flags at the corners of his desk. On February 27, Dilling and the other Mothers of the NLMA began to demonstrate outside his office. Dilling suggested that the women give Glass an American Flag. Once the women arrived, a police officer stood guard outside of Glass's door and told the Mothers that only one at a time could see the Senator. The twenty-five Mothers refused to do so even though the police ordered them to obey the Senator's wishes. Once again, Dilling was arrested and the others were instantly ejected. When Dilling was arrested, one of the Mothers, Clara Nibberich, stood up and shouted if Dilling was arrested then all of them should be. The police agreed but decided to charge Dilling and Nibberich with disorderly conduct and forced them to post bail. <sup>124</sup>

Once again, the authorities were quiet lenient with Dilling and her escapades. Dilling was only on trial for a six-day period while her fellow Mothers packed the courtrooms daily and picketed outside of the courthouse to show their support. "The arresting officer testified that Dilling and her women blocked the entrance to Glass's office, chanting "Down with the Union Jack!." In a demonstration "women crawled on the floor, and over the other women's legs to get by." <sup>125</sup> Dilling argued with another woman by saying that she was only exercising free speech and it was her God Given right to petition representatives. The judge recognized her statement and decided that her exercise was indeed freedom of speech. Therefore, her act should not count as disorderly. However, the judge did not let Dilling go free. The judge pointed out

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<sup>124</sup> Information can be found in: *Bulletin*, March 1941, 11-2; *Chicago Herald America*, February 28, 1941; *Chicago Tribune*, February 28, 1941.

<sup>125</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 1941.

that was Dilling's second convention. The judge in turn fined her twenty-five dollars and Nibberich fifteen dollars. "A tearful Dilling said it was the kind of justice she had expected from a Roosevelt judge."<sup>126</sup>

This small infraction did not stop Dilling; she was far from being finished with Senator Glass. "During a recess in the trial, she wrote him a note calling him a warmonger who should register as a British agent "You will be known to millions as a traitor to the republic, another Benedict Arnold, an overaged destroyer of American youth".<sup>127</sup> Soon after this statement, Glass asked the FBI to look into the NLMA for any type of connections with foreign governments. Glass stated, "I likewise believe it would be pertinent to inquire into whether they are Mothers. For the sake of the race, I devoutly hope not".<sup>128</sup> Dilling responded by saying that "This is the most insulting thing I have ever read. If Carter Glass is interested in how many children these women have, why doesn't he come down and count heads?"<sup>129</sup> Dilling offered to produce photos to Glass of the "sons and daughters" of her fellow Mothers at the demonstration. She instantly spoke out in a statement to Glass that there were over thirteen children (five of them were of draft age)<sup>130</sup>.

"The day after Dilling's convention, Missouri's Bennett Clark defended her on the Senate floor and condemned Glass for requesting the investigation".<sup>131</sup> Lucas instantly came to Glass's defense by saying that "A man eighty years old is entitled to protection from people of this type. Clark said he received all callers courteously. That might be true, Lucas replied, but Clark

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<sup>126</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 7, 1941; *Washington Sunday Star*, March 1, 1941; Zwisler 47.

<sup>127</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 1941

<sup>128</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 1941

<sup>129</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 1941

<sup>130</sup> Information can be found in the above citation.

<sup>131</sup> Jeansonne, 79

had never met anyone like Dilling.”<sup>132</sup> By the end of Dilling’s sixth day at trial, the Senate debated the Lend-Lease Bill. The Mothers tried desperately during this time to win the over the Senate by March 8<sup>th</sup>. The women tried several methods of persuasion. “Fifty women picked the White House and tried to deliver letters to Roosevelt. Elise Candef (a member of the NLMA) was ejected from the Senate Gallery when she unrolled and hung over the balcony a banner reading, “HR. 1776 means war- vote no.”<sup>133</sup> “On March 11, the House avoided a conference committee by passing a resolution concerning Senate amendments, 317-71. Later that day, Roosevelt signed Lend-Lease into law.”<sup>134</sup> After all efforts that the NLMA put into repealing the bill, “the mothers changed only one vote, that of New Mexico Sen., Dennis Chavez, and Dilling and her disciples had damaged their cause, drawing ridicule from the press-even from the *Chicago Tribune*- and alienating congressmen whom they confronted.”<sup>135</sup>

After the bill passed, most of the Mothers (including Dilling) left Washington in complete despair. Smaller branches of the NLMA such as America United, United Mothers of America, and the Roll Call of American Women attempted to plan a third party in hopes of their voice being heard. “The party intended to enter candidates in 1942 congressional elections, but the coalition was destroyed with the attack at Pearl Harbor.”<sup>136</sup> The voices of these women of the NLMA did not fade away as quickly as some might have hoped.

Catherine Curtis, loyal member of the NLMA and creator of the Women’s National Committee to Keep the U.S. out of War, continued to speak publically

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<sup>132</sup> *New York Times*, March 2, 7, 1941; *Washington Sunday Star*, March 1, 1941; Zwisler, 67.

<sup>133</sup> *New York Times*, March 9, 1941.

<sup>134</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend- Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 216-20

<sup>135</sup> *PM*, March 30, 1941; *New York Daily Mirror*, March 30, 1941; Zwisler 67.

<sup>136</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 13, 1941.

and continued to write for the remainder of her life. After Norris left the NLMA, Curtis assumed complete leadership of the organization. One of her famous incidents was a Mother's Day petition that aimed at several members of Congress. "The petition asserted men had no right to destroy life without the consent of women, and that the war resulted from the failure to include mothers in the peace process."<sup>137</sup> Curtis stated, "We are confident that the presence of mothers at the conference table will soothe temperaments, heal wounds now mirror, prevent destruction of life, and bring a lasting peace to the entire world." Curtis recruited Laura Ingalls, a famous member of her group who aided her in the group's many attempts for their voices to be heard in Washington. Outside of the spotlight, "Curtis was a very private woman, and our knowledge of her parents, upbringing, education, spouses, and personal life is fragmentary. Perhaps it was her wish to remain a mystery; she removed most of the personal material from her papers before donating them to New York Library. An analysis of her personality and motives is therefore largely speculative."<sup>138</sup>

Like Curtis, Lyrl Clark Van Hyning continued to lift her voice to the Mothers Movement for the remainder of her life. Van Hyning continued her support with the NLMA but became more focused on the group "We the Mothers Mobilize for America". This group came into existence after the Lend-Lease crusade. "We the Mothers claimed 1,000 members in Chicago and 150,000 nationwide. In addition, it created a male auxiliary called We the Fathers".<sup>139</sup> Unlike most of the women in the NLMA, Van Hyning preferred to write articles

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<sup>137</sup> Mothers Day Petition, May 1941, B 1, Curtis Papers, cited in Frederickson, 32 and Jeansonne 66.

<sup>138</sup> Fredrickson. 1-6; *American Women*, 207; TAF 1939, 207. Also found in Jeansonne 69.

<sup>139</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 5, March 5, and March 8, 1941; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 29, 1943.

rather than speak in a public forum. Her articles are found in *Women's Voice*, *The Bulletin*, *The Cross-and the Flag*, and several others. Van Hyning used her voice through her articles to recruit new members and promote a sense of loyalty amongst its members. For example "In May 1944, *Women's Voice* issued a call for a national women's peace conference in Chicago to unite the mother's movement. About 125 women and a few men from 16 states assembled at the Hotel Hamilton on June 12-14 1944. Among the leader present were Katherine Sutter of the Loyal American Mothers (of Flint, Michigan), Waters, Stanley, and Blanche Winters, whose Detroit mansion was a center for women's right-wing anti-war activities". "Much like Curtis, Van Hyning was one of the more modern mothers' leaders, pragmatic enough to attempt to succeed in conventional politics. For this reason, she was on the graver threats to Roosevelt's foreign policy."<sup>140</sup>

If Van Hyning was considered a grave threat to Roosevelt's foreign policy through her writing, than Waters could be considered the same but through her skills of public speaking. Waters continued with the NLMA movement as well as the National Blue Star Mothers and the Mothers of the U.S.A after the Lend-Lease crusade occurred. Waters still had the same abrasive and loud attitude that she always had in terms of getting what she wanted from the government. "Waters said she represented the National Blue Star Mothers, which provoked a congressman to say he knew many Mothers who disagreed with Waters. "They might be called black star mothers if they are Negroes and Jews."<sup>141</sup> "One might be tempted to dismiss Waters as a lot of noise. For all of her bigotry and

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<sup>140</sup> Jeansonne, 100

<sup>141</sup> Jeansonne, 146



crackpot ideas, however, she helped kill the child refugee measure and convinced some women that she was an asset to their causes. To Waters, it was the world, not she, that was an idiosyncratic and menacing.”<sup>142</sup> Waters continued public speaking for the NLMA until her death.

After the Lend-Lease crusade ended, Dilling continued to write and speak publically for the remainder of her life despite a family crisis that was ongoing in her life. Her marriage to Albert began to quickly fall apart. Dilling discovered that Albert gave large sums of money to his mistresses. Elizabeth found this bit of information out through his annual tax returns. She filed for divorce on February 24, 1942. The divorce took several months to settle in terms of assets. The affair proved to be too demanding for Dilling as she had her career to think about. It was not until October 18, 1943, that everything settled. After this matter, Dilling began writing again. This topic is explored in the chapters to come.

In conclusion, all of these women embodied several aspects of Elizabeth Dilling. This list included her skills of public speaking and her methods of research. Whether these women choose to believe it or not, she was a front-runner for the NLMA and they needed her in their cause for the Lend-Lease Bill to be repealed. The role reversed, as Dilling needed more support from the Mothers to achieve her ultimate goal. After months of protesting to get the senators to vote against the bill, the NLMA only changed the mind of one Senator from New Mexico. The famous women of the NLMA (Catherine Curtis, Lyrl Clark Van Hyning, and Agnes Waters) gained fame through the Lend-Lease crusade. Dillings career was already established, but this incident made her

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<sup>142</sup> Jeansonne, 151

more famous than she was before the incident. It is important to remember these names, as they will discuss in the upcoming chapter. Max Lerner sums it up best when he describes Dilling and the Lend-Lease crusade. He writes: “She seemed like a woman pursued by the furies. What she did not know was the furies were not outside her, but in her own mind”. Indeed, the mind proved to be a dangerous but necessary tool for Dilling for the remainder of her life. Her crusade against the Lend-Lease Bill proved to be short lived but the connections she made by doing so lasted a lifetime.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SEDITION TRIAL OF 1944

After the failure of the Lend-Lease crusade, Dilling did not give up on the thought that Communism could spread throughout the United States. Dilling continued taking an active role in politics especially within the various far right organizations. It is from Dillings strong beliefs that she and various other members of far-right organizations started to torment President Roosevelt and his administration on a daily basis. Elizabeth Dilling and several others were charged with committing seditious acts against the government in direct violation of the Smith Act. In this chapter, charges of sedition against various far-right organizations are discussed in direct relation to the Smith Act.

Elizabeth Dilling became one of the several important figures who were put on trial in Washington D.C for committing seditious acts against the government.

To begin, in 1935 President Roosevelt mobilized the FBI to investigate all pro-Nazi organizations within the United States. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover kept the White House well informed of any type of suspicious activity that took place within these various far-right organizations. Roosevelt felt that Hoover was often too lenient on some groups: therefore, Roosevelt hired Attorney General Francis Biddle to attend to this matter. "Biddle demurred out of concern for civil liberties and a belief that convictions would be difficult to obtain. Roosevelt was "not much interested... in the constitutional right to criticize the government in war time, Biddle commented. FDR prodded him to

prosecute, showering him with memos and asking him brusquely: “When are you going to indict the seditionists?”<sup>143</sup>

By early 1941, Biddle selected William Power Maloney to investigate these fascist claims. Maloney investigated various far-right groups but concluded that there simply was not enough evidence to convince a grand jury. It was during this time important NLMA Mothers such as Dilling, Curtis, Van Hyning, and several others were called to testify before a grand jury. “Maloney’s plan was to prosecute under the Smith Act of 1940, which prohibited activities to undermine the morale of fighting men in peacetime. This prosecution would be the first under the latter law.”<sup>144</sup> The Justice Department would begin prosecuting smaller figures and work their way to bigger figures such as Father Coughlin. Senators such as Wheeler, Nye, and William L. Langer felt that the government should not prosecute the small first but the larger group posed a greater threat to the government. “But on July 21<sup>st</sup> rightists, the grand jury indicted twenty-eight German agents, Buddhists, and far rightists including Dilling, Pelley and Winrod, on two counts of conspiracy to cause insubordination of the military in peacetime and wartime. Conviction on each count would bring a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison and a fine of \$20,000.”<sup>145</sup>

In 1943, six months after the first indictment, the federal government decided to produce a second indictment. The second indictment brought a harsher sentence than the first group had previously experienced. “This group

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<sup>143</sup> Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. ( Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 152

<sup>144</sup> Jeansonne, 152

<sup>145</sup> Jeansonne, 152

included two women, Lois de Lafayette Washburn, who proved to have anti-Semitic groups in the cities of Chicago and Tacoma, Washington. The other woman was Paquita Louise de Shismareff, who wanted the world to know her as Leslie Fry".<sup>146</sup> The second indictment proved much like the first, the only difference was the court date changed to June 28, 1940, to accommodate the inking of the Smith Act into law. Not all the congressional representatives involved were convinced of the crimes charged against the defendants. For example, both Wheeler and Senator Taft felt that Maloney must be removed from his duties as they felt that he was biased. However, it was not known at this time whether William Maloney was biased toward the defendants or not. Nonetheless, "Attorney General Francis Biddle removed Maloney and replaced him with O. John Rogge, who proved to be a famous lawyer. Rogge had won several cases against Long's corrupt sentences in 1939".<sup>147</sup> Therefore, it evoked a fresh new approach that would end this trial.

Soon after the replacement of William Maloney, O. John Rogge had several cases of sedition dismissed. District Judge Jesse C. Adkins decided it was important to eliminate all the acts that occurred before the Smith Act as the cases could not hold up in a court of law. "On March 5, 1943, he ruled that by dating the conspiracy of 1933, the government was attempting to prosecute on the grounds of an ex post facto law- prosecution for acts that were no crimes when they committed. Later Adkins ruled that no actions taken before the United States went to war could be included."<sup>148</sup> Soon after District Judge Jesse

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<sup>146</sup><sup>146</sup> Information can be found in *Bulletin*, June 1954, 5.

<sup>147</sup> *The Bulletin*, April 1947, 10, August 1947, 5; January-February 1960, 20, 38, 43; May-June 1963, 6; May-June 1964, 11

<sup>148</sup> Jeansonne, 154

C. Adkins eliminated all of cases of sedition before the Smith Act came into law, Rogge decided to implement a third indictment regarding the remaining cases after the Smith Act came into law. After returning “on January 3, 1944, this bill indicted twenty-two defendants, dropped eleven, and included eight new ones; Dilling and Washburn was indicted but Fry was not. The new indictment, known as *U.S. vs. McWilliams*, differed from the first two attempting to link the defendants with Hitler’s agents in a plot to overthrow the government and establish a Nazi dictatorship.”<sup>149</sup>

Elizabeth first heard of this new third indictment via the car radio coming home from visiting her son, Kirkpatrick. “She telephoned lawyers to arrange for 5,000 bail but several bondsmen, fearing adverse publicity, refused to serve her, and Dilling had difficulty raising 500 dollars as a bond fee. She arrived at the Federal District Court in Chicago, where about 150 supporters packed the courtroom, and she was photographed, fingerprinted, and questioned.”<sup>150</sup> Dilling saw herself as a loyal American who sought to destroy the rise of Communism within her country. She strongly felt that she did nothing wrong in the eyes of the law. However, the government did find several examples of her committing seditious acts against the government. Examples of seditious material included a copy of her book *The Octopus* and reprint of a cartoon that sought to ridicule the Lend-Lease Bill. Another charge that brought against her was making seditious statements in both a public forum and in writing. “First, she had reprinted in her *Bulletin* part of a speech by Hoffman, in which he quoted an American soldier in the Philippines who

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<sup>149</sup> Jeansonne, 154

<sup>150</sup> Jeansonne, 155

complained his outfit lacked bombers because the planes had been given to the British. Dilling protested that she not be prosecuted for reprinting a speech delivered by Congress.”<sup>151</sup> Second, Dilling was charged with writing that “Any professional servant of Christ who could aid the church-burning, clergy-murdering, God-hating Soviet regime belongs either in the ranks of the blind leaders of the blind or in the ancient and dishonorable order of Judas.”<sup>152</sup> Elizabeth stated that she planned the above statement but did not mean to undermine the military in any way. Not everyone proved to be against Elizabeth; *The Chicago Tribune* defended Elizabeth and often sympathized with her present situation.

Elizabeth often made claims that she did not know any of the defendants and she felt that the government made a mistake by including in such group of seditious conspirators. She argued that if she must be tried, it should be in Chicago, not Washington D.C, because she felt that a Washington jury would be full of New-Dealers ready to pounce on her at any given moment. She often complained that it be quiet expensive to travel so often to Washington and back to home to Chicago. In the mist of all the traveling, Elizabeth felt that she would not have time to write her *Bulletin* or have complete access to the documents that she deemed necessary for her defense.

“On July 29, 1942, Dilling appeared in Chicago before Edwin K. Walker, who ruled she must stand trial in Washington but permitted her to appeal to the District of Columbia. District Judge William H. Holley was sympathetic to Dilling’s case, doubted her guilt, and reduced her bail to \$200. He said his

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<sup>151</sup> Jeansonne, 155

<sup>152</sup> Jeansonne, 155

authority would not permit him to block a Washington trial, however.”<sup>153</sup>At the end of the trial, several women went up to Elizabeth and congratulated on her victory. However, the Dillings responded by making plans to appeal to the Supreme Court. On October 26, The Dillings left for Washington for the arraignment. The train station on that day filled with women who wanted to show their continuous support for Elizabeth’s cause.

On the day of her arraignment on October 27, 1942, Elizabeth pleaded that was she not guilty and her bail was instantly raised to \$5,000. Once it was posted, authorities told her that she must remain in the city. Maloney accused Elizabeth of being a tool for German propaganda. This statement angered Elizabeth so much that Albert had to restrain her. “In Congress, Dilling’s supporters, including Wheeler and Taft, accused the Justice Department of trying to entrap the defendants. If the defendants had violated the law, Wheeler argued, they should be tried individually in their own localities, not in Washington on nebulous conspiracy charges.”<sup>154</sup>

As the sedition trial continued, Adkin’s health weakened to the extent, that the case was reassigned to District Judge Edward C. Eicher. Before taking over the sedition trial Eicher was a former New Dealer from Iowa who left his seat in Congress to Guy Gillette in 1938 after FDR attempted to purge all conservatries from attempting to serve in the senate. “Roosevelt decided to name Eicher to the Securities and Exchange and later on to the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals. However, Gillette blocked his appointment forced FDR to

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<sup>153</sup> *Women’s Voice*, June-July, 1954, 1

<sup>154</sup> Jeansonne, 157



name Eicher to the District of Columbia seat. At the age of sixty-three Eicher proved that he lacked the stamina to keep up with such a high paced trial.”<sup>155</sup>

When Eicher took over the trial, Albert Dilling (Elizabeth’s husband) found him to be biased when it came to the final judgments. Albert felt that the government could only prove that his wife had written books on these subjects but could not connect her with any act of conspiracy in an attempt to undermine the government.<sup>156</sup> More importantly, Albert argued that the government gave only two dates of conspiracy charges.” The first was in 1933 when Hitler came to power. The second was on June 28, 1940, when the Smith Act became law. Albert claimed that any acts that occurred before these dates were called into question. He claims that if the conspiracy had started on June 28, 1940, then the three-year status of limitation expired before the trial date. Therefore, the government had no right to implement this as an act of conspiracy.”<sup>157</sup>

“Eicher quashed Dilling’s demurrers but asked for a bill of particulars from the government. The subsequent bill was vague and had little direct relevance to the charges in the indictment; there was nothing to indicate the defendants had conspired with Nazis to weaken the military.”<sup>158</sup> Twenty-five of the bill’s thirty-two odd pages were dedicated to the history of the Nazi party in Germany. It consisted of excerpts from scholarly books from around that country that contained specific quotations from Nazi letters. The bills choose not to display the authors’ names from any of the quotations mentioned. “By

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<sup>155</sup> *Bulletin*, March-April 1963, 7

<sup>156</sup> *Bulletin*, September 1955; January-February 1960, 3 7, 10; November-December 1960, 26; *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1955; *Chicago Sun*, October 25, 1946, August 1, 1948.

<sup>157</sup> *New York Times*, May 1, 1966.

<sup>158</sup> Jeansonne, 158

attacking the Jews the Nazi conspirators hoped to destroy the feeling for law and order in the whole world.”<sup>159</sup>

The defense in turn decided to denounce this bill and have it stricken from the record. The council for Elizabeth Dilling asked that the trial be postponed until after the war because the case might require one to look at classified documents that the defense would not have access to at this time. The prosecution at this time was quiet disorganized and raised many questions if Eicher could keep up with all of the sedition cases. The defense repeatedly requested, “Eicher disqualify himself, claims that Roosevelt was a Jew, who attempted to introduce *The Protocols* as evidence, and demands to subpoena New Dealers and generals.”<sup>160</sup> This type of accusation mixed with propaganda had some valid points. Albert Dilling proclaimed that he would show the jury the work of his former wife, who was a lone crusader and unconnected with any of the other opponents of Communism.

By mid June, Eicher held several attorneys and public defenders, including Albert Dilling, held in contempt. In response to this Albert formed a group entitled, “Eicher Contempt Club” whose members often sported badges made of white ribbons reading “E.C.C”. If a member were fined during the trial, the members would add a star to that person’s badge. “Once, Eicher found out about these so-called badges, he had an open discussion with the *New York Times* about the badges. Albert explained that he had formed the club to maintain morale of the defense. In the end, Eicher felt it was best that he ignore

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<sup>159</sup> *Women’s Voice*, February 1955.

<sup>160</sup> Jeansonne, 162

the badges altogether.<sup>161</sup> This example proved not to be the only time that Albert and his ex-wife Elizabeth spoke out against the trial. For example, during one of the sessions Elizabeth spotted Theodore Pope in the spectators section. Pope was a minister of the Universalist church in Wisconsin and was an active member in the Communist Party. Elizabeth took one look at Pope and remarked to Albert that, “All of these kikes have big ears, don’t they?” Pope replied angrily, “I’m not a Jew; I’m a communist!” Elizabeth responded, “You’re both a kike and a communist.”<sup>162</sup>

After months of chaos, both the defendants and the public began to lose complete interest in the trial and dreaded coming into the courtroom every day. “On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the *Washington Post*, which condemned the trial as “a sorry spectacle” and “a courtroom farce,” announced the trial had lost news value and deserved only intermittent coverage. Under the circumstances, the *Post* declared that justice could not be obtained and the proceedings should not be terminated.”<sup>163</sup> However, no one could have predicted that on November 29, Edward C. Eicher would die of a heart attack.

After Eichers death, the government went into recess until early December, while District Judge James M. Proctor considered whether to declare it a mistrial. “The odds against continuing were high: a new judge would have to read nearly eighteen thousand pages of testimony and examine more than eleven hundred exhibits. Furthermore, the case could not continue unless all the defendants agreed.”<sup>164</sup> Proctor chose not to continue with the trial;

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<sup>161</sup> Information can be found in the above citation.

<sup>162</sup> Jeansonne, 162

<sup>163</sup> Jeansonne, 163

<sup>164</sup> Jeansonne, 163

therefore, the trial as a whole was dismissed. After much dismay, President Roosevelt agreed to drop all the charges. The trial was labeled “Much Ado about Nothing” after William Shakespeare’s play. After six long months, the defendants were free to go about their normal existence. This did not mean, however, that these men and women stopped taking part in Nazi related organization. For example in Chapter 5, I conclude by discussing Dillings postwar life. The connections Elizabeth made during the trial became invaluable as she used them for the remainder of her life.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

After the Mass Sedition Trial, Elizabeth Dilling's career continued to flourish until her death on April 29, 1966. Before her death, Dilling remained quiet bitter as she suffered from a series of personal setbacks. Despite these personal setbacks, Elizabeth continued with politics and became if nothing more anti-Semitic than she ever was in the past. Her literary career became the center of her life and she seldom left her home to do anything else. Elizabeth shifted from loving to speak publically to preferring to address her fans only by writing. Despite her love for writing, she often grew lonely and felt that she had no one to share her ideas.

After her divorce from Albert, Elizabeth met "Ellis O. Jones, a codefendant in the sedition trial, who moved in with her soon after the trial ended. She said their relationship was platonic and he was only her editorial assistant, despite rumors that they were lovers."<sup>165</sup> Then in January 1948, Elizabeth (now fifty-three) married Jeremiah Stokes (seventy) who was a lawyer from Salt Lake City. It was speculated that she only married him to get out from underneath the thumb of her ex-husband, Albert. Elizabeth felt that by becoming Stokes' wife insurmountable pressure would be put upon her. Elizabeth would soon get over this notion and considered her new husband as a beloved confidante. Stokes not only acted as her husband but also helped her immensely with her career. For example, "he helped Dilling revise her books and write the *Bulletin*, and joined Albert and Kirk's law firm."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Glen Jeansonne. 1996. *Women of the Far Right*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 165

<sup>166</sup> Jeansonne, 165.

After the sedition trial, it took years for Elizabeth to settle the various sedition cases she initiated. For example, “The Chicago *Herald-American* published an article about Dilling implying that she was guilty of sedition. An Illinois court dismissed the suit on grounds that she was public figure subject to reasonable criticism. Dilling sued the *Chicago Star* and the Billboard Publishing Company for libel, but both suites were settled out of court for undisclosed terms.”<sup>167</sup> During her lawsuit with the *Jewish Sentinel*, her son Kirkpatrick defended his mother the best of his ability. Kirkpatrick addressed the jury by telling them that “a verdict for my mother, Mrs. Dilling, and the rest of these people in a verdict against Communism and for Christianity and Americanism.”<sup>168</sup>

For almost two decades, Elizabeth wrote about the threat of Communism within the United States, poverty, income tax, foreign aid, and NATO. Later on in the 1950s, she continued with these types of crusades. For example, she felt that the Japanese received too harsh of a treatment from the Americans. Elizabeth traveled to Japan, much like she had with Russia and other foreign countries. She felt that it was the only Christian nation in Asia. In the 1950s, “Dilling backed Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s crusade against communism and attacked President Eisenhower. Disappointed over Eisenhower’s election, she said, ‘Ike the kike’ was the candidate of the Jews.”<sup>169</sup> In 1960s, Elizabeth complained heavily about the major candidates such as John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. “Kennedy was denounced for reviewing a favorably a book that condemned McCarthy, for address the National Conference of Christians

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<sup>167</sup> Jeansonne, 166

<sup>168</sup> Jeansonne, 166

<sup>169</sup> Jeansonne, 166

and Jews, for accepting an honorary degree from Brandeis University, and for advocating the sale of Israel bonds.”<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, Dilling believed Kennedy wanted to admit more refugees to get more Jews in the country. Dilling concluded by saying that, “The only candidate who can excel Kennedy in the service to the synagogue is perhaps Nixon.”<sup>171</sup>

Once Kennedy was elected, Elizabeth began to discredit him and his cabinet. She claimed that it was the Jews, Blacks, and Communists who had elected Kennedy. She was quiet disappointed with the Kennedy administration and its foreign policies. Elizabeth made this notion perfectly clearly in her long articles in the *Bulletin* and *Women’s Voice*. By the 1964 election, Elizabeth backed Lyndon Johnson as she strongly felt that Goldwater backed the Jewish community. At this time, she tended to write less about her thoughts on the Johnson administration as her health was rapidly deteriorating. Her last book, *The Plot Against Christianity* (privately published after her death in 1954), “reveals the satanic hatred of Christ and Christians responsible for their mass murder, torture and slave labor in all Iron Curtain countries- all of which are ruled by Talmudists-believe it nor not!”<sup>172</sup> Unlike the other books she had published in the past, this book was comprised of a collection of two hundred ninety-nine photostats of anti-Christian material found throughout the United States.

After Elizabeth wrote *The Plot Against Christianity*, her writing became hard to read or comprehend. She often skipped from one subject to another. Her articles in the magazine *Women’s Voice* appeared to be quite long and

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<sup>170</sup> Jeansonne, 167

<sup>171</sup> Jeansonne, 167.

<sup>172</sup> *Women’s Voice*, June- July 1954, 1

stopped in the middle of a sentence requiring the reader to wait until the next issue to come out to find out the conclusion of the article. “It is difficult to conceive of anyone deriving enjoyment from Dilling’s writing, although, she had readers and influenced their lives. One Catholic wrote to her, thanking her for changing his point of view. He had always been taught to love his enemies, but after reading Dilling, he realized it was all right to hate Jews.”<sup>173</sup>

In response, to her writings Elizabeth became so radical that some members of the far-right no longer supported her. She began to lose support of those important connections that she worked so hard to maintain. In 1954, grief once again struck Elizabeth as her second husband Jeremiah Stokes died. After his death, Elizabeth sold their home and moved in with son, Kirkpatrick. Her son assisted Elizabeth in all of her work. Because of health problems, *The Bulletin* appeared to have little to no content when it was published. Despite her health problems, Elizabeth kept writing and researching until her death on April 29, 1966.

Elizabeth Eloise Dilling Kirkpatrick led a fascinating life. She could not have achieved any of her success had it not been for other people. Her “intimate connections” are truly what made her career. Her books and articles did make her a famous crusader for all things anti-Communist. Nevertheless, she could have never made it on her own if she did not have someone to support her ideas. Sadly, her books are no longer in print but can be found in various libraries around the world. Elizabeth Dilling will always be remembered as a crusader who worked hard to get rid of Communistic threats within the United

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<sup>173</sup> Jeansonne, 1969.



States. However, her personal intimate connections with others will forever stand out in everyone's mind.

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