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**Internal Colonialism: Questioning The Soviet Union As A Settler Colonial State Through The Deportation Of The Crimean Tatars/
Uranium Fever: Willful Ignorance In Service Of Utopia**

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Internal Colonialism: Questioning the Soviet Union as a Settler Colonial State Through
the Deportation of the Crimean Tatars/Uranium Fever: Willful Ignorance in Service of
Utopia

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ABSTRACT

Internal Colonialism: Questioning the Soviet Union as a Settler Colonial State Through the Deportation of the Crimean Tatars

This study examines the deportation of the Crimean Tatars by the Soviet Union in 1944 and questions whether it was an example of settler colonialism in action. The Soviet Union's actions throughout its history have often been deemed colonial and imperialist, however settler colonial theory has rarely been applied to Soviet studies. At a surface level, the deportation appears to fit into settler colonial theory, however upon further scrutiny it becomes clear that it fails to satisfy the necessary conditions. The evidence presented in this essay shows that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars was an event, not a lasting structural change in the Soviet Union. Settler colonial theory posits that settler colonialism is not confined to a single event and is impervious to regime change. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars was the project of a single leader, Joseph Stalin, and the majority of its effects were limited to a short period of time during and after his rule. The event had less to do with the ethnicity of the Crimean Tatars and more with securing the Soviet Union's borders with Turkey and maintaining control over the Black Sea. The study concludes that although the deportation of the Crimean Tatars is not proof of settler colonialism in action in the Soviet Union, the topic is worth further investigation, as it is dangerous to exclude any powerful nation from such examination.

Uranium Fever: Willful Ignorance in Service of Utopia

This essay explores public knowledge of the dangers of radium and uranium in the United States between the 1920s and 1960s. It is often assumed that Americans were not aware that radioactive materials presented a danger to their health. Through the examination of mass media, court cases, and newspapers of the time, it becomes clear that not only did Americans know about the dangers of radiation, but that there was a concerted effort by the government and corporations with business interests in radioactive materials to minimize these fears and convince Americans that the dangers were necessary in order to bring about a utopian future of unlimited energy. Americans consciously chose to remain ignorant and ignore clear evidence that radioactive materials were dangerous and willingly followed the propaganda produced by these actors. The reasons Americans chose this path varied from a desire for profit to patriotism.

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Intellectual Biography

My research portfolio is the culmination of my interest in early Cold War history in the United States and the Soviet Union. When I began my studies at William & Mary as a graduate student, I knew I wished to focus on this era despite the institutional focus on other periods. I feel a level of pride that I was able to achieve this goal and that rising to the challenge has proved to be a beneficial moment that will greatly aid me in future endeavors. As a terminal master's student, I knew that my portfolio would not be connected by underlying themes or an overarching thread. Instead, I approached each paper separately on their own terms. The result of this approach are two papers focused on the same time-period in two different nations. Each paper discusses topics that were internal matters at heart but had repercussions felt at an international level. The United States and the Soviet Union were the dominant superpowers following World War II and internal matters in these nations could never truly stay internal. The events and arguments discussed in the following papers inevitably affected others within the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.'s spheres of influence. There is one connecting thread between the two papers. Both papers serve as an opportunity to "debunk" myths or misconceptions about the actions of these great powers.

My first paper, written in the Fall for Dr. Andrew Fisher's seminar "Settler Colonialism since 1763," is an examination of claims that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Central Asia at the end of World War II is evidence that the Soviet Union was a settler colonial state. This topic was inspired by the work of Professor J. Otto Pohl, specifically his article "The Deportation of the Crimean Tatars in the Context of Settler Colonialism." In this article he stated that the Soviet Union had

been previously immune to examination as a settler colonial state, and that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars was an event that pointed towards settler colonialism existing in the socialist state. This struck me as odd because I was aware that the Soviet Union had been accused of colonialism as early as the 1960s. Thus, my research began, and I attempted to answer the question Pohl posed. I started by examining the debate amongst historians concerning the Soviet Union's status as a colonial state in the classical sense of the word. Quickly, it became apparent the consensus is that the Soviet Union, whether by design or by accident, had become colonial quickly after its founding, inheriting the structures of its Tsarist past. The rest of my research focused on settler colonial theory, what constitutes a settler colonial state, and if the deportation of the Crimean Tatars fit this definition. My conclusion was that the deportation was a tragic event in Soviet history, but it did not fit the definition of settler colonialism, as it was an event, not a long-term structural change in Soviet policy. While the deportation of the Crimean Tatars is not evidence of settler colonialism in action, I feel that it is important that no country ever be exempted from such examination. The hesitation to scrutinize the Soviet Union as potentially settler colonial stems from its self-stated commitment to anti-imperialism. If one were to take such statements as facts, they run the risk of doing the field of history a disservice and risk compromising our understanding of the past. Additionally, while this event cannot be called settler colonial, I believe the question of the Soviet Union as a settler colonial state is still valid and warrants further study. Were I to continue these studies myself, I would shift my focus from Crimea to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. If

there is evidence of settler colonialism in action in the Soviet Union, I believe it would be found there.

I do not plan to publish this paper in the near future, but I am open to doing so eventually. If I were to aim for publication, I would include far more primary sources than are included here. Much of the source base for this topic has not been translated from Russian and Ukrainian. I do read Russian, and Ukrainian is close enough that given a long period of time, I would be able to do this myself, however this was not feasible for a semester project. With these sources added to the essay, I believe the argument can be made much stronger.

My second paper was written for Dr. Nicholas Popper's seminar, "Knowledge in the Early Modern World." We were given leeway in the actual era covered by our papers, so naturally I chose to follow my interests in early Cold War history. Rather than focus on the Soviet Union again, I chose the United States as my region of focus. This paper covers the creation of knowledge of the dangers of radioactive materials in the United States between the 1920s and 1960s. The inspiration for this paper came from listening to pop music from the 1950s and noting a trend in music about the uranium mining boom. Many people assume Americans were ignorant of the dangers of uranium and I wondered if this was really true if uranium was a topic well known enough to enter pop music and culture. I had heard of the case of the Radium Girls that took place in the 1920s and started my research there. Radium, like uranium, was a radioactive material that rapidly entered the public consciousness and battles over controlling the knowledge of radium's dangers began almost immediately. Examining major newspapers from the 1920s and 30s revealed that this case was high profile and the dangers of radiation

were made public through the proceedings. By the time uranium became a valuable mineral in the 1940s, the American public was aware of the dangers of radiation and radioactive materials. Rather than control this knowledge, the government and corporations with financial interests in uranium sought to change the narrative surrounding uranium to one of national security and patriotism. Americans chose to ignore the well-known dangers of radiation out of a belief that radioactive materials would usher in a utopian age of abundant energy and international domination. If I were to seek to publish this paper, I would like to discuss more extensively the science denialism at work in creating knowledge about radioactive materials and connect it with similar situations such as tobacco.

Writing these papers presented an opportunity to work within a time period and location I was comfortable with while engaging in theories I had no experience in. This process gave me an opportunity to improve my research abilities and critical thinking. These are skills that are universally applied and will serve me well in whatever I choose to do next. Should I one day decide to continue my studies, I believe either paper would serve as a sound basis for dissertation ideas.

Internal Colonialism: Questioning the Soviet Union as a Settler Colonial State Through the Deportation of the Crimean Tatars

The systems of imperialism and colonialism have often been linked with the rise of capitalism. These systems are thought of as inseparable; colonialism having created the conditions necessary to facilitate the creation of capitalist economies. On the surface, this seems to be a relatively obvious assumption. Major capitalist powers such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom all grew out of a colonial or imperial past, and this has been the dominating view throughout much of history amongst scholars. However, the intrinsic nature of capitalism to colonialism comes into question when one looks towards the Soviet Union. Itself the successor to an imperial power, the Soviet Union directly challenged and opposed the validity of imperialism and believed itself to be a morally superior entity. Despite these objections, the Soviet Union's treatment of indigenous people, ethnic minorities, and undesirable classes within its borders has drawn parallels to colonialism. Since at least the 1960s, debate has existed over whether the Soviet Union was an imperial power and if it was indeed hypocritically practicing colonialism. Recent historical literature largely agrees that the Soviet Union was an imperial power, practicing "internal colonialism" in Central Asia, Ukraine, and the Baltics. However, an important question has yet to be posed and answered within mainstream historiography. If the field can generally agree that the Soviet Union practiced one form of colonialism within its borders, is it possible that the Soviet Union was engaged in settler colonialism as well? When one looks at the actions of the Soviet Union through the lens of settler colonialism, familiar patterns begin to appear. The Soviet Union acted just as any other large empire, though it did so through

its massive land empire, rather than overseas. The “internal colonialism” practiced by the Soviet Union was extractive and exploitative and in some parts of the Soviet Union, took the form of a conscious campaign to replace ethnic minorities with strong Soviet men and women. This colonialism was practiced primarily in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as in Ukraine on the Crimean Peninsula. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea during World War II, their resettlement and re-education in Central Asia, and the replacement of the Tatars by Russian settlers certainly appears on the surface to be an example of settler colonialism at work. This study will focus primarily on this event and the experiences of the Crimean Tatars as they were forced from their homeland to be Russified elsewhere. While the patterns of colonialism and actions taken to repress the Crimean Tatars share many similarities with the treatment of natives in other settler colonial states, the Soviet Union cannot be called a settler colonial state. Primarily, this is because the deportation and subsequent Russification of the Crimean Tatars was an event, not a perpetuated structure.

Additionally, the motivation to deport the Crimean Tatars was punishment for perceived traitorous actions during World War II as well as a strategic move to prepare for a potential invasion of Turkey. The land was valuable to be certain, but the desire to eliminate the Crimean Tatars was pragmatic and motivated by foreign, not internal policy. This study will also touch on the historiographic argument of the Soviet Union as a colonial state. When questioning if the Soviet Union practiced settler colonialism; one must first ask if they were imperialist in the first place.

Patrick Wolfe’s essay “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” is a solid starting point for those who do not know what settler colonialism is or how it differs

from “traditional” extractive colonialism. Published in 2006, Wolfe’s essay is often taught in universities as a basis for understanding settler colonial theory. In the article, Wolfe seeks to separate settler colonialism from genocide as a single concept. While genocide can and often does factor into settler colonialism, it is not one and the same. In some settler colonial sites, like Fiji, genocide was never implemented. In others, like North America, genocide was a feature of settler colonialism, but was not implemented evenly across the country, nor was it the primary tool of colonialism. In addition, there can be genocides that have nothing to do with settler colonialism, such as the tragedies of Rwanda and Armenia. Settler colonialism operates off of what Wolfe calls the “logic of elimination” in which the native people of a territory must be removed so that it may be repopulated by settlers of the colonial state. This is not inherently genocidal, though that is often the form of elimination chosen. The primary motivation of the settler colonial state’s removal of native peoples is not based on race, religion, ethnicity, or perceived level of civilization. Instead, the primary motive is to open access to territory and this desire for territory is the intrinsic, irreducible, element of settler colonialism.¹

Wolfe is careful to point out that elimination under settler colonialism is a “structure not an event.” Elimination comes in two parts, the dissolution of native societies and the establishment of a new colonial society on the newly acquired land. The dissolution of native societies can be accomplished through many means beyond genocide. Officially sanctioned race-mixing, extending citizenship to natives, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization through boarding schools, and any other form of forced assimilation can be used to accomplish this goal. These actions are

¹ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387-388.

ongoing, part of a larger pattern of colonialism and the singular obsession with the acquisition of land is what separates settler colonialism from “classic” extractive colonialism. It is impervious to regime change and indifferent to the nature of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The indigenous people are not another commodity to be bought and sold or a source of labor to extract valuables from the colony. They are an obstacle that must be removed by any means necessary in order to acquire the true commodity, land. Whether they are killed or assimilated is unimportant to the colonial state, although killing or removing is often the easiest method. Once this has been accomplished the settler colonial state can establish a new society in service of the metropole. Elimination refers to more than the complete removal of native people. The logic of elimination and its oppression of native people becomes ingrained into settler colonial society and informs nearly every aspect, shaping the society as a whole. The complex social forces at work and its continuity through time are what leads Wolfe to say settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. Wolfe succinctly summarizes this entire process, stating “Settler colonialism destroys to replace.”²

This is only one interpretation of settler colonialism but Wolfe’s logic of elimination and definition of the end goals of settler colonialism are widely accepted, and thus what this study will be referring to when discussing settler colonial theory. With this definition in mind, it is impossible to call the Soviet Union a settler colonial state. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars and reeducation in Uzbekistan was a tragic event, but it was temporary. These actions were undertaken by Joseph Stalin and his regime. Following his death in 1953, many of his policies were reversed. While the

² Ibid, 388-390.

Crimean Tatars were not permitted to return to Crimea and their status as traitors was never lifted, the attempt to totally erase them from existence slowed down or disappeared. However, the Soviet Union did practice colonialism within its own borders, and it is worth discussing. Following this thread, it will become clear as to why one might be tempted to call the Soviet Union a settler colonial state.

Throughout the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union clashed in a quest to convince unaligned countries that their system was more beneficial than the other and many proxy wars were fought in service of this goal. One of the Soviet Union's most appealing arguments and one that concerned the United States greatly was the Soviet Union's commitment to decolonization. By its nature, Marxism is anti-imperialist. If the ultimate goal of socialism is a stateless society in which the workers own the means of production, there is no room for colonialism to exist. The Soviet Union itself was the result of an anti-imperial rebellion and civil war. The Soviet Union under Vladimir Lenin was established as a vanguard of the world revolution. It was his belief that once the Russian Empire and later the liberal provisional government fell, the Soviet Union would be the guiding light for socialists around the world. The capitalist and imperialist system of the West was supposed to be weakened or even destroyed by the horrors of World War I. The Soviet Union could then export its "brand" of communism to these other nations and eventually spark a worldwide revolution. The Soviet Union had already fended off an expeditionary force of capitalist Western forces after World War I during the Russian Civil War, thus gaining legitimacy as an anti-colonial power. However, this was not meant to last. The Polish-Soviet war of 1919 and 1920, the Soviet Union's first attempt at exporting communism, was a complete

disaster, resulting in total retreat by the Red Army. The attempted communist uprising in Germany around the same time was also quickly defeated by Western powers. The worldwide revolution the Soviets expected never arrived and by the time Stalin took power in 1924, the Soviet Union's role as the vanguard of the revolution was questionable. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union enacted a policy of "Socialism in One Country." Under this policy, the Soviet Union planned to strengthen socialism and the state within its own borders. This was the era of Stalin's infamous "Five Year Plans" of unprecedented industrial growth. However, this change in policy also made it possible for the Soviet Union to begin the internal colonialism for which it is known today. Following World War II, the Soviet Union found itself in control of more territory than ever before, and thus more opportunities to practice colonialism.

In the early 1960s, the United States embarked on a campaign to label the Soviet Union as a perpetrator of colonialism. In order to attack the image of a champion of decolonization the Soviet Union had constructed for itself, the United States began to push a narrative of "Red Colonialism." The United States claimed Red Colonialism was the worst colonialism of all, as it was imposed upon people who had previously been free. This argument challenged the Soviet Union's stance on decolonization, as well as made "normal" Western imperialism seem less nefarious than it really was. This line of thinking would lead the U.S. envoy to the United Nations, Sidney R. Yates, to declare in 1963 before the General Assembly that the Soviet Union was "the world's greatest imperialist power."³

³ Mary Ann Heiss, "Exposing 'Red Colonialism': U.S. Propaganda at the United Nations, 1953-1963," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 82.

It was important for the United States to make this argument before the General Assembly. The structure of the United Nations had rendered the Security Council impotent in important matters due to veto power held by the five permanent members. Because of this, the General Assembly assumed a role of importance that was not intended. It became the arena for the United States and Soviet Union to battle for the favor of the 113 member countries of the United Nations. Many of these nations were directly created as a result of decolonization and concerns about colonialism were a major issue for the General Assembly. If either side was to “win” the Cold War, it was necessary to gain the favor of the General Assembly.⁴

The campaign to discredit the Soviet Union began in the 1950s under President Eisenhower. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was the first to see the United Nations as a potential arena for propaganda and an opportunity to embarrass the Soviet Union. Under the “Lodge Project” the United States laid out an “anti-communist rather than pro-U.S.” campaign. The plan was to focus on examples of Soviet hypocrisy such as its annexation of the Baltic States and domination of its Eastern European satellites. Lodge and the officials who carried out this campaign severely overestimated the concern unaligned countries had towards Soviet imperialism. Many within the United States government saw this weakness and argued it would be more beneficial to present the United States’ successes in human rights, but their arguments went unheard. Another critical weakness in this plan was the United States’ commitment to a slow and steady decolonization, rather than “disorderly progress.” To those many former colonial states in the General Assembly, this made the United States look like it was a full supporter of

⁴ Ibid, 84-85.

Western imperialism and harmed its credibility in its argument against the Soviet Union.⁵ The Soviet Union predictably responded with anger, stating at one point that the accusations of Soviet imperialism were “flagrant fabrications and slander” that “anyone who [was] at all familiar with the history and policy of the Soviet State” would recognize. They rejected any accusation of internal colonialism and explained their actions away as “relations of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance...between the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.” This meant it was an internal matter, not up for debate or scrutiny from anyone outside of the Soviet Union. U.S. objections to how Moscow treated other socialist states did not justify U.N. intervention any more than Soviet outrage at “the racial discrimination practiced against the Negro population in the United States” allowed for Soviet intervention in the United States.⁶ With this last point, the Soviet Union had zeroed in on the United States’ greatest weakness in this argument. The treatment of African-Americans in the United States was abhorrent and well known by the other nations of the world. The U.S. campaign to discredit and embarrass the Soviet Union fell flat as the gap between their words and deeds was far too large to overcome. Any valid arguments the United States had as to the colonial nature of the Soviet Union was undermined by its own anti-democratic actions in Central America and Asia and treatment of minorities at home. America’s commitment to democracy and self-determination could be easily called into question.⁷ In the end, the campaign against Red Colonialism appeared from the outside to be a disingenuous

⁵ Ibid, 85-88.

⁶ Ibid, 108-109.

⁷ Ibid, 114.

argument motivated by a desire to shift attention away from the shortcomings of the United States onto those of the Soviet Union.

In more recent years, the question of Soviet colonialism has been revisited by historians, and many have come to the conclusion that the Soviet Union was indeed a colonial power, as the United States had attempted to argue before the United Nations in the 1950s and 1960s. One example of this is Benjamin Loring's article "Colonizers with Party Cards: Soviet Internal Colonialism in Central Asia, 1917-1939." Loring's argument points to a trend in Russian historiography, that Soviet colonialism was not a deliberate action, but an accident, the result of trying to bolster the core, often at the expense of the periphery. The article distinguishes Soviet colonialism as different from that of the Russian Empire that it replaced, even though the people of Central Asia described Bolshevik officials as "colonizers with party cards." Loring argues that the difference was the result of Soviet efforts to "integrate the region politically and economically into the union, which differed greatly from earlier tsarist administrative and economic policies expressly designed to maintain the region's separateness from the rest of the empire." Additionally, Soviet colonialism was at odds with the Soviet Union's stated goals and objectives for its territorial possessions. Loring claims colonialism in Central Asia did not come about because of "any deliberate, cynical deception by the Bolshevik leadership" but "was rather the unintended outcome of the regime's response to conditions on the world market." Soviet economic policy in Central Asia prioritized the production and transport of raw materials such as cotton to improve the Soviet Union's trade balance as a whole. This policy structured the economy to serve the needs of Soviet industry, unintentionally making Central Asia economically dependent on the rest

of the Soviet Union for other goods and food. The greater level of integration into the market than had existed under Tsarist Russia held great influence in how political and cultural life in Central Asia played out. Loring claims that because of this integration, Central Asia went from an “overseas” colony ruled from a distant metropole of Moscow to an “internal colony” of the Soviet state. Integration created a “subordinate relationship between center and periphery, one that was qualitatively different and far more pervasive than that of the tsarist era.”⁸

Another article arguing for the inclusion of the Soviet Union on the list of colonial states is Epp Annus’s “The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics.” Annus argues, similar to Loring, that the Soviet Union’s colonization of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was initially unintended. Annus addresses the question if the Soviet Union was truly colonizing or occupying the Baltic states. She settles on the answer that it was both. She compares the colonialism experienced by the Baltic states to that of Sub-Saharan Africa stating,

Indigenous governments are replaced with puppet control or outright rule. African education is revamped to privilege the colonizer’s language, and histories and curricula are rewritten from the imperium’s perspective. Autochthonous religious traditions are suppressed in the colonial zone, idols are destroyed, and alternative religions and nonreligious ideologies are promoted. The colonized areas of Africa become economic fiefs. Little or no ‘natural’ trade is allowed between the colonies and economies external to the colonizer’s network. Economic production is undertaken on a command basis and is geared to the dominant power’s interests rather than to local needs. Local currencies, if they exist, are only convertible to the metropolitan specie. Agriculture becomes mass monoculture, and environmental degradation follows. In the human realm, African dissident voices are heard most clearly only in exile, though accession to exile is difficult. Oppositional energies are therefore channeled through forms including mimicry, satire, parody, and jokes. But a characteristic feature of society is cultural stagnation.

⁸ Benjamin Loring, “Colonizers with Party Cards,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 77-80.

Annus states “This description of a colonial rule would, without difficulty, describe the situation in the Soviet sphere.”⁹ She finally contends, “even though the Soviet Union occupied rather than colonized the Baltic States, the period of occupation nevertheless developed into a period of colonial rule, as the modes of resistance turned into a hybrid coexistence with the new power.” Annus claims that because the Baltic states were unable to expel the occupying Soviet Union, the relationship between the occupied and the occupier started to change. Occupier began settling in the occupied states and they brought with them their ideology, which changed how occupied people related to the world. Therefore, while the Baltic countries were indeed occupied countries, the economic, social, and cultural models at work within those countries became those of a colonial enterprise.¹⁰

There are many articles such as Annus and Loring’s, but they all come to the same conclusion. Whether by design or by accident, the Soviet Union was engaged in some form of colonial endeavor. Inheriting vast amounts of territory from the Russian Empire, the institutions of the past remained in place to be used and exploited by the Soviet Union to establish itself as a superpower. However, this does not mean that the Soviet Union was a settler colonial state. There are a number of features that are required for an enterprise to be called settler colonial. As stated previously, it must be an ongoing process, impervious to regime change, not limited to an event. The logic of elimination must be in place with the explicit purpose of removing native people as an

⁹ Epp Annus, “The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 43, no. 1 (March 2012): 30-31.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 37.

obstacle to acquiring land. The case of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars appears at first glance to conform to this definition, but upon further examination, it fails to satisfy the requirement of an ongoing, structural, feature of the state.

During World War II, the Crimean Peninsula was occupied by the German army. During this time, Tatars formed defensive units meant to protect their villages from both Russian partisans, known to raid Tatar villages for supplies, and from the Germans. Many of these defensive units were created with the help of the German army before the Tatars chose not to fight for them. Although some Tatars did join the German army, many more remained neutral and many chose to fight against the Nazis. Crimean Tatars made up the second largest ethnic group engaged in partisan operations against the Germans in Crimea. In 1944, approximately one fifth of partisans in Crimea were Tatar, not the more numerous Ukrainian.¹¹ Despite these facts, the Tatars were targeted for reprisal when the Soviets retook Crimea from the Germans. The battle to retake Crimea, especially the Battle of Sevastopol, was extremely bloody and Soviets wanted revenge. It was common knowledge within the Soviet government that the Tatars, by and large, had remained loyal to the Soviet Union during the occupation. One Soviet report stated

The secretary of the Crimean *obkom* (district committee) of BKP (Communist Part), V.S Bultaov, pointed out that the main mass of Tatars remained loyal to the Soviet authorities and after the arrival of the occupiers they supported the partisans, whole villages offered supported to the partisans, and many of these were burnt by the Germans for supporting the partisans.

¹¹ Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars, From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 93-94.

The call for vengeance was louder than these voices of reason, however, and Stalin sought to punish those he felt were guilty of being traitors to the Soviet Union.¹²

Almost immediately after the Soviet Red Army liberated Crimea from German control, thousands of Crimean Tatars were arrested and summarily executed. One Tatar present described the trees lining the streets being used as makeshift gallows to carry out this crime. On May 10, 1944, Lavrentii Beria, the chief of the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the secret police) sent a letter to Stalin. The letter read

Considering the traitorous activities of the Crimean Tatars against the Soviet people, and as a result of the undesirability of the further habitation of the Crimean Tatars on the borders of the Soviet Union, the NKVD of the USSR brings to your attention a project decided upon by the State Committee of Defense on the resettlement of all Tatars from the territory of the Crimea. We consider it useful to settle the Crimean Tatars in the category of special settlers (*spetsposelenets*) in the districts of the Uzbek SSR for the utilization in work such as village labor, on *kolhoz*es and *sovkhos*es (state farms) and in industry and transport. The question on the resettlement of the Tatars in the Uzbek SSR has the agreement of the secretary of the CP (Communist Party) of Uzbekistan, comrade Iusupov.¹³

This letter would signal the beginning of a new stage of history for the Crimean Tatars.

On May 18, 1944, at dawn, the operation of deportation began. Thirty-two thousand NKVD officers conducted the operation and the entire deportation was completed within three days. By 4:00 PM on May 20, 180,014 people had been deported from Crimea, 173,287 of them already aboard trains and heading for their new home in Uzbekistan. When the operation had ended, the final tally of deportations numbered 191,014.¹⁴ The deportation was carried out with ruthless efficiency. On the first day, the NKVD mechanized infantry surrounded all Tatar villages and suburbs and

¹² Ibid, 95-96.

¹³ Ibid, 97.

¹⁴ Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 95-96.

transported the surprised Tatars to designated shipment points. Tatars were given less than an hour to gather what belongings they could carry with them. At gunpoint, the Crimean Tatars were led to major rail hubs around Crimea to be sent away. The survivors of the deportation later claimed that many Tatars assumed they were being gathered for execution, as the methods the NKVD used to carry out their orders were highly reminiscent of Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* tactics. One Tatar activist, Reshat Dzhemilev, wrote “The cruel treatment by armed soldiers convinced the Crimean Tatars that they were being taken out to be shot at the anti-tank ditches just as the fascists had shot all the Jews. Some of the Tatars even began bidding each other farewell.” Once the Tatars reached the rail hubs, 11,000 Crimean Tatar men were separated from their families and led onto cattle cars to be shipped to Moscow and Tula in forced labor units. The women, children, elderly, and war injured Tatars were sealed into guarded train cars and shipped eastward towards Uzbekistan. Those who survived reported later that the only modification the train cars received to accommodate humans was the addition of a pipe to serve as a toilet in the corner of the car. Many cars were still filled with the blood and feces of those who had been deported previously from the Caucasus.¹⁵

Upon arrival in their destination, many cars were opened to find the occupants dead. When the doors of the cars were opened, Tatars still capable of moving exited the train on their own, followed by the sick who required help. Then an NKVD officer would enter the wagon to remove the bodies, usually children and elderly who were too weak to make the long journey in such harsh conditions. The bodies were simply thrown into

¹⁵ Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, 99-100.

hollows three meters from the train embankment and left there. It is estimated that approximately 7,900 Crimean Tatars lost their lives in this deportation process.¹⁶

When the Crimean Tatars arrived in Uzbekistan, they were forced to live in *spetsposelenie* settlements, or special settlement camps. These camps resembled the internment camps seen in many countries during World War II, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. Each head of the household was required to report to the *spetskommandants* every three days to give a report on their family deaths, births, work progress, or any other information the Soviets wished to know. Leaving the camp was punishable by arrest and a sentence of five years of hard labor. Tatars later claimed to have been awoken before dawn for twelve-hour workdays in the fields and factories of Central Asia, of members of their families being sent to labor camps for visiting family, and the abuses of the camp *kommandants*. Living conditions within the camps were horrendous. Crimean Tatars were forced to live in barracks near factories, in dugouts, and sometimes in only simple huts built with dried mud bricks. In addition to the poor camp conditions, Crimean Tatars also had to contend with the environment. Crimean Tatars had a difficult time adjusting to the hot, dry climate of Uzbekistan known for frequent droughts. As so often happens when a population is displaced, disease spread quickly through the Crimean Tatar communities. Crimean Tatars lacked immunity to diseases endemic to the area such as malaria, dysentery, dystrophy, yellow fever, and other intestinal illnesses. Uzbek medical facilities found themselves overwhelmed and many Tatars died. Women and children were disproportionately affected.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid, 100-101.

¹⁷ Ibid, 105-106.

The Crimean Tatars had a centuries old tradition of agriculture. This was totally erased following the deportation. Few Tatars were capable of finding land suitable for farming in Uzbekistan. The most fertile regions of Uzbekistan were already overpopulated by the time the Tatars arrived. The vast majority of Crimean Tatars were forced to work in heavy industry. One source states “It was characteristic that the *spetspereselenets* from the Crimean Tatars were frequently assigned to the most trying and heaviest construction enterprises,” jobs the Uzbeks loathed. These assignments came directly from Stalin. Another source states “the Crimean Tatars, to a considerable degree, satisfied the need for the speedy development of industry in the republics of Central Asia.” Forcing the Crimean Tatars into industrial jobs cut them off from the national pride and ancestral skill of agriculture, a skill they never recovered; thus, a major part of Crimean Tatar identity was lost forever.¹⁸

This effort to erase Crimean Tatar identity was another aspect of the deportation. Soviet officials believed the Tatars, deprived of their home and identity, would quickly assimilate into Central Asian society. In theory, this would happen quickly due to the fact that the customs, Islamic cultural identity, and Turkic language of the Turko-Muslim population of Central Asia were closely related to those of the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatar nation had been nearly destroyed by the deportation in terms of politics. By removing the Tatars from Crimea, the territorial basis for recognition had been lost. Crimean Tatars became a group of non-people. Crimean Tatars were to be taught exclusively in Russian; their national literature was destroyed. Stalin had set out a plan to totally eradicate the Crimean Tatar people as a distinct identity within Soviet borders.

¹⁸ Ibid, 106-107.

In the 1960s, one source stated the Tatars “are doomed to be assimilated by the peoples among whom they are now living. Thus, a people with a long, glorious and tragic past will disappear from history.”¹⁹ This pronouncement brings to mind the statements often made in the United States in the 1890s about the fate of the Native Americans. The “vanishing Indian” trope was often deployed and implied that Native Americans had been fully eliminated in an unfortunate but inevitable turn of history. These statements were being made while Indians continued to live and even thrive in places around the United States. Just the same, when Lemerrier Quelquejay proclaimed the impending death of the Crimean Tatars, he did so as Tatars continued to live and maintain their identity against all odds.

Stalin’s attempt to erase the Tatars did not stop with treatment of the Tatar people. In 1945, the Soviet government embarked on a campaign of de-Tatarization of Crimea. Crimean language textbooks were burned, previously sanctioned nation building efforts were stopped and all traces of Crimean Tatar presence was erased. Mosques, fountains, cemeteries, and other structures important to Tatar culture were destroyed. Tatar village and topographic names were changed overnight. For example the *Ak Mecit* (White Mosque) district was renamed to the *Chernomorskii* (Black Sea) district, Alushta became Kutusovskii in honor of a Russian general wounded by Turks in a previous war, Bahcesaray became Pushkinskii in reference to the famous Russian author Alexander Pushkin. Balaklava was renamed Nakhimovskii after a famous Russian general of the Crimean War, *Karasu Bazar* (Black Water Market) was changed to *Belogorsk* (White City) and the district around it became Partisanskii. These changes

¹⁹ Ibid, 110-111.

continued until any linguistic connection between Crimea and the Tatars was lost. As these name changes were occurring, government-sponsored settlement of Russians and Ukrainians to Crimea was implemented. With the Tatars deported, the abandoned farms of Crimea needed labor and the Soviet Union happily replaced Crimean Tatars with Slavs to restart work.²⁰

Joseph Stalin died in 1953, and with his death came a major change in Soviet politics. In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, gave a "secret speech" at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party. The speech shocked the Soviet officials present because it condemned the Stalin regime as tyrannical and antithetical to the socialist future the Soviet Union claimed to be working towards. Stalin's purges and the cult of personality he constructed around himself were targeted as especially awful. Part of this rejection of Stalinism was repealing many of his more totalitarian policies. One of the first steps taken in de-Stalinization was to end the special settlement regime the Tatars toiled under for twelve years. Under Khrushchev, Crimean Tatar survivors were allowed to reintegrate into Soviet society. The Crimean Tatars and other deported nations such as the Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars, and Chechens were exonerated of the charges of mass treason. Crimean Tatar civil rights had largely been restored and many of the other deported nations were allowed to return to their ancestral homeland, however, the Tatars were exempted from this policy of repatriation. The Tatars were not allowed to return home despite being exonerated simply because the strategic and economic importance of Crimea was too important to the Soviet Union.²¹

²⁰ Ibid, 111-112.

²¹ Ibid, 108.

Turkey and Russia have been enemies for much of their history and in the 20th century, the distrust and hostility this created were still present. The Soviet Union believed sooner or later, whether it was an attempt to export communism or another Western intervention, that it would become embroiled in another war with Turkey. It is highly likely that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars was not a colonial enterprise that sought to exploit their labor or land, but a political move meant to better prepare for the perceived looming war. As the Red Army pressed on towards Germany, Stalin considered the possibility of annexing portions of the northeastern border with Turkey. Accompanying this was a propaganda campaign designed to convince Armenians in this region to rise up against Turkey in rebellion. Stalin, born in Georgia and aware of the political and social ties of the Caucasus and Black Sea region, knew that many of the Muslim, Turkic speaking ethnicities in this region were historically pro-Turkish. These groups were located on what would be the invasion route should a war break out. Groups such as the Balkars and Meshketian Turks occupied the main highways running into Turkey or lived on the Turkish frontier itself. Most importantly, the Crimean Tatars occupied the main Soviet naval bastion facing the Turks across the Black Sea. With the deportation of many groups who had never been close to combat with German soldiers and these strategic locations in mind, it is likely that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars was more the result of Soviet foreign policy concerns than any other reason.²²

J. Otto Pohl's "The Deportation of the Crimean Tatars in the Context of Settler Colonialism" is one of the earliest, if not the first, attempts to apply settler colonial theory to the Soviet Union. However, it appears that Pohl either misunderstands settler colonial

²² Ibid, 97-98.

theory, or has his own definition. In his introduction, Pohl claims that the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan and the Urals has not been examined “in the context of larger historical phenomenon of forcible displacement and racial discrimination against indigenous peoples.” He claims that it has not been compared to cases outside the Soviet Union such as American treatment of Native Americans, blacks in South Africa, or Arabs in Palestine, “despite the fact that all of these cases also involved the forcible resettlement of indigenous populations and the imposition of severe legal restrictions upon their freedom of residency and movement on the basis of their ethno-racial classification.” Pohl believes the Soviet Union has been exempt from such comparative studies because of its “espousal of a socialist ideology and opposition to capitalist economics.²³ The claim that the Soviet Union has escaped criticism as a colonial state is unfounded. As has already been demonstrated, many scholars prior to this article’s publishing in 2015 have questioned the status of the Soviet Union as a colonial power. Even if he is speaking specifically about settler colonialism, the argument still does not make sense. The reasons he puts forward for the Soviet Union’s exemption in comparative studies could easily be applied to the question of Soviet colonialism. It seems Pohl is focusing too hard on the racial aspect of the deportation at the expense of other factors at work. While he is correct that the deportation, Russification, and de-Tatarization holds many similarities with settler colonial states, he fails to engage meaningfully with settler colonial theory. The mere dispossession of land and racial or ethnic prejudice is not enough to label a state “settler colonial.” What Pohl is describing in this article, the deportation, the reeducation, the acts of resistance, are

²³ J. Otto Pohl, “The Deportation of the Crimean Tatars in the Context of Settler Colonialism,” *Uluslararası Suclar ve Tarih* 16 (2015): 45-49.

events. There is no continuing structure of elimination following the death of Stalin and eventually, the Tatars were allowed to return to their ancestral home of Crimea.

However, to Pohl's credit, he states that it is his hope this article inspires other scholars to carry the question of the Soviet Union as a settler colonial state forward. If it was Pohl's intention to simply start a conversation, rather than attempt to answer it himself, then he has succeeded.

While the actions of the Soviet Union can be described as colonial and historians generally agree that the Soviet Union was a colonial state, this does not mean the Soviet Union was a settler colonial state. As Wolfe stated, settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars and attempts to erase their culture was limited to a twelve-year span of time under a single leader, Joseph Stalin. Settler colonialism is impervious to regime change. The structures of settler colonialism and the logic of elimination inform every action of the settler colonial state and those policies cannot be seen in the Soviet Union. When Khrushchev succeeded Stalin and began the process of de-Stalinization, he reversed the policies that were meant to eliminate the Crimean Tatars. Over time, the Crimean Tatars were fully granted their rights, and many have returned to Crimea. Additionally, Stalin's campaign to eliminate the Crimean Tatars and Russify the Crimean Peninsula does not appear to be motivated out of settler colonial desire for land for the sake of land. Stalin was a ruthless man who was willing to do whatever he felt was necessary to accomplish his goals. As evidenced in his purges, total erasure of Stalin's enemies was a common tactic for him. Many of his victims were entirely purged from history, any trace of them carefully scrubbed away by the NKVD. Stalin intended to eliminate and replace the

Crimean Tatars as part of his defensive plan against Turkey. Removing the Crimean Tatars ensured that they would neither side with Turkey in a potential war, nor could block or destroy the Soviet naval base at Sevastopol. The elimination of the Crimean Tatars was a ruthless plot to be sure, genocidal in nature. But as Wolfe stated, genocide is not always a feature of settler colonialism and settler colonialism is not always a feature of genocide. While settler colonial theory cannot be applied to the Soviet Union in this instance, Pohl's insistence that it at least be tried is beneficial to the field of settler colonial studies. Not every question yields a revelatory or groundbreaking answer that spawns a new field itself. There is no harm in asking questions, and that is what is most important about Pohl's article. Pohl's work is no less important than one that revolutionizes history. The question of the Soviet Union as a settler colonial state is an interesting one, and one that merits further investigation. Perhaps over time more studies on the subject will find that it was settler colonial in other cases, or perhaps the consensus will fall on the side that it was not. But it is important, as Pohl points out, not to exempt the Soviet Union, or any country, from these kinds of historical questions. Doing so is to do the field of history a disservice. It is a historian's job to ask questions and seek out answers, no matter what those answers are. Exempting a country entirely based on its self-proclaimed status as anti-colonial risks leaving a blind spot in history.

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Uranium Fever: Willful Ignorance in Service of Utopia

For much of human history, uranium, the heaviest naturally occurring element, was believed to have few practical uses. Uranium was generally seen as an unwanted waste product found in the hunt for more valuable minerals such as silver. However, various peoples and civilizations throughout history managed to find some limited decorative uses. In the time of the Roman Empire, it was used as a coloring agent for glassware, creating the yellow tinted, luminescent, uranium glass that is still collectable today. Until World War II, this was the sum total of uranium's contribution to humanity. However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, there were a series of major discoveries in the new field of particle physics that would turn uranium from a mildly attractive pigment, to a coveted element worth waging war over. The promises of a uranium powered future were bright, as scientists dreamed of the potential uses, but with these promises came a dark side. The proliferation of uranium led to more people than ever before being exposed to the invisible danger of radiation. Uranium miners, factory workers, unlucky civilians, military personnel and even scientists themselves became victims as radioactive materials and elements such as uranium and radium became fixtures of daily life. The danger of radiation was discovered rather early and several high-profile cases of radiation poisoning such as the death of Marie Curie and the Radium Girls of the 1920s brought this danger to public attention. Yet, during World War II and the ensuing uranium boom, it seemed at first glance that these cases had been forgotten, as nuclear testing ran rampant across the western United States. People flocked from around the country to stake a claim, just as their ancestors did during the famous gold and silver rushes. The uranium boom of the 1940s and 50s played out very

similarly to those previous ore strikes and quickly engrained itself into popular culture, becoming immortalized in music and television of the era. It is easy to explain this phenomenon away by stating that Americans in the immediate post-war era were simply unconcerned about the world around them, riding high off the victory of World War II, unable to critically think about their actions, but to do so is a dangerous reduction of the complexity of the situation. Far from it, many Americans were well aware of the dangers of radiation and radioactive materials. However, the monetary incentives of the new market proved too enticing for them to care. In addition to this, there was a concentrated effort by the United States government and corporations with interests in these materials to hide the full extent of the dangers of radiation, resulting in the deaths and illnesses of thousands of Americans. What initially seems to be a cavalier or ignorant attitude towards the dangers of radiation can be explained instead as a willful disregard of the danger in the name of utopian promises, national security, and the pursuit of that most seductive force of all, capital.

In 1896, German physicist Wilhelm Röntgen discovered through his experiments with cathode rays a mysterious invisible emission capable of penetrating photographic plates. Unable to determine the source of this energy, Röntgen named these emissions “x-rays” with X serving as a placeholder for the unknown source. Later that same year, Henri Becquerel set out to find the source of these mysterious x-rays. Becquerel believed the key to this mystery could be found through the use of luminescent minerals. Sprinkling a salt, uranium potassium sulfate, on a photographic plate and leaving the plate in the sun, Becquerel hoped to find a similar reaction as Röntgen’s x-rays. Initially, the salt created a silhouette on the plate, leading Becquerel to believe

sunlight had triggered a reaction inside the luminescent salt and emitted a gas. However, as the experiment continued, the skies became overcast and Becquerel put a halt to his experiment, leaving new plates sprinkled with salt in a drawer. When Becquerel returned to continue his experiment, he found the plates had been marked just as before. This proved that whatever the emissions were, they were not a gas and they were not a chemical reaction induced by the environment. These mystery emissions were the result of a constant source of energy within the salts themselves. Becquerel did not know exactly what he had found at the time, but he had found the first evidence of radiation. In simplistic terms, radioactivity is the result of atomic particles being ejected from an atom. Uranium is the heaviest naturally occurring element, containing ninety-two protons in its nucleus. Any heavier and the atom would become too unstable and fall apart. Because of this density, extra particles are constantly fired off into the space around the atom to maintain the minimum level of stability required to remain an atom.²⁴

The results of Becquerel's experiments inspired a graduate student, Marie Curie, to dig deeper. Marie Curie was a Polish immigrant married to French physicist Pierre Curie. Through her research on her doctoral thesis, Marie Curie theorized that an unknown element inside uranium was responsible for emitting even more radioactivity. Marie Curie dubbed this theorized element "radium" and set out to prove its existence. Using slag heaps from a mine in Czechoslovakia, Marie Curie reduced the slag to a crystalized form, isolating a tenth of a gram of radium chloride, proving her thesis of a radioactive substance inside of uranium and further shedding light on the phenomenon

²⁴ Tom Zoellner, *Uranium: War, Energy, and the Rock that Shaped the World* (New York: Viking, 2009), 19-21.

of radiation. In 1903, Marie and Pierre Curie, along with Becquerel, were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in physics among great media fanfare. Almost immediately, the utopian claims of miracle cures and beneficial usages of radium began. Pierre demonstrated his belief in radium's ability to cure cancer by exposing his arm to radium long enough to create a burn, then observing the total healing process over two months. This struck a chord with the medical community and soon, doctors confirmed Pierre was correct. Small doses of radium could shrink or eliminate tumors. A Johns Hopkins physician sang the praises of radium stating, "It was just as miraculous as if we had put our hands over the part and said, 'Be well.'" *Cosmopolitan* magazine continued this trend, writing an article in which it called radium "life, energy, immortal warmth" and "dust from the master's workshop." Radium quickly entered into popular culture and consumer goods with this reputation as a miracle worker driving its popularity. One company added radium to its chocolate bars, glow-in-the-dark crucifixes were made using radium paint, radium paint was used to paint luminescent watch faces, a product called "Radium Eclipse Sprayer" was marketed as a bug killer and furniture polish.²⁵ In just a few years, radium had become the most valuable substance on earth. Doctors marketed it as a miracle cure and even sold a radium solution known as "Liquid Sunshine" to their patients. The value of radium reached such incredible heights that a single gram could fetch \$175,000, thirty thousand times the price of gold at the time.²⁶

Even in this early time of discovery however, the clues of the true danger were starting to appear. When fellow physicist Ernest Rutherford visited the Curies in 1903, Pierre's fingers were red and inflamed. His hands were shaking so much that he could

²⁵ Ibid, 21-22.

²⁶ Ibid, 5.

not hold a tube of radium to show his guests. That same year, he was too sick to present his Nobel lecture, postponing it for two years. It was at this lecture that Pierre Curie expressed his concerns about the potential misuse of materials like radium. Pierre Curie said “Is it right to probe so deeply into nature’s secrets?...The question must here be raised whether it will benefit mankind, or whether the knowledge will be harmful. Radium could be very dangerous in criminal hands.” Pierre Curie compared his and Marie’s work to that of Nobel, whose invention of dynamite led to both great progress and great suffering. “The example of the discoveries of Nobel is characteristic, as powerful explosives have enabled men to do wonderful work.” Pierre Curie ended this thought with, “They are also a terrible means of destruction in the hands of great criminals who are leading the people toward war. I am one of those who believe with Nobel that mankind would derive more harm than good from these new discoveries.”²⁷ Pierre Curie’s fears would be proven correct.

One of the most famous high-profile cases of radiation poisoning as well as one of the earliest is the case of the Radium Girls. In 1917, when the United States entered World War I, young, unmarried women were forced to pick up the slack left by the absent men and enter the workplace. Many of these women were drawn to factory work. Dial painting was a rapidly growing industry due to the rising popularity of the wristwatch. Using radium infused paint, the watch faces could be made to glow-in-the-dark. This job quickly became sex-typed as women’s work and the vast majority of dialpainters were young white women in their mid-teens to early twenties. This job proved to be incredibly attractive as it was easy work for high wages. As the years went

²⁷ Ibid, 23.

by, some of these women began to show signs of a debilitating and often fatal disease. In order to bring the paint brushes to a point, the girls often licked the brush or placed it between their lips. In doing so, a portion of each dose of radium was stored in the bones of the jaw, leading to brittle bones, anemia, necrotizing tissue, and potentially bone cancer and marrow cancer. As radium decayed, it produced radon, a radioactive gas. Like radium, radon could become stored in the calcium of the nasal bones and lead to more crippling damage. By 1923, the victims of radium poisoning recognized that they had contracted their affliction through their work. By 1925, many scientists and government officials conceded that the dialpainters had indeed been poisoned by radiation, but the industry resisted the conclusion. The radium industry, sensing the threat to profits, set out on a campaign of disinformation and coverups. Scientific consultants were bribed in order to control public knowledge about the danger of radium. The industry concealed data that supported the existence of radium poisoning and promoted what amounted to conspiracy theories that shifted blame elsewhere.²⁸ A legal battle ensued that lasted a decade until victims successfully sued the industry in 1938.²⁹ The plight of the Radium Girls and the ensuing legal battle and industry reform were met with intense interest from the media, bringing the issue of radioactive materials and the consequences of their mishandling to the public eye.

The most shocking part of the Radium Girls story is the extent the radium companies went to in order to cover up the problem and the utter disregard for workers'

²⁸ Claudia Clark, *Radium Girls: Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1-7.

²⁹ "Victim of Radium Wins \$3,470 and Pension for Life: Appeals Will Delay Final Awards to 14 Others. Pension Awarded to Woman Radium Victim," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 6, 1938.

health displayed by the industry. The denials of the dangers of radium went far beyond the point at which most medical experts and government officials agreed upon.

Consultants were paid to lie about the properties of radium and maintain the miracle cure myth. Medical and government experts were manipulated in order to avoid or mitigate the cost of compensation to injured employees. When profits were threatened, the industry closed ranks to fight regulation tooth and nail.

The first cases of deaths of dialpainters from radium poisoning began appearing in major newspapers as early as 1925. The June 19th, 1925 edition of the *New York Times* ran the article "Radium Killed Woman, Relatives Declare; She is Seventh Watch Dial Painter to Die." The victim, Sarah T. Maillefer, was reported to have died after suffering a "pernicious type of anaemia." Maillefer was a dialpainter at the United States Radium Corporation's factory. The article notes that Professor Edwin E. Lemman, chief chemist of the United States Radium Corporation, had died ten days previously under similar circumstances. The family of Maillefer claimed she had become crippled months prior due to her illness and a recent x-ray confirmed she was suffering from radium poisoning.³⁰ Five days later on June 24, the *New York Times* ran another article on the subject "To Begin Two Suits Against Radium Co." This article reports that William J. A. Bailey, director of the Bailey Radium Laboratories claimed that Dr. Lemman's death was unrelated to his exposure to radium and that he would have died sooner in some other occupation. This offended his wife who stated "I do not know who William J. A. Bailey is, nor where the Bailey Radium Laboratories are...but I do know that his assertion that Dr.

³⁰ "Radium Killed Woman, Relatives Declare; She is Seventh Watch Dial Painter to Die," *New York Time*, June 19, 1925.

Leman was not in robust health is absolutely unfounded.” She clarified “To the contrary, my husband was in the pink of condition until about last Christmas, when he complained of being tired from overwork and seemed to grow pale as time went on.” Mrs. Leman described her husband as an athlete and in robust health. She also stated that all of Dr. Leman’s acquaintances found Bailey’s statement to be “unwarranted and ridiculous.” In this same article, Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, advisory physician of the Prudential Life Insurance Company in Newark, New Jersey, tried to shift blame away from radium to another substance, mesothorium, a common and cheaper substitute for radium. Harold B. Viedt, Vice President and general manager of the radium company’s statement was laced with redirection and downplaying of the situation.

There are a large number of men who have made the study of radioactivity, together with the production of radioactive materials, their life work. They are scattered throughout this country and abroad, and because of its being so specialized it has required that they devote practically all their time to its study. In its early years of production, when little was known of its peculiarities, we heard nothing of fatalities due to association with it. In later years, after the results were observed in the medical world, certain precautions were observed to be necessary and were taken with regard to handling the materials. Yet the number of deaths which can be definitely laid to association with this element are few and far between.

He then redirects attention to how much good the company has done. Concluding “Certainly no industry is in existence for the purpose of endangering human life and certainly not the radium industry, the main objective of which is to relieve human suffering.”³¹ This statement, and the statement of Mr. Bailey were blatant falsehoods

³¹ "To Begin Two Suits Against Radium Co.: Newark Attorneys Say Two Women Died After Using Luminous Paint on Watch Dials. Says Chemist Was Well Dr. Leman's Widow Denies Husband Would Have Died Sooner in Another Occupation," *New York Times*, June 24, 1925.

and disinformation meant to distract the public from a problem the industry was well aware of.

In March 1924, one year before the publishing of these news stories, the U.S. Radium Corporation enlisted the aid of three physicians from Harvard, Dr. Cecil Drinker, his wife Dr. Katherine Drinker, and Dr. William Castle, to determine the cause of the new disease affecting the dial painters. The research team visited the same factory Sarah Mallefer worked in, toured the plant, examined the dial painters, and interviewed dentists and physicians who had contact with those affected. Almost immediately the team zeroed in on radium as the cause of the disease. Dr. Cecil Drinker reported the team's findings to the U.S. Radium Corporation in June that same year. Arthur Roeder, the president of the company, refused to accept the conclusions of the team and stated "Your preliminary report is rather a discussion with tentative conclusions based on evidence much of which is necessarily circumstantial...Our conclusion is that there is nothing harmful anywhere in the works." Drinker chose not to release the results of the study to the public without the permission of the U.S. Radium Corporation. An advocacy group for the dial painters discovered the existence of the Harvard report and set out to force its release. They believed the Department of Labor could demand the release of the report, however the Labor Department claimed they had received a summary of the Harvard study previously and that U.S. Radium had been cleared of any wrongdoing. When Drinker and his wife were approached with the possibility that their work had been tampered with, they reacted with anger and arranged to have the original report published. It was revealed that the Labor Department had received a misrepresentation of the study by Roeder. U.S. Radium was ordered to "comply or close" with the

recommended safety procedures of the Harvard study by the New Jersey commissioner of labor. The company chose to close up shop and relocate to New York City.³² This story proves Viedt's statement in the *New York Times* article was a blatant and intentional lie. The company had been aware of the danger of radium poisoning for a year and chose to block the release of the report that proved it.

William J.A. Bailey's statement in the *New York Times* article was also a disingenuous one meant to protect profits. By 1925, the use of radium medicine had been largely abandoned by mainstream practitioners, however it still had defenders amongst quacks. William J. A. Bailey was one of those quacks. Bailey claimed to be a "consultant to the medical profession on radioactivity and endocrinology." However, the American Medical Association held a file on Bailey identifying him as a fraud. Bailey had served time in jail for conspiracy and in 1925 purchased radium and mesothorium from U.S. Radium. With these elements, Bailey created Radithor, a radium tonic sold by the case. Unlike most of his competitors, who did not actually put radium in their radium solutions, Bailey's Radithor was the real thing. Bailey advertised Radithor as a "Fountain of Youth," quickly gaining the attention of the media. Dr. Charles Morris' book *Modern Rejuvenation Methods* asked rhetorically "Can modern science make men and women young again? Can the abundant life, health and spirit of youth be renewed?" The answer Morris provided was yes. "Foremost scientists claim that this is possible and point with pride to the fact that already withered, ailing, wrinkled, forgetful 'has-beens' have been turned into alert, healthy, vigorous persons fired with the energy of romantic youth." Morris directly credited Bailey, calling him "eminent scientist, Dr.

³² Clark, *Radium Girls*, 89-92.

William J. A. Bailey,” with this miraculous progression of medicine and went on to list seventy-six conditions curable through Radithor ranging from arthritis to obesity. The book declared Radithor to be perfectly safe, stating “If any doctor or other person states that radium water is injurious he is not telling the truth.

Recently some doctors, who I learn have never had the slightest experience with radium or mesothorium, and know no more about it than a school boy, have been trying to garner some publicity by claiming harmful effects from these products. Their statements are perfectly ridiculous and in opposition to twenty years of experience in hospitals and clinics.

One might ask, how did Bailey convince a doctor to write such a glowing review of his product? The answer is simple, he did not. *Modern Rejuvenation Methods* was written by Bailey. Dr. Morris only contributed a few pages of notes taken during a conversation with Bailey. William Bailey was the sole author and publisher of the book and used Morris’ name for legitimacy.³³ When Bailey made his statement to the *New York Times* concerning the death of Dr. Edwin Lemman, he did so purely to protect his business. Bailey was no more qualified to speak on the potential cause of Dr. Lemman’s death than any other random person pulled off the street.

The high-profile nature of the Radium Girls case and the confirmed examples of corporate coverups and quackery show that by the 1940s, the dangers of radioactive materials were a known phenomenon to the American people. However, the mystique of atomic power and radiation never fully lost its luster. With the discovery of nuclear fission Americans were once again lured by the utopian visions of progress that had caused so much suffering with radium. In 1938, physicist Otto Hahn and his assistant Fritz Strassman discovered nuclear fission by bombarding uranium atoms with particles.

³³ Ibid, 172-174.

The energy generated by nuclear fission was astounding and scientists immediately began to theorize practical uses for fission and uranium. Almost overnight, an element seen as a disposable and worthless byproduct of radium harvesting became the most valuable commodity in the world. Nuclear scientists in the United States assured the leaders that developing a uranium stock and harnessing the power of the atom would increase the prestige of the nation and drastically increase its military power. Most attractively, it provided the power of the atomic bomb, believed to be the weapon to end war in general. This marked the beginning of the Uranium Boom in the United States.³⁴ During this time, Uranium and radiation would be elevated to unprecedented heights in the American consciousness and “uranium fever” would overtake the nation. Through music, television, comic books, and film, radiation fully entered the American consciousness as a potentially destructive power capable of ending life as people knew it or ushering in a new golden age. The dangers of radiation had never been forgotten. The question is not “Did Americans know radiation was dangerous?” Instead, the question is “Did Americans care that radiation was dangerous?” to which the answer is a resounding “No.” Americans chose to remain willfully ignorant of the dangers of radioactive materials in order to take advantage of the many beneficial uses. Additionally, the government engaged in effective propaganda and disinformation campaigns in order to maintain this mindset.

For most people, the coming of the Atomic Age was a surprise, kept in the dark by the United States government in order to protect the secrets of the atomic bomb. However, with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the curtain had been lifted. The

³⁴ Stephanie A. Malin, *The Price of Nuclear Power, Uranium Communities and Environmental Justice* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 23.

excitement that would accompany the uranium boom was not immediate. Initially, the atomic bomb and atomic power was largely met with apprehension. In his book *Uranium: War, Energy, and the Rock that Shaped the World*, Tom Zoellner compared the initial reaction to the atomic bombing with the collective pause following September 11, 2001. A *New York Sun* correspondent reported a “sense of oppression” as people talked about what just transpired. He wrote “For two days it has been an unusual thing to see a smile among the throngs that crowd the street.” Edward R. Murrow of CBS News reported, “Seldom if ever has a war ended with such a sense of uncertainty and fear...with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured.”³⁵ Pushing against this overwhelming feeling of fear were two counterforces. First, despite the horror surrounding the power of the bomb, patriotism and national pride was at an all time high. America won a seemingly impossible war through a “magic solution that had emerged from its innards.” Good old-fashioned American ingenuity had created the atomic bomb and in a matter of seconds completely reshuffled the international order. Secondly, there was the belief that the destructive potential of uranium could be controlled. If handled correctly, atomic power could usher in an age of comfort, luxury, and even utopia. People dreamed of atomic-powered cars, airplanes, and ships. Writers theorized the ability to power entire cities from only a small amount of uranium. Although many of these ideas were not feasible, the important part was that such high dreams helped ease people through that terrifying time of uncertainty.³⁶

³⁵ Zoellner, *Uranium*, 73.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 80.

Just as the radium industry sought to hide the truth about the extent of the danger of radium poisoning, so too did the United States government with uranium. *New York Times* reporter William L. Laurence was almost single handedly responsible for shaping the American conception of uranium and the atomic bomb. Laurence had been the only journalist allowed to witness the work being done at Los Alamos and was present for both the Trinity test and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Laurence was of the utopian mindset when it came to atomic power, calling it “an Eighth Day wonder, a sort of Second Coming of Christ yarn.” His utopian vision of an atomic future meant he was all too happy to help sanitize perception of uranium and the bomb.³⁷ Laurence had become obsessed with the idea of atomic power early in its scientific development and met with many of the top scientists. By 1945, he had a strong grasp on the inner workings of the atomic bomb. Despite his championing the atomic bomb, he was not allowed to visit the remains of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to see the aftermath. That did not stop him from writing a story debunking reports that the atomic bombs emitted deadly levels of gamma radiation. With his background knowledge of the atomic bomb, he almost certainly knew the bombs did indeed emit gamma rays and willingly engaged in a cover-up for the government.³⁸

Laurence’s story was a response to a crisis resulting from Australian reporter Wilfred Burchett’s reporting on the ruins of Hiroshima. Burchett snuck past the military cordon and personally witnessed thousands of people dying of acute radiation syndrome. Burchett interviewed doctors who described the symptoms as the familiar signs of radiation sickness. Victims’ teeth and hair fell out, they suffered from loss of

³⁷ Ibid, 80-81.

³⁸ Ibid, 83-89.

appetite, they bled from their nose and mouth, and exhibited burns on the skin. Burchett was caught and deported from Japan, his photographs confiscated. However, he was still able to run the story in Britain, causing a massive scandal. The United States acted quickly through puppets like Laurence to hide all news of radioactivity resulting from the bomb. After the scandals of the Radium Girls, they could no longer argue that radiation itself was harmless. People were aware of the horrible effects radiation poisoning had on the body. The government was afraid that if news got out about the thousands of Japanese civilians dying such a slow painful death, the use of the atomic bomb would be compared to the German use of mustard gas in World War I, up to that point considered the greatest of wartime atrocities. Laurence was taken on a tour of the Trinity site and was shown Geiger counter readings that proved no appreciable levels of radiation were detected. This stunt was pointless, as the Geiger counters could not detect gamma ray emissions that would have been present in the immediate aftermath of the blast, which was what had caused the radiation poisoning in Hiroshima. Laurence framed Burchett's story as Japanese propaganda and claimed that all casualties from the atomic bomb were the result of the initial blast and the ensuing fireball, the official stance of the Army at the time. This discredited the story and placed the United States within the moral right.³⁹

By 1948, it became harder to coverup the existence of gamma radiation in atomic blasts, but that did not stop Laurence from trying. That year, Laurence wrote an article for the *New York Times* in which he reported on an Army spokesperson's speech at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association. The spokesman, Col. James

³⁹ Ibid, 89-90.

P. Cooney, stated that fear of radiation was “unreasoning” and implored people to take a “proper psychological” approach to their evaluation of the dangers of radioactivity. Once again the casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were brought up, however this time the numbers had been adjusted to 85% of the damage being the result of the blast and fireball and “only” 5 to 15% of casualties were the result of radiation. Cooney claimed he had interviewed “a large number” of Japanese who had recovered from radiation sickness, and they all appeared “perfectly normal and handicapped in no way,” blatantly ignoring the increased risk of cancer that Laurence no doubt was aware they were suffering from. The article concludes with Cooney explaining how water supplies cannot be sufficiently poisoned by radioactive fallout, another blatant lie. These lies pushed by men such as Cooney and Laurence gave Americans a false sense of security. While Americans knew radiation was dangerous, they were led to believe that such stories were exaggerated or that the danger could be mitigated with something as simple as a basic water filtration system.⁴⁰

With the fear of radiation at the very least controlled, the uranium boom hit America hard and started a rush the likes of which had not been seen since the gold and silver strikes of the 19th century. In 1946, The United States, desperate to maintain a stranglehold on uranium supplies and amass a large stockpile, passed the Atomic Energy Act and formed the Atomic Energy Commission, making itself the sole legal purchaser of uranium. To incentivize independent and amateur prospectors on the Colorado Plateau, the government offered a \$10,000 dollar bonus for each significant

⁴⁰ William L. Laurence "Fear of Radiation Called Dangerous: It Might Interfere with Rescue of A-Bomb Victims, Health Group is Told in Boston," *New York Times*, November 13, 1948.

uranium strike and charging only one dollar per claim. Just as in the gold rushes, communities became entirely dependent on the uranium boom. These towns, such as Monticello and Moab, began to see themselves explicitly as “uranium communities.” With this new identity came a sense of pride. To the people of these communities, uranium mining was a chance to both express their patriotism and enhance their wealth. They believed the United States’ stockpile of uranium would serve as a powerful tool in a potential war against the Soviet Union and felt a special pride about being located at the source of such an important resource. Local newspapers played a large role in perpetuating this identity. The weekly *San Juan Record* served the region of Utah where Moab was located. In 1949 the paper only ran nine stories about uranium on the front page. In 1951, it ran eighteen front page stories. The following year, thirty-four. At the peak of the boom in the mid-1950s, the number had climbed to forty editions with multiple stories dedicated to the topic. These stories covered everything from the bonuses being paid, how to find “hot spots,” advertised prospecting equipment such as Geiger counters, and shared stories of locals who made it rich on lucky strikes. Uranium stocks were featured on the second page and in 1955, the *San Juan Record* published a 122-page insert “touting the virtues of uranium and equating it with progress, the American Dream, and economic security.” Workers interviewed decades later recalled the pride they felt in their work, something as simple as drilling ventilation shafts gave the people of towns like Moab a purpose and economic opportunity where none had previously existed. Uranium became ingrained in the culture of the Colorado Plateau. Subdivisions were named “Uranium Village” and the like. New roads were named after uranium and the technology required to mine it. During this era, women were crowned

with titles such as “Uranium Queen” and “Miss Atomic Energy.” Three towns in the area even called a restaurant the “Uranium Café.” The government worked to foster and support this identity. The Atomic Energy Commission sent out announcements every week about the importance of setting aside public lands for uranium prospecting or detailing new methods of uranium refinement “to fight the tyranny of communism.” Through these constant reminders, the people of the Colorado Plateau had become fully ingrained into a culture of worshiping uranium and atomic power despite the risks involved.⁴¹ The willful ignorance of the facts continues to today. Despite overwhelming evidence at the time and in the present of the dangers of uranium exposure, as well as a noted increases in the region in cancer and respiratory conditions, the people who once thrived on the uranium boom continue to deny a link between cancer and uranium. Some even claim that consuming yellowcake uranium with water is an effective health remedy.⁴²

The knowledge of the uranium boom and obsession with the power of uranium was not limited to the Colorado Plateau. As stated earlier, the uranium boom occupied a space in the American imagination that reflected the gold and silver rushes. Popular culture aimed at broad American audiences frequently referenced the uranium boom and the tropes of the gold rushes were applied to uranium, creating stories that Americans coast to coast could easily recognize and identify with. One of the most popular examples of this and perhaps the most well-known is a 1958 episode of *The Luci-Desi Comedy Hour*.

⁴¹ Malin, *The Price of Nuclear Power*, 23-25.

⁴² *Ibid*, 28-29.

In the 1950s, there were few more recognizable television stars than Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. The sitcom *I Love Lucy* was a massive hit that is fondly remembered today as a trend setter that established what a sitcom could be. It is not a stretch to say that every sitcom on television today contains some amount of influence of *I Love Lucy* visible in the situations and tropes on display. Therefore, when a beloved television icon at this level stars in an episode centered around the uranium boom, it shows that uranium held a prominent place in the American imagination. When *I Love Lucy* came to its end, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz continued to star as the same fictionalized versions of themselves in less frequent television specials titled *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*.

On January 3, 1958 the episode “Lucy Hunts Uranium” aired. In this episode, Lucy and Ricky Ricardo and Fred and Ethel Mertz travel to Las Vegas for a performance of Ricky’s band. Lucy has heard about uranium strikes out west and purchases a Geiger counter, hiding it from Ricky as he previously forbade Lucy from hunting for uranium because Las Vegas was too far south of the Colorado Plateau to be viable prospecting territory. Lucy convinces Fred and Ethel to join her hunt for uranium, enticing them with the \$10,000 government bonus. On the train to Las Vegas, the group meets the famous actor Fred MacMurray, appearing as himself. In a humorous scene, Fred’s radium painted watch sets off the Geiger counter, nearly ruining Lucy’s plan to hide it from Ricky. This is an interesting callback to the knowledge of the radioactivity, and danger, of radium painted wristwatches. At the hotel, Ricky discovers the Geiger counter and once again forbids Lucy from wasting their time. Lucy visits a novelty shop on the strip and has a fake newspaper printed with the headline that uranium has been

found near Las Vegas to try and convince him prospecting is worth their time. Lucy accidentally leaves the fake newspaper in the hotel room. The maid finds it, believes it is real, and sends the whole town into an uproar of excitement as everyone rushes to the desert to begin the search. As the gang heads out to begin their own hunt, Lucy runs into Fred MacMurray who has gambled away the allowance his wife gave him. Desperate to hide the loss from his wife, he agrees to join Lucy on the hunt. The rest of the episode plays out the way one might expect an old western about gold would. Characters like the old-time prospector appear, complete with the straw hat and overalls. The group finds a chunk of uranium and instantly becomes paranoid that everyone else in the group is plotting to steal it. The paranoia escalates into a full-blown race back to Las Vegas to reach the claims office and claim the government bonus for themselves. Each of the group becomes ruthless in their greed, willing to sabotage longtime friends for the chance at \$10,000. Of course, it all turns out to be a misunderstanding. Nobody was planning to betray anyone else. Everyone makes up, and they eagerly await the bonus, at which point the plot twist is revealed. The uranium rock they found was the sample rock that came with Lucy's Geiger counter. Everyone has a good laugh and Fred MacMurray is scolded by his wife for losing his allowance.⁴³

“Lucy Hunts Uranium” is important because it is a classic prospecting story updated to a setting that is relevant to the modern audience. The episode does not have much to say about uranium outside of a possible commentary on greed, and at no point is uranium ever presented as something dangerous, but that was not the point of the

⁴³ *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour*. “Lucy Hunts Uranium,” Episode 3. Directed by Jerry Thorpe, written by Madelyn Davis, Bob Carroll Jr., Bob Schiller, Bob Weiskopf, CBS, January 3, 1958.

episode. The writers knew that the uranium boom was a major event that dominated the news cycle. It was a situation the audience would instantly recognize and could relate to. Attaching Old West gold mining story tropes to the episode follows in line with how the uranium boom actually affected the communities of the American West. “Lucy Hunts Uranium” presents the kind of sanitized vision of uranium its proponents always wished for. It is portrayed as an element of great monetary value, worth turning on your friends for, and something the government desperately needs.

Another example of the uranium boom’s impact on popular culture is country star Elton Britt’s song “Uranium Fever.” Much like “Lucy Hunts Uranium,” “Uranium Fever” offers a humorous take on the uranium boom. In the song, the narrator sells his Cadillac and buys a Jeep in order to cash in on the uranium craze. Upon arriving at the Colorado Plateau, he visits the Atomic Energy Commission office, where he is directed to a promising spot. The narrator laments the long drive through rough terrain and is dismayed to see that he must climb a mountain that “didn’t have no top.” In the following verse, he sings “Well I took my Geiger and I started to climb/Right up to the top where I thought I’d find/A hunk of rock that would make it click/Just like I’d read about Vernon Pick.” Vernon Pick was one of the most famous amateur prospectors of the uranium boom. Pick was the quintessential example of the American Dream. He gave up everything to go West and found his fortune in uranium ore. His story seemed too good to be true. The controversy over claims that he had fabricated his tale made headlines, yet he still went on to become a folk hero.⁴⁴ Returning to the song, the narrator reaches the top of the mountain on the second day only to discover there was no uranium there

⁴⁴ Raye C. Ringholz, *Uranium Frenzy: Saga of the Nuclear West* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press. 2002), 73-79.

and must climb back down and continue his search elsewhere. The narrator sums up his experience by singing “Well, you pack up your things/You head out again/Into some unknown spot where nobody’s been/You reach the spot where your fortune lies/You find it’s been staked by 17 other guys.” However, despite his disappointment, the narrator refuses to give up, as he has caught the “uranium fever” and will continue prospecting until he finally strikes it rich.⁴⁵ “Uranium Fever,” much like “Lucy Hunts Uranium,” relies on the expectation that the audience is at least familiar with the uranium boom and the folk heroes and stories that come out of it. References to the AEC and Vernon Pick seem obscure today, but at the time, it was a topical jab at the absurdity of the uranium boom and the obsession with money it brought.

The tendency of people today to assume that Americans in the early Cold War era were disconnected from reality or uncritical of their lives is dangerously reductive. It was not true that Americans were unaware of the dangers of uranium, or that they were blinded by utopian visions of an atomic powered future. The dangers of radiation had been well established since the Radium Girls made headlines in the 1920s. Despite attempts to cover up the truth in the name of economic growth, the truth eventually made its way into the mainstream and new tactics had to be created in order to maintain a valuable industry. Misinformation about the extent of the danger, rather than outright denial became more prevalent. The government was careful to coverup instances of suffering precisely because officials were aware that Americans were capable of connecting the dots. The triumph of World War II and the advent of the Cold War provided the perfect opportunity to redirect attention to the positive aspects of uranium

⁴⁵ Elton Britt, “Uranium Fever,” RCA Victor, 1955.

and atomic energy. Americans willingly chose to ignore the dangers of uranium and uranium mining in favor of the obvious economic benefits. The government incentivized this as much as possible through monetary bonuses as well as stoking nationalist pride and hatred of communism, creating a massive labor force willing to throw themselves into danger. For these reasons, Americans allowed themselves to be economically exploited and physically harmed. This was a conscious and informed decision. The topic of radioactive materials and radiation loomed large in the American consciousness in the 1940s and 50s, and Americans reacted to it, truly believing it was in their best interest to let these materials proliferate.

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