

**The Kuczynskis:
Eight Generations From Enlightenment to Socialism and Beyond (1800-2000)**

Introduction

My research interests focus on the roles of public intellectuals in modern societies, as prominent features of the cultural landscape in the twentieth century and global phenomena. I refer to both classic and recent work in the philosophy and sociology of intellectuals (Karl Mannheim, Pierre Bourdieu, and Katherine Verdery, among others) to understand how public intellectuals fashioned themselves and operated within modern Europe.

Doctoral Work

My doctoral dissertation, XXXXXXXX, investigates patterns of intellectuals' conformity, accommodation, and dissent. It examines a specific group within the context of socialist East Germany (1949-1990), focusing on how the economic historian Jürgen Kuczynski, the writer Stephan Hermlin, and the journalist Hermann Budzislawski contributed to subverting the regime's attempts to construct a uniform socialist culture. Partly intentionally and inadvertently, they added to the pressures that undermined and eventually imploded the regime they had hoped to reform and humanize. As dissatisfaction and dissent with the regime coalesced around their works, they became loci of social communication far beyond their own milieus. My post doctoral project will build on those foundations, while also substantially broadening and re-focusing my lens.

Proposed Post-Doctoral Theme

Building upon this approach and combining a broad outlook with the focus of a case study, I propose a multi-generational examination of the Kuczynski family, covering the period between the late eighteenth to the end of the twentieth century. This family is typical of the European Jewish middle-class, while also exhibiting exceptional characteristics and accomplishments. Eight generations (starting with the noted physician Hirschmann Brandeis to the current academics Peter and Thomas Kuczynski) were part of an increasingly assimilated Jewish, left-leaning, bourgeois intelligentsia. Even those family members who did not identify explicitly any more with Judaism were still profoundly shaped by Jewish culture(s) and sensibilities. Due to their left-liberal and Communist activism, several family members were imprisoned or forced into exile, most recently through the Nazi regime. In addition, the family's predilection for scholarly and artistic work strengthened significant ties to other countries. Among their ranks are two internationally recognized scholars and public intellectuals: the economist René Kuczynski and his son, the economic historian Jürgen Kuczynski, who were on friendly terms with leading international academic, artistic, and political figures, including Albert Einstein and John Kenneth Galbraith, to mention but a very few.

Two family members accumulated substantial fortunes, during the later part of the nineteenth century, propelling the family into the upper class. Yet ironically, this newfound status did not erode their anti-capitalist sentiments; on the contrary, most family members joined Communist parties from the 1930's on. Historical circumstances led them to Bolshevik ideology and eventually into the Communist German Democratic Republic. There, with few exceptions, they confronted accommodating their self-image to socialist public life. I will move considerably beyond a family history by examining the Kuczynskis alongside key issues and problems in nineteenth and twentieth century European history. In each generation, the Kuczynskis were influential agents of intellectual and cultural currents, ranging from the Enlightenment and liberalism, to Bolshevism and even anti-Stalinism. My project will explore how the family's Germanness, Jewishness, and left-leaning sympathies interacted with the mainstream

political, socio-economic, and cultural forces. I want to examine the extent to which the Kuczynskis remained attached to the Enlightenment ideals of rationality, tolerance, and liberalism, within the context of rising romanticism, nationalism, and an inclination toward authoritarian solutions within society at large.

Relationship to the Field:

The study of the central European, Jewish middleclass is the subject of rich scholarly literature, including works by Marion Kaplan, David Sorkin, and George Mosse's highly respected and contested, German Jews Beyond Judaism. Mosse argues that German Jews, by virtue of their legal emancipation within the context of the Enlightenment, attached themselves to its ideals as a way into respectable society, even remaining faithful to Enlightenment ideals of rationality, tolerance, and liberalism when much of the German middle-class turned to nationalism and illiberalism. German middle-class Jews, according to Mosse, displayed a proclivity for tolerance and critical rationalism also within the context of Communist party membership. Other scholars, such as Shulamit Volkov, have challenged Mosse's perspective as too sweeping, pointing to the fact that many middle-class Jews followed the general German trend of detachment from eighteenth century Enlightenment values in favour of Romanticism, nationalism, and an inclination for authoritarian solutions. I want to test Mosse's thesis, combining the revisions suggested by Volkov, on the Kuczynski family as a case study.

Contribution to the Field

This project has the potential to contribute significantly to the historiography of European middle-class Jewish identity as well as Marxism. While there is an ever growing body of excellent family biographies, including Percy Ernst Schramm's classic Neun Generationen: dreihundert Jahre deutscher "Kulturgeschichte" im Lichte der Schicksale einer Hamburger Buergerfamilie, 1648-1948, Lothar Gall's Bürgertum in Deutschland, as well as works more specifically dedicated to German-Jewish families, like Elizabeth Kraus' Die Familie Mosse : deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20.

Jahrhundert and Klaus Kempter's Die Jellineks 1820-1955, there are hardly any accounts, to date, of the continuities, ruptures, and accommodations of this type of family, intersecting through and beyond Soviet-style socialism.

Work Plan:

I have already collected large amounts of material, having had complete access to the Kuczynski family archives for eight months during a previous research stay in Germany [1999-2000], as well as a follow-up trip in July 2001. Being in the Potsdam/Berlin area would allow me to further research and fully engage the material available. I anticipate travel outside of Berlin only to supplement my information while working through the draft. Most of the Kuczynski papers are now at the City and State Library of Berlin, where I plan to research. In addition, I will consult the Prussian State Archives, as well as archives and libraries in Amsterdam and London. The bulk of my project should take approximately ten months to complete, at the end of which I will have a book draft on the material.

Location:

The Moses Mendelssohn Centre in Potsdam would be an ideal environment, conducive to synthesizing my research project. The centre is home to experts in my field of research, such as; there I could present segments of my work for critical response and participate in seminars. Overall, Potsdam hosts an excellent scholarly community in my field, providing an opportune location for research, consultation, evaluation, and writing. I would have access to not only Potsdam's exceptional research institutes, including the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, but also Berlin's libraries and universities. I have ongoing contact with important scholars in my field in Germany, including Mario Keßler, Konrad Jarausch, and Rüdiger von Bruch (all centered in the Potsdam-Berlin area). I have been invited to the Moses Mendelssohn Centre by its director Julius SCHOEPS and look forward to making use of this important opportunity in Germany.