

BACKGROUND GUIDE

A DANGEROUS REMEDY: THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

Composed by Sofia Simonian & Akash Nayak



WMIDMUN-XXII

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to WMIDMUN XXII! My name is Sofia Simonian and I am looking forward to being your In-Room Director for the Gunpowder Plot committee this spring. I am a sophomore at William and Mary and am studying International Relations and Russian and Post-Soviet Studies. I started Model UN in my sophomore year of high school and have decided to continue with it into college. I have staffed WMHSMUN and WMIDMUN last year and am in my 2nd year as a member of the secretariat for &MUN, our collegiate Model UN Conference. I look forward to sharing my enjoyment of Model UN with you all and hope to make this committee one to remember.

I am from Woodbridge, Virginia, and currently work with the geoLab on the geoBoundaries team, which mostly involves GIS work. Outside of my work and Model UN, I also play the balalaika in the Eastern European Music Ensemble. In my free time, I enjoy reading, engaging in conversations, and roaming around Colonial Williamsburg.

Overall, this committee, especially as a crisis, will allow you to advance your research skills, public speaking, and of course, your knowledge of this historical event. You should expect to be tested, challenged, and questioned, as is the nature of a crisis committee. I am here to help, but I do expect you all to bring your A game and try your best in this committee. I hope all of you find the confidence to make a meaningful contribution to the issues we are here to discuss and I look forward to meeting you all come conference day. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this committee.

Best of luck,

Sofia Simonian (she/her)

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to WMIDMUN XXII! My name is Akash Nayak and I am looking forward to being your Crisis Director for the Gunpowder Plot committee this spring. I am a freshman at William and Mary and am studying Government. I started Model UN this year at CMUNNY XVIII and have continued with the club since. This is my first time staffing a conference here at William & Mary! I'm deeply excited to spend this weekend coming up with fun new crisis updates for you.

I am from Princeton, New Jersey, and currently serve as a member of the Undergraduate Student Conduct Council, which presents behavioral expectations and promotes William & Mary's campus values. Outside of my work and Model UN, I'm also a freshman member of William & Mary's award-winning Mock Trial team. In my free time, I enjoy bowling, selling antiques, and watching horse races.

Throughout this committee, we hope to see camaraderie and competition and expect your best performance when attempting to address the issues posed by our crisis team. By writing a thorough background guide, we hope you are well prepared to quickly and efficiently handle each crisis you are faced with. We wish you the best of luck and hope you have fun in this committee! If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out.

Best,

Akash Nayak

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BACKGROUND



The original Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was a plan created to kill the king of England, King James I. It was organized by a group of English Catholics, led by Robert Catesby. This group had the aim of ending the religious persecution of Catholics in England by forcing a regime change. At the time, Catholicism was frowned upon in English society, as Anglican Christianity was the nationally recognized religion, with the king being both the head of state and the head of the Church.

The actual plot was to use explosives to cause an explosion in the House of Lords during that year's State Opening of Parliament. After this, the conspirators planned to install Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of King James, as the new monarch by capturing her during a planned revolt in the Midlands. Some members of the plot were to form a "hunting party" to capture Elizabeth, while Fawkes was to set off an explosion under Parliament. A plot of this scale involved quite a bit of planning and collaboration between the conspirators. Despite the challenges of this, the group was able to nearly go through with their plan. Their downfall occurred due to a letter



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A letter was sent from an anonymous individual to William Parker, the 4th Baron Monteagle. It included a cryptic warning to not attend that specific session of parliament, so as not to risk his life. This letter was then taken to the authorities as Lord Monteagle was uncertain of its meaning. Though the conspirators were informed of the existence of this letter, they decided they must move forward with the plot.

The first individual to be discovered in connection with the conspiracy was Guy Fawkes. The king had ordered a search of parliament after discerning what the conspirators had planned, to ensure his and the members of parliament's safety. Through this search, Fawkes was found below parliament guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder. Soon after, the others involved in the plot heard of Fawkes's arrest and fled London. They were soon found by the king's men and were apprehended.

BACKGROUND



Aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot

Following the conclusion of the plot, tolerance for English Catholics did not improve. Parliament considered passing anti-Catholic legislation and in 1606 laws against recusancy (remaining Catholic after the English Reformation) were strengthened. However, King James I himself acted with relative leniency towards Catholics, with many remaining in high offices throughout his reign. Had the plot been successful, historian Ronald Hutton argues, it would likely not have had the effects its conspirators had hoped for. With the amount of gunpowder used, the explosion caused by it would have killed not only the king, but the entire House of Lords. This would have caused severe backlash against suspected Catholics in England and any rebellion against the monarchy would have been unsuccessful without foreign aid. England may have become a “Puritan absolute monarchy” as opposed to the civil reform that it eventually achieved in the future.

Prior Events

The Bye Plot of 1603

The Bye Plot was another plot that occurred just two years before the Gunpowder Plot in an attempt to force the king to offer greater religious freedom to Catholics. This conspiracy was created by the priests William Watson and William Clark, with the plan being to kidnap King James and imprison him in the Tower of London until he agreed to be more tolerant towards Catholics. The plot did not end up succeeding, and those involved in it were arrested. It was a component in the Main Plot.

The Main Plot of 1603

Created around the same time as the Bye Plot, the Main Plot was a greater conspiracy also focused on the goal of increased religious freedom for English Catholics. This plan involved replacing King James with his cousin Lady Arabella Stuart and was allegedly led by Lord Cobham with funding coming from the Spanish government. Along with Lord Cobham, Lord Grey de Wilton, Griffin Markham and Sir Walter Raleigh were involved in this plot. They were all later arrested for their involvement in it.

HISTORY OF ANGLICANISM



Formed through a series of laws created by the Reformation Parliament in the 1530s, Anglican Christianity broke England away from the Catholic Church. Its origins can be traced back to King Henry VIII, who broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in order to annul (cancel) his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He decided to break away from the Catholic Church, as it did not allow annulments. The subsequent laws passed by the Reformation Parliament came together to create the Anglican Church, with King Henry VIII becoming the head of both Church and state.

Following England's split from Catholicism, everyone in the country was expected to follow the Anglican religion. Continuing to be Catholic was seen as disloyal to the crown, something that could not be tolerated under the monarch. English Catholics faced significant challenges and changes in their religious practices and status. They were often subject to persecution, including having to pay fines or being imprisoned for their faith. As the English Reformation continued, it was clear that the status of Catholics in the country had been legally and socially diminished.



BACKGROUND 1.0



Current Situation

As prominent English Catholics, the members of this committee have gathered to solve the two issues presented below. The goal of this committee is to address both of these topics in a manner **different** from the way they were addressed in the actual Gunpowder Plot. Delegates may use other schemes of the time or their own ideas to address these issues. However, they should not replicate the events of the real Gunpowder Plot. It is assumed that at the beginning of the committee these plots are just being created and have not been exposed.

Topic 1: Religious Freedom

Since the adoption of Anglican Christianity as the religion of England in the 1530s, alignment with another religion or another form of Christianity has been seen as atypical at best and treason at worst. This lack of religious tolerance has made life for English Catholics difficult. The kings and queens that have ruled England in this span of time have all held different perspectives on Catholicism throughout their reign. Sometimes exhibiting more tolerance towards Catholics, but sometimes driving Catholics out of the country. These different responses have been a minefield to handle. Practicing your religion freely has become difficult, with religious freedom being offered (or not) at the whim of the current ruler. In this committee, you have all come together as fellow English Catholics to resolve this issue. How will you decide to do so?



DISCOVERY OF THE GUNPOWDER PLOT (1605).

BACKGROUND 2.0



Topic 2: Who Will Rule

Besides the issues of religion, the issue of succession still remains. Currently, King James I rules England as its monarch, both the head of state and Church. Could this change? There are multiple possible options for who may replace him, possibly someone more amenable to greater religious freedom. His most direct heirs are his children, Henry Frederick, Elizabeth, and Charles, though they are, respectively, 11, 9, and 5 years of age. Then, there is Lady Arabella Stuart, a young woman who is the cousin of King James, whose potential claim to the throne some English Catholics support. Perhaps, with enough evidence, there are even those in this committee that could stake a claim to the throne.





RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What alternative plan can be created to address both topics?

How should religious freedom be achieved?

How should the government of England be structured? Does it need to be changed?

Do the laws of England need to be changed to solve the issues presented?

Robert Catesby

The original leader of the Gunpowder Plot, Catesby comes from a family of Catholics. Though not originally a devout Catholic, he found faith again after the death of his wife and father. Described as a tall and athletic man, Catesby wishes to create a plan to defend himself and his fellow Catholics from persecution.

John Wright

Known for his strong Catholic beliefs and loyalty, John was part of the strong Yorkshire contingent involved in the Gunpowder Plot. He had great skill as a swordsman and was seen to be courageous in battle.

Christopher Wright

The brother of John Wright, Christopher shared his brother's faith and skills with the sword.

Robert Wintour

A devout Catholic with close connections to many other Catholic families, Wintour has been known to shelter Catholic priests at his family estate.

Thomas Wintour

Educated as a lawyer, Wintour was a close friend of Catesby as their families were both Catholic. Though he originally fought for England against Catholic Spain, his allegiances had since changed and he previously visited Spain to request Spanish financial and military support for their cause.

Thomas Percy

Being a distant cousin of the Earl of Northumberland, Thomas Percy was a man with connections and a shady past. When he met King James prior to his coronation, the king had promised him that Catholics would not be persecuted under his reign. When this turned out to not be the case, Percy felt betrayed and joined the plot.

Guy Fawkes

Growing up under Catholic influence, Fawkes devotion to his faith encouraged him to join the plot. After saving up enough to leave England, he had previously fought with the Catholic Spanish army, specializing in explosives. Due to this, he is currently present in England undercover, acting as Percy's servant "John Johnson."

Robert Keyes

The son of a Protestant clergyman and a Catholic woman, Keyes was brought into the plot later than most of the conspirators. Despite this, he soon became devoted to their cause and even after being arrested, insisted that the plot had been justified.

Thomas Bates

As Catesby's most trusted servant, Bates was essential to the original Gunpowder Plot. He assisted with making many of the arrangements needed for the plot, such as finding locations for the conspirators to meet.

John Grant

As the owner of Norbrook, a strategically located house for the purposes of the plot, Grant was brought in to assist with the scheme. He was said to have also brought in a number of weapons to arm the conspirators.

Ambrose Rookwood

Born and educated a Catholic, Rookwood was recruited for his resources. He was a wealthy man, having inherited his father's estates, and owned many good horses.

Sir Everard Digby

Adopting the Catholic faith later in life, Digby was recruited for his finances. Originally having doubts about the conspiracy, it took a bit of convincing to get Digby onboard with the plot.

Francis Tresham

A cousin of Catesby and friend of the Wright brothers, Tresham was recruited into the plot very late. Though he had access to significant financial resources, Tresham was not as passionate about the plot as the other conspirators and seemed to have some doubts about it.

Father Henry Garnet

A Jesuit priest who was involved with many conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot, Garnet had converted to Catholicism after a visit to Rome many years ago. His direct involvement is debated, but it seems he discovered the plot under the seal of confession.

Stephen Littleton

A prominent Catholic from the Midlands, Littleton owns the Holbeche House, the location where the conspirators that escaped London hid after the Gunpowder Plot was exposed. Littleton knew little of the actual plot and agreed to assist Catesby after being offered a command position in a regiment (that never existed) which Catesby allegedly planned to send to Flanders.

Nicholas Owen

An associate of Father Garnet, Owen was known for helping hide Catholic priests in England. He was a carpenter by trade and traveled around England building "priest holes" (hiding places for priests) in the buildings of Catholic families.

Sir John Talbot (of Grafton)

A Catholic man tied to many other Catholics through family or marriage, Talbot was often considered suspicious by the English government. Though he had no direct involvement in the Gunpowder Plot, he was considered to be associated with the plotters, as his daughter was married to Robert Wintour.

Anne Vaux

The daughter of a wealthy Baron (with wealth of her own), Vaux was known for her support of Catholic priests by renting houses for them where they could convene safely. While she did not have direct involvement with the plot, she took interest in Father Garnet's teachings and was distantly related to Tresham. She briefly helped hide Father Garnet immediately after the plot and was arrested and later released for her actions.

William Clark

The other main creator of the Bye Plot, Clark was a Catholic priest involved in a religious mission to England from Rome. Similar to Watson, he joined the Bye Plot to increase religious tolerance for Catholics. Even after his arrest, Clark maintained his religious convictions.

Thomas Grey (Lord Grey de Wilton)

Not a Catholic himself, Grey was a more politically-minded individual who opposed the rule of King James. He was involved in the Bye Plot, but his reasons for participating in it were not religious. He also knew of the Main Plot, through his friendship with George Brooke.

Sir George Brooke

Connected to both the Bye Plot and the Main Plot, Brooke engaged in these endeavors for personal gain. By participating in these plots, he believed he could receive increased rights for Catholics as well as a position in the government.

Sir Griffin Markham

Another individual involved in both the Bye Plot and the Main Plot, Markham participated in these plots after his disappointment at the lack of tolerance King James showed for English Catholics. Prior to this, he fought in the Nine Years War as a cavalry commander.

Henry Brooke (Lord Codham)

The brother of George Brooke and a major conspirator of the Main Plot, Codham had connections with the Spanish which he attempted to use in this plot. He did not agree with the rule of King James and was engaging in negotiations with Spain to gain enough money to depose the king.

Sir Walter Raleigh

An English explorer of the Americas, Raleigh was a prominent statesman during Queen Elizabeth's reign. He was also a major player in the Main Plot and involved himself in it due to political motivations, as he opposed the rule of King James. He also planned to gain monetarily from the Main Plot, as he and Henry Brooke were to split the money meant to be gained from Spain.

William Shakespeare

An English playwright, poet, and actor, Shakespeare was a popular individual at the time of the plot. Though he was publicly Anglican, there is research that suggests he may have been a secret Catholic, based on his personal life and textual evidence taken from his works. His play "Macbeth" is said to contain references to the Gunpowder Plot, as it also involves a failed plot to kill a king.

William Watson

One of creators of the Bye Plot, Watson decided to form a plan after King James I's promises of religious tolerance for Catholics fell through. Prior to this, he traveled England engaging in illegal Catholic missionary activities, for which he was occasionally arrested.

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