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**The British Army of the Rhine and the Germans (1948-1957):
from enemies to partners**

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The British Army of the Rhine and the
Germans (1948-1957):
From Enemies to Partners?

By

Peter Speiser

A thesis submitted in part requirement for the degree of PhD Social and Political
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the attempt by the post-war British Labour and Conservative administrations to use the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) as a tool to improve relations with the German civilian population during the early stages of the Cold War. The original contribution to knowledge lies in the evaluation of the efforts made by both the British and the German administrations to transform the BAOR from an occupation army to a protecting force and utilise its presence to strengthen German integration into the Western defence against communism. Although historians have evaluated the BAOR's role in Germany from a strategic and military perspective, the political and social contexts resulting from the presence of nearly 80,000 British troops and their families during the early period of post-war German sovereignty have so far been largely neglected. This study considers not only the official contacts between the Services and the Germans, but also the more individual levels of contact, including living conditions of troops, social interaction and points of friction between soldiers and civilians.

The thesis argues that the success of the transformation of the BAOR from a force of occupation to a tool of integration depended on two factors: the receptiveness of the German population to the new role of the BAOR and the attitudes of the British Services in conducting their new relationships with German civilians. It examines the German perceptions of the British Services by analysing hostile incidents between troops and civilians as well as comparing the popularity of the British Services with that of the other occupying powers in the young Federal Republic. Furthermore, it seeks to establish to what extent the widespread unwillingness of the Services to engage with Germans, which was evident in 1948, was transformed by the mid-1950s. This entails the analysis of the representation of Germany in British media and popular culture as an influence on troops in the BAOR as well as initiatives taken by the Services themselves to improve relations.

The main findings of the thesis are that, although significant changes were implemented by the British administration to improve relations, the BAOR was not an effective tool to strengthen the Anglo-German partnership. This was partly due to the organisational structure of the Services but also due to a widespread reluctance by British troops to engage with the German population. Despite some local successes, the main achievement of the British and German administrations throughout the period in question was not an improvement but rather the prevention of a deterioration of relations between British Servicemen and German civilians in a crucial period of German integration into the Western defence against Communism.

List of Abbreviations

BAFO	British Air Forces of Occupation
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
CCG (BE)	Control Commission Germany (British Element)
COS	British Chiefs of Staff
CDU	German Christian Democratic Party (<i>Christlich Demokratische Union</i>)
CSU	Christian Social Union Party of Bavaria (<i>Christlich Soziale Union</i>)
DM	Deutsche Mark
EDC	European Defence Community
ERP	European Recovery Programme
FO	British Foreign Office
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GSO	German Service Organisation
ISD	Information Services Division (Foreign Office)
JSLO	Joint Services Liaison Officer
KPD	German Communist Party (<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i>)
NA	National Archives
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDR	Northern German Broadcasting Company (<i>Norddeutscher Rundfunk</i>)
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia (<i>Nordrhein Westfalen</i>)
PLO	Press Liaison Officer
POW	Prisoner of War

RAF	Royal Air Force
SPD	German Social Democratic Party (<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>)
TAF	Tactical Air Force
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (<i>Telegrafnoye agentstvo Sovetskovo Soyuz</i>)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Staff in many libraries and archives have helped me in my research. I would like to thank the staff at the National Archives, Kew; the British Library Newspaper Archive at Colindale; Frau Kirsten Hoffmann of the Landesarchiv Niedersachsen, Hannover; the Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf; the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin; the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; the Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex; the County Durham Record Office, Durham; the BBC Written Archive Centre, Reading and the German Historical Institute, Holborn;

I also owe gratitude for the friendly advice and support from a number of Museums dedicated to the British Armed Services. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Royal Engineers Museum, Gillingham; the National Army Museum, Chelsea; the Imperial War Museum, Southwark; the Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich; and the Royal Signals Museum, Blandford Forum;

I would never have embarked on a challenge like a PhD project without the unwavering support of my parents, Nelli and Richard, and my brother Fredy. And it is only due to the endless patience and understanding of my wife Veronica, that this project did not just remain an idea but became reality. Thank you.

Chapter One: Introduction

If we are to give the Germans a sense of community with the West something more must be done by the Services than through purely professional contacts and cooperation. A real sense of community must be fostered not only at work but in normal human relationships as well.¹

Context: The British Army of the Rhine after the Second World War

The British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), just like its predecessor in 1919, was stationed in Germany in 1945 as an army of occupation following the defeat of Germany. However, with the advent of the Cold War and the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949, the Rhine Army turned into a very different force. For the first time in the history of the British Army, the BAOR evolved into a major military presence, permanently stationed in Germany as the British contribution to the defence of Western Europe against communism. This contribution led not only to the stationing of British soldiers in Germany, but also included Servicemen's wives and children. At its peak in the 1950s, the BAOR employed nearly 80,000 troops in the British zone of Germany.² This troop contribution not only included the British Army but also the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO).

¹ N[ational] A[rchives], F[oreign] O[ffice] 953/1662, PC 1181/16, Letter J.M. Fisher, British Information Services, Bonn to R.A.A. Chaput de Saintonge, German Information Department, Foreign Office, London, 16 March 1956.

² Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany: An Organizational History, 1947-2004*, Milton Keynes, 2005, p. 22.

The country these troops were stationed in transformed rapidly, from the Nazi enemy of 1945 to a Cold War ally of the 1950s. At the Paris Peace Conference in May 1952, West German sovereignty was officially restored and the Allied Occupation of the Federal Republic formally came to an end. Good and constructive relations between the BAOR and the Germans were henceforth of great importance. This was due to the fact that the Services were now stationed in Germany by agreement with a sovereign government and not by virtue of their victory in the Second World War.³ In the eyes of the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, the role of Western Germany had very quickly changed, from that of Britain's biggest enemy in 1945 to that of a necessary ally against the much bigger threat of the Soviet Union.⁴ There was, however, considerable reluctance among sizeable parts of the British public, as well as many members of both the Labour and Conservative administrations, to put any trust in a possibly rearmed Germany so soon after the Second World War. Nonetheless, despite a suspicious public and a very often German-phobic press, both Labour and Conservative governments aimed at improving relations with Germany, above all for the sake of the Washington-led defence of Europe against communism. One means for the improvement of relations was to be the British Rhine Army.

As Anne Deighton, a Professor of European International Politics, with a particular interest in Anglo-German international relations after the war, has pointed out, by 1945 Britain had survived five years of 'Total War' against Germany, and this war had occurred only twenty years after the Great War of

³ NA, FO, 371/109787.

⁴ Bevin Memorandum, 3 May 1946, cited in: Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, The Division of Germany and the origins of the Cold War*, Oxford, 1993, p. 231.

1914-18.⁵ It is therefore hardly surprising that Germany was to remain unpopular with the majority of the British public and with many elites in political life, and in Whitehall, for many decades to come. This was still strikingly evident as late as 1989, when the question of German unification arose.⁶ Popular representations of Germany even to this day are powerfully conveyed in Britain through the showing and reshowing of old Second World War films. The popular press generally needs very little prompting before indulging in outbursts of chauvinistic attacks on Germany.⁷ The unpopularity of Germany in Britain was particularly understandable in the decade or so after the Second World War. Many public and political figures had personal memories of war, and thousands had lost friends and family members. Many others had seen their homes, streets and town and city centres damaged or destroyed by the Blitz.⁸ It would therefore not be surprising if resentment towards the Germans was also felt by many of the members of the British Army of the Rhine stationed in Germany after the war.

Yet despite all this, by 1956, little more than a decade after the end of hostilities, the British Government had invested millions of pounds and millions of man-hours into the economic and political rehabilitation of the western part of Germany. The British helped to secure Marshall Aid for the three western

⁵ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts: British Policy and West German Rearmament' in: Haase, Christian (ed.), *Debating Foreign Affairs. The Public and British Foreign Policy since 1867*, Berlin, 2003, p. 78.

⁶ Evgenios Michail, 'After the War and after the Wall: British Perceptions of Germany following 1945 and 1989', in: *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, Issue 3, September 2001.

⁷ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts', p. 78.

⁸ For example, some 50,000 houses in inner London were destroyed or damaged beyond repair, with a further 66,000 in outer London. Some 288,000 more houses London-wide were seriously damaged and another two million slightly damaged. See for example: Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century, A City and Its People*, London, 2008, p. 39.

German zones of Occupation, and gave military support for West Berlin in the face of an alarming Soviet land blockade of the city. Britain also played a key role in creating a West German state with a military capacity, pledging itself to two formal alliances which included the new German state, NATO and Western European Union. Also, for the first time in history, Britain stationed its troops – the BAOR – on German soil indefinitely as part of a combined Western European defence effort. There was therefore a remarkable inconsistency between government policy and at least parts of British public opinion.⁹ The British press frequently reacted with incomprehension to government policy.¹⁰ The BAOR, arguably caught between the two extremes, would have to side with government policy rather than public opinion if it was to play its role in the process of transforming the relations between Britain and Germany from victor and vanquished to alliance partners. British concerns over political stability in the newly established Federal Republic and the financial burden the British Services placed on the German population did not make the task of the BAOR easier. The British Services in Germany were in a unique and challenging position. There was a marked contrast in reactions to the Services by the German population. On the one hand there were complaints from many quarters about the impact of the continuing occupation by foreign troops on housing shortages, manoeuvre damage and crimes committed by soldiers. On the other hand there was widespread fear of the consequences a reduction of the same forces was to cause in the context of the Cold War. It is this striking disparity which requires further investigation.

⁹ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts', p. 78.

¹⁰ Matthias Schönwald, 'New Friends – Difficult Friendships: Germany and its Western Neighbours in the Postwar Era', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2002, p. 318.

Research Aims

This thesis intends to evaluate the political and social impact of the British attempt to transform the BAOR from an occupation force of the defeated Nazi Germany to an alliance partner of the Federal Republic of Germany, which joined NATO as a full member in 1955. The time period covered is from 1948, when it became increasingly evident that the western zones of Germany would merge into a semi-sovereign state, to 1957, when the generally good political, economic and cultural understanding that had been developed between Britain and Germany through hard work, began to take a turn for the worse. Within little more than half a decade it deteriorated to the worst level since the end of the war.¹¹ This deterioration was partly due to the general weakening of British relations with Europe over the question of British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), but also due to the fact that from 1956 onwards the question of BAOR troop cost and German unwillingness to cover these increasingly soured Anglo-German relations.¹²

This thesis thus aims to establish the extent to which the BAOR, nearly 80,000 strong by 1954 and geographically spread over the former British zone of Occupation, provided an effective tool for the improvement of Anglo-German relations. This entails the analysis of the difficulties encountered by both the British and the German administrations during the attempts to come to a better understanding between the BAOR and the German public, as well as the degree of success achieved in the political, economic and individual contexts. This

¹¹ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe? Britain and Germany since 1945*, Harlow, 2001 p. 72.

¹² For the debate on troop costs see for example: Hubert Zimmermann, 'The Sour Fruits of Victory: Sterling and Security in Anglo-German Relations during the 1950s and 1960s', in: *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2000, pp. 225-243.

thesis will shed new light on an important angle of Anglo-German diplomatic, military and social relations after 1945, and evaluate its impact on the wider context of European integration after the Second World War.

Attempts by the British Control Commission for Germany (CCG) to achieve better relations between Occupation troops and German civilians began soon after the war. Early initiatives ranged from the instructions given by the British Military Governor in Germany, Sir Brian Robertson, to British officials in Germany in 1947 to accept the Germans as a 'Christian and civilized people', to an encouragement of contacts between German and British children. They also included joint participation in sports and games.¹³ However, the Military Governor had no influence on the running of the BAOR. As a result the Army, at least initially, had very different ideas regarding fraternization with Germans and, three years after the cessation of hostilities, there was 'no great desire evinced to associate much with Germans'.¹⁴ One of the main aims of this research is to examine to what extent this reluctance was overcome between 1948 and 1957 among the various ranks of the BAOR and which attempts were made to transform the initial unwillingness of British personnel to engage with Germans. It is important in this context to consider the difference in attitudes between officers and ranks, regular soldiers and National Servicemen as well as the Army and the Royal Air Force (RAF).

Key Argument and Approach

The main focus of this thesis is to examine the relationships between the military, political and social contexts in which the BAOR operated. Its main hypothesis is that the BAOR was in fact a missed opportunity for the British to develop a close relationship with the newly established Federal Republic. One of

¹³ NA, FO 1032/1465.

¹⁴ NA, FO 1014/26.

the main premises of the thesis is that a successful demonstration of a new attitude towards the German population by the British Forces arguably served as a useful contribution to a number of short and long-term British security interests, both in regards to Germany itself as well as to the defence of Europe. This issue concerned both the military as well as the social contexts of relations between the BAOR and the Germans, as British military objectives in Germany were closely connected to the behavior and actions of British troops on the ground. This thesis will evaluate the role of the BAOR's presence in the context of a number of key issues, including the rearmament of Germany. This was considered a necessity by Chiefs of Staff even before the outbreak of the Cold War, but opposed by sizeable portions of both the British and German public. The BAOR also posed an easy target for anti-Western propaganda from both the left and right of the political spectrum in Germany.

Furthermore, the questions of British and German contributions to the European defence system (initially within the proposed European Defence Community (EDC), later within NATO, when the BAOR formed the main element of NATO's Northern Army Group (NORTHAG)), as well as continued German payments for the upkeep of the large number of BAOR bases were issues which had an impact on the BAOR's position vis-à-vis the German population. On the one hand, a German contribution to European defence took some of the burden off British shoulders by spreading the task of European defence among a larger number of countries. On the other hand, German rearmament, especially coupled with German sovereignty, threatened to cut off all or part of the German contribution to the maintenance of the BAOR, whilst not contributing to the task of 'controlling' Germany.¹⁵ Good relations between troops and Germans were furthermore important once West Germany had entered NATO and Britain had agreed to the first ever peace-time commitment for a permanent involvement of British forces on the continent. This had been a crucial step to convince the

¹⁵ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe*, p. 59.

French to accept German rearmament.¹⁶ A hostile German population was arguably a potential threat to continued German payment for the upkeep of the BAOR, as well as the stationing of the troops themselves as part of the European defence system. Hence the social context of public opinion was a uniquely important arena that intersected with military intentions.

The political context of this thesis examines the use of the BAOR to improve the relations between the British and German governments. Arguably the BAOR also constituted an important political asset for Britain. As previously noted the political relationship between Britain and Germany during the period in question changed from one of victor and vanquished to one of two sovereign states. By the early 1950s London attempted to use the BAOR to support the pro-Western government of the Federal Republic. British *Deutschlandpolitik* at governmental levels was arguably more aimed at British European interests, the containment of the Soviet threat and the 'Special Relationship' with the US in general rather than the improvement of Anglo-German relations in particular.¹⁷ However, in order to achieve these British interests, namely the twin problems of controlling Germany and containing the Soviet Union, the BAOR was an important tool, and therefore friendly Anglo-German political relations were crucial. A negative image of British troops among the German population potentially played into the hands of those political forces in Germany, which were against a close alliance with the West, particularly after the release of Stalin's notes on German unification in March 1952. The political aspect of the proposed research will therefore highlight the role the BAOR played in the tense political climate of the early Cold War in Europe.

On a social level, which includes the values and perspectives, the subjectivity, of the British soldier, this thesis aims at finding out to what extent anti-German sentiment among groups and individuals in the BAOR might have

¹⁶ NA, FO 371/124622, C.H. Johnston, Memorandum on 'Economy in our forces in Germany', 14 May 1956.

¹⁷ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe*, p. 51.

hindered the process of Anglo-German reconciliation. One hypothesis of the thesis is that anti-German sentiment would be expected to be even stronger in the BAOR than among the general British public, as many British conscripts may have lived through the Blitz as children and many officers might have personally fought against the German *Wehrmacht*. British Servicemen were also more likely than the rest of the population to show an interest in cultural products featuring the British war effort against Germany. Particularly fictional literature and war films, produced in large numbers throughout the period in question and, as will be seen, popular among troops, would have further impacted on their views. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one Foreign Office paper argued as late as 1954, that the attitude of the Forces in general and the Army in particular towards the German population had so far been unsatisfactory and that more efforts should be made towards better relations.¹⁸

This thesis aims to analyze the official efforts to facilitate better relations, taken at the different levels of the British administration in London and Germany due to the initial reluctance of the Army to engage with Germans. It also assesses the levels of success achieved in the four districts of the BAOR in Germany, ranging from the Hamburg district in the north to the Rhine district in the south. The large number of bases all over the British zone in cities like Hamburg, as well as in more rural areas like Bielefeld, poses an opportunity to examine the relations between soldiers and civilians in various different social and geographical settings. Furthermore the research aims to highlight how different military leadership in different bases might have influenced relations between the BAOR and the Germans. It is important in this context to consider the RAF contribution to the British military presence. The British Forces in Germany also included the 2nd Tactical Air force, which posed additional problems to local relations due to noise caused by low-flying aircraft and the use of bombing ranges in Germany. The example of the German island of Heligoland, which had been evacuated by the British in 1945 and used as a

¹⁸ NA, FO 371/109787.

bomb target, was the most notorious case here.¹⁹ This thesis will therefore also consider the efforts made by RAF units to improve Anglo-German relations and compare these with Army initiatives. The British Forces will also be evaluated in the context of the other occupying powers in Germany, particularly the Canadian, American and French troops.

Secondary Sources

Despite the obvious importance of Anglo-German relations in the context of the making of postwar Europe, the coverage of the bilateral political and cultural cooperation between 1948 and 1957 in general is relatively sketchy and has only recently begun to attract wider scholarly attention. This is partly due to the fact that the independent significance of bilateral relations in post-war Europe in general was somewhat diminished by the increasingly close European-wide cooperation in the context of the Cold War. Arguably this was particularly true for Britain and Germany. Germany's desire for rehabilitation and supranational collaboration within the EEC increasingly contrasted with Britain's focus on inter-governmental trade relationships envisaged by EFTA. As a result for neither the partner across the Channel was a top priority.²⁰

¹⁹ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 236.

²⁰ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe*, p. 50. Gottfried Niedhart goes as far as claiming that specific attempts to improve the bilateral aspect of the Anglo-German political relationship were in fact notably absent. Gottfried Niedhart, 'Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der britischen Politik der fünfziger Jahre: Rearmed but once again a healthy member of the Western family', *Historische Mitteilungen*, 3, 1990, p. 186. There are nonetheless clear efforts evident on both sides to improve bilateral relations. See Sabine Lee, *Victory In Europe*, p. 70; Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die deutsche Frage*, Paderborn, 2002, p. 231.

Some wider political aspects involving Anglo-German relations have been covered in far more detail than others. The 'German question' for instance has been extensively covered, particularly by German historians in a European and Cold War context.²¹ There are also numerous publications on British foreign policy towards Europe since 1945.²² By contrast far fewer scientific works examine the early political development of the Federal Republic (FRG) under Konrad Adenauer.²³ Also, when considering Allied policy towards Germany, it is US policy which so far has attracted far more scholarly attention than its British and French counterparts.²⁴ The reason for this lies partly in the fact that the majority of works on the subject has been produced by German historians with a focus on German-American relations. The selection of secondary sources is comparatively small when dealing with British policy towards Germany and Anglo-German relations once the FRG had been established in 1949. Again the majority of publications have been produced by Germans²⁵ but here (regardless of the lack of access to archival material) the early works by the British historian

²¹ See for example Wolf D. Gruner, *Die deutsche Frage in Europa 1800 bis 1990*, München, 1993; David P. Calleo, *The German Problem Reconsidered. Germany and the World Order, 1870 to the Present*, Cambridge, 1978.

²² See for example Anne Deighton, *Britain and the First Cold War*, Basingstoke, 1990; Elisabeth Barker, *Britain in a divided Europe, 1945-1970*, London, 1971.

²³ See for example Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die Ära Adenauer: Gründerjahre der Republik 1949-1957*, Stuttgart, 1981.

²⁴ See for example Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, *Unionsparteien, Sozialdemokratie und Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika 1945-1966*, Düsseldorf, 1983; Thomas A. Schwartz, *America's Germany. John McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany*, Cambridge 1991; Hermann-Josef Rupieper, *Der besetzte Verbündete. Die Amerikanische Deutschlandpolitik 1949-1955*, Opladen, 1991.

²⁵ For recent examples see: Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die deutsche Frage* and Daniel Gossel, *Briten, Deutsche und Europa*, Stuttgart, 1999.

Donald C. Watt stand out. The more recent publications by Anne Deighton also add important insights here.²⁶

Compared with later years, the period between 1945 and 1949 in general is covered in far more detail in both British and German publications when it comes to British Occupation policy and the German reaction to it. This also applies to individual relations between Britons and Germans.²⁷ Likewise, the later period between 1955 and 1961 has been dealt with recently, for example, by Sabine Lee and Daniel Gossel.²⁸ Memoirs of high-ranking British and German diplomats of the time also provide some useful information on the

²⁶ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, London, 1965; Donald C. Watt, 'Deutschland im Zwiespalt britischer Politik', in: Walter Hofer (ed.), *Europa und die Einheit Deutschlands. Eine Bilanz nach 100 Jahren*, Köln, 1970, p. 119-158; Donald C. Watt, 'Anglo-German Relations Today and Tomorrow', in: Karl Kaiser and Roger Morgan (eds.), *Britain and West Germany, Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy*, London, 1971, p. 203-218; Donald C. Watt, 'Perceptions of German History among the British Policy-Making Elite', in: Josef Foschepoth and Rolf Steininger (eds.), *Britische Deutschland-und Besatzungspolitik 1945-1949*, Paderborn, 1985, p. 15-25; Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts'.

²⁷ Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*, Oxford, 1990. Anne Deighton, 'Cold-War Diplomacy: British Policy Towards Germany's Role in Europe, 1945-49', in: Ian D. Turner (ed.), *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation and the Western Zones*, Oxford, 1989, pp. 15-36.

Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People, Germans under the British, 1945-1950*, London, 2001.

²⁸ Sabine Lee, *An uneasy partnership: British-German Relations between 1955 and 1961*, Bochum, 1996. Daniel Gossel, *Briten, Deutsche und Europa. As* Gossel covers the relatively long period from 1945 to 1962 the years 1945 to 1955 are not covered in a particularly detailed manner and offer little new insight.

topic.²⁹ Yvonne Kipp points out that the majority of British publications on Anglo-German relations during the post-war years tend to give a broader overview of the period.³⁰ In contrast to this, German studies tend to mostly highlight more specific aspects.³¹ Kipp's recent publication presents for the first time an analysis of the British Foreign Secretary and later Prime Minister Anthony Eden's attitude and foreign policy towards Germany between 1951 and 1957 in its entirety, therefore providing a valuable addition to the wider topic addressed in this thesis.³²

When considering the Occupation forces of the western powers, the problems created by the American troop presence have been highlighted by John Willoughby. His work focuses on the threat to U.S. authority in Germany caused by the lawless behavior of American troops and the initiatives which prevented a deterioration of relations in the period between 1945 and 1948.³³ There has however been no publication focusing on the specific issue of the British Army of the Rhine and its potential role as a tool for the improvement of the newly found Anglo-German partnership and its relations with the Germans. It is this lack of historiography on the political and social aspects of the British military presence in the Federal Republic, which this thesis intends to address.

²⁹ Here the memoirs of the British High Commissioner to Germany Ivone Kirkpatrick and the German Ambassador to London Hans von Herwarth stand out: Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*; Hans von Herwarth, *Von Adenauer zu Brandt. Erinnerungen*, Berlin, 1990.

³⁰ For a particularly useful British example see Jeremy Noakes et. al. (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Europe, 1949-1990*, Oxford, 2002;

³¹ For instance: Olaf Mager, *Die Stationierung der britischen Rheinarmee*, Baden-Baden, 1990.

³² Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die deutsche Frage*, Paderborn, 2002, p. 28.

³³ John Willoughby, *Remaking the Conquering Heroes: The Postwar American Occupation of Germany*, Basingstoke, 2001.

Regardless of how vital bilateral Anglo-German political relations were during the period in question, from a military or security perspective there is a widespread consensus in secondary sources on the importance of the British contribution of forces to the continent. In matters of security and defence policy Britain aimed for a strong and united Europe to withstand Communism, albeit in an Atlantic, not a European framework. Germany was a crucial factor here.³⁴ Britain's unprecedented contractual commitment in October 1954 to contribute a maximum of four divisions and a tactical air force was arguably the one really substantial, firm commitment in Britain's post war defence experience.³⁵ Anne Deighton's recent article on Britain's policy towards German rearmament demonstrates that, when considering Britain's security policy, the anti-German strand of opinion may have been more easily recognisable but tended to be less powerful for decision-makers than the imperial and post-imperial strand. As a result Cold War priorities for strategic reasons were stronger than anti-Germanism.³⁶ The various potential aims of the stationing of the BAOR in Germany have been touched upon in a number of publications on Britain's security and defence policy since 1945. Gottfried Niedhart points out that, apart from being an advanced defence of the British Isles³⁷, the BAOR was increasingly to constitute a vital tool for achieving the long-term goal of *Sicherheit für Deutschland* instead of *Sicherheit vor Deutschland*.³⁸ Beatrice

³⁴ Matthias Schönwald, 'New Friends – Difficult Friendships', p 318.

³⁵ For the discussion on how effective and wholehearted this commitment was see: Paul Cornish, 'The British Military View of European Security, 1945-50', in: Anne Deighton (ed.), *Building Postwar Europe*, Basingstoke, 1995, p. 70.

³⁶ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts', p. 79.

³⁷ Angelika Volle, *Deutsch-Britische Beziehungen, Eine Untersuchung des bilateralen Verhältnisses auf der staatlichen und nichtstaatlichen Ebene seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bonn, 1976, p. 41.

³⁸ Gottfried Niedhart, 'Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der britischen Politik der Fünfziger Jahre', p. 190.

Heuser's work on Britain, West Germany and NATO shows that Britain went further than any other country bar the USA by unilaterally committing forces to Germany. She demonstrates that the stationing of the BAOR was part of a plan to incorporate West Germany into the Western Union (recast to become the Western European Union) and into NATO.³⁹ Olaf Mager furthermore stresses the important fact that the stationing of the BAOR aimed far more at preventing a change of US defence strategy and a domestic destabilisation of the FRG than calming French fears of a resurging Germany.⁴⁰ What has been neglected so far is the potential impact of relations between the BAOR and the Germans on achieving the above aims. The closely related issue of German rearmament has been documented in great detail, most recently by Spencer Mawby. His work also covers the changes in British policy towards the arming of the Federal Republic, from the entry into force of the Occupation statute in September 1949, up to the recruitment of the first volunteers at the end of 1955.⁴¹

Secondary source material on the official relationship between the British Army and the Germans is very limited and so far only covers the period immediately following the German surrender in May 1945. Patricia Meehan provides very useful insight into this period and establishes that, unsurprisingly,

³⁹ Beatrice Heuser, 'Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO, 1955-1990', in Jeremy Noakes, *Britain and Germany in Europe*, p. 142. On the related topic of Britain, the failure of the EDC and German entry into NATO see Hans Heinrich Jansen, *Grossbritannien, das Scheitern der EVG und der NATO-Beitritt der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Bochum, 1992.

⁴⁰ Olaf Mager, *Die Stationierung der britischen Rheinarmee. Grossbritanniens EVG-Alternative*, Baden-Baden, 1990, p. 2.

⁴¹ Spencer Mawby, *Containing Germany: Britain and the Arming of the Federal Republic*, Basingstoke, 1999. See also Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950-1955*, Cambridge, 1991; A.C. Azzola, *Die Diskussion um die Aufrüstung der BRD im Unterhaus und in der Presse Großbritanniens, Nov. 1949-Juli 1952*, Meisenheim, 1971

things got off to a rather cool start. There were many obstacles in the way to a closer relationship, both between British and Germans as well as among the British themselves.⁴² Her publication demonstrates how the BAOR and the Civilian Control Commission for Germany (CCG), quickly nicknamed 'Charlie Chaplin's Grenadiers' or 'Complete Chaos Guaranteed' by the Army, were soon just as far apart from each other as from the Germans.⁴³ Furthermore Meehan demonstrates that in general Army personnel were rather reluctant to socialise with Germans and that, according to the CCG:

there has to be re-education *of* the Army before you can start re-education of the Germans *by* the Army. We all know the Army attitude at many conferences where we ask for concessions to the Germans. [...] There still exists, far too generally, the view that in all spheres we can instruct the poor benighted Germans – a tendency to consider them as uncivilised Africans.⁴⁴

In regards to cultural and more personal relations between the BAOR and the Germans, a number of secondary sources point towards factors which potentially influenced the view of the general British public towards Germany and therefore also that of individual soldiers stationed in Germany. Sabine Lee for example highlights the anti-German feelings expressed by the Labour left with regard to British public opinion and parts of the press.⁴⁵ Furthermore public opinion, at least in the early post-war years, generally tended to be more sympathetic towards the Soviet Union due to the war-time alliance and the slow

⁴² Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*.

⁴³ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 53.

⁴⁴ FO 1014/26, cited in Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Sabine Lee, *An Uneasy Partnership*, p. 14. For relevant press views on Germany see also Karin Herrmann et. al. (eds.), *Coping with the Relations: Anglo-German Cartoons from the Fifties to the Nineties*, Osnabrück, 1988.

acceptance by the public of Cold War realities.⁴⁶ Apart from useful works on general British public opinion on Germany⁴⁷ there are a relatively large number of accounts of particular non-governmental groups and prominent personalities (as opposed to general mass opinion) and their efforts towards and experiences with the Germans in the immediate post-war period in secondary literature. Some of these potentially provide the opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the BAOR to other means of *rapprochement*.⁴⁸ Many of the Army conscripts going to Germany perhaps had a predefined opinion of Germany and their inhabitants. What Jill Stephenson terms the 'peculiarities of British history' may have conditioned many a Briton to regard continental Europeans, with their border disputes, wars and changes of political regimes as unreliable, unenlightened and backward:

⁴⁶ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, not Hearts', p. 79.

⁴⁷ Evgenios Michail, 'After the War and after the Wall'; Ruth Wittlinger, 'Perceptions of Germany and the Germans in Post-War Britain', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 25, No. 5&6, 2004, pp. 453-456; R.G. Hughes, "Don't let's be beastly to the Germans': Britain and the German Affair in History', *Twentieth Century British History*, No. 17, Vol. 2, 2006, pp. 257-283.

⁴⁸ John Farquharson, "Emotional but Influential': Victor Gollancz, Richard Stokes and the British Zone of Germany, 1945-9', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22, No.3, 1987, pp. 501-519; C. Haase, 'In Search of a European Settlement: Chatham House and British-German Relations, 1920-1955', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2007, pp. 371-397; Rolf Breitenstein, *Total War to Total Trust. Personal Accounts of 30 Years of Anglo-German Relations*, London, 1976; Peter Alter, 'Building Bridges: The Framework of Anglo-German Cultural Relations after 1945' in: Jeremy Noakes et. al. (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Europe*; A more dated but still useful account is provided in Angelika Volle, *Deutsch-Britische Beziehungen*.

The implication is that there is a gaping gulf between the British way of life and European traditions and practices – without much doubt left about which is superior.⁴⁹

This may certainly have applied to the period immediately after the Second World War. Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1929) put it well:

For the most part we do not first see and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.⁵⁰

These stereotypes were to an extent furthered by the British film industry during the 1950s. For instance, Richard Falcon's article on the portrayal of Germans in British films points out that the industry seemed largely preoccupied with appealing to audiences via heroic World War Two narratives.⁵¹

Finally, there are a limited number of accounts of officers and conscripts in the BAOR and their experiences in Germany available in secondary sources. John Ramsden provides insight into some individual experiences of British soldiers in Germany after 1945. He also points out that many British servicemen quickly changed their anti-German attitudes with that of a lighter vein of humour

⁴⁹ Jill Stephenson, 'Britain and Europe in the later Twentieth Century: Identity, Sovereignty, Peculiarity' in: Mary Fulbrook (ed.) *National Histories and European History*, London, 1993, p. 233.

⁵⁰ Walter Lippmann, cited in: Karin Herrmann, Harald Husemann, Lachlan Moyle (eds.), *Coping with the Relations*, p. 15.

⁵¹ Richard Falcon, 'Images of Germany and the Germans in British Film and Television Fictions' in: Harald Husemann (ed.), *As Others See Us. Anglo-German Perceptions*, Frankfurt, 1994, p. 18.

and tolerance – despite the Army leadership’s best efforts to prevent further fraternisation.⁵² Some servicemen found the Germans in at least some of the areas they were stationed in quite easy to get on with.⁵³ B.S. Johnson’s collection of accounts furthermore comments on boredom taking over in an army in peacetime conditions. This in itself, at least for some soldiers, was a motivating factor for fraternisation.⁵⁴ However, most of the recollections of Servicemen in Germany during the 1940s and 1950s tend to focus on Army life rather than on the contacts made with the local German population. It is the latter aspect which this thesis aims to address.

Primary Sources

As previously noted, this thesis aims to operate at a number of different levels. These range from the diplomatic and intergovernmental relations between the two countries, over the political and military context of the British administration both in London and Germany, down to the much more individual investigation of the experience of individual officers and ranks at a grass-roots level. As a consequence a wide range of primary sources offers itself for consideration. In

⁵² John Ramsden, *Don’t Mention the War*, London, 2006, p. 246. See also C. Summers, ‘We had a lot of laughs’ BBC News Online, 20 July 2004, [available online] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3842041.stm> [accessed 27 November 2008]

⁵³ National Serviceman Harry Wright found the German people in the more rural town of Herford quite different and more likeable than the ones in the industrial town of Essen. Cited in: Peter Chambers, Amy Landreth (eds.), *Called Up: The Personal Experiences of Sixteen National Servicemen, Told By Themselves*, London, 1955, p. 175.

⁵⁴ Cited in: B.S. Johnson, *All Bull: The National Servicemen*, London, 1973, pp. 112.

regards to the political angle of the project, primary source material covers for example British and German government papers. The bulk of the British material, like Foreign Office, Cabinet and War Office files, is available at the National Archives in Kew. The German perspective of the impact the BAOR had on Anglo-German political relations is highlighted by documents in the Federal Archives in Koblenz as well as the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin.⁵⁵ The perspective of the individual German *Land* administrations in Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia is provided by the state archives in Hannover and Düsseldorf. These also provide local newspaper extracts on the subject. 1950s literature, diaries, private papers, memoirs of individual servicemen and interviews with former BAOR soldiers stationed in Germany are also vital contributions to the project.

The German archives provide a very good insight into the German perception of relations at the highest levels. The Federal Archives allow for a comparison of relations between British soldiers and German civilians and those involving American and French soldiers. The archives also disclose interesting reports by the British press on German attempts to use the BAOR as a scape goat. The Political Archives of the Federal Foreign Office reveal for instance that an inter-allied working group on the issue of relations between soldiers and civilians had been created to deal with the rising incidents of rape and murder committed by foreign troops in Germany.

Sources at the British Library Newspaper Archive at Colindale contributed to the chapter on the perception of Germany in Britain. Close study of the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* in the period of the early 1950s revealed a somewhat more nuanced picture of reporting on Germany than might have

⁵⁵ For the Federal Archives in Koblenz see www.bundesarchiv.de, for the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin see http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/sid_CAB9AF7926D7E1097F51E96F42134382/EN/AAmt/PolitischesArchiv/Uebersicht_node.html

been expected. The sources available at the BBC Archive Centre in Reading provide an equally balanced account of the Federal Republic. The Imperial War Museum Sound Archive contains a number of eye witness recordings of former BAOR soldiers in Germany relevant for the exploration of relations between soldiers and Germans.⁵⁶ These reveal for example that, particularly among officers, fraternisation was frequently frowned upon even in the 1950s. Official regimental records on relations between BAOR and Germans on a social level have proven very difficult to find. There are nonetheless some highly useful findings in Regimental Archives. Of particular value were the Royal Signals Museum in Blandford Forum, Dorset, the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham, Kent, the Durham Record Office and the Royal Artillery Museum in Woolwich.⁵⁷ These records highlight the efforts made by Regiments to improve relations with Germany, particularly when it suited the interest of the Regiments. Equally revealing is the change in reporting on Germany in several regimental magazines. Whereas in 1948 these magazines focused exclusively on British and Army issues by the mid-1950s they were increasingly reporting and discussing social relations, from personal relations between soldiers and local women to the attempts by regiments to get to know the residents better. Hence the changing social dimension of the Army's activities could never be separated from the military and political imperatives of the Army and the British government. There are variations between regiments but there clearly is a strong tendency towards a much more positive reporting on Germany from the early 1950s. The Regimental Histories uncovered in the British Library also

⁵⁶ For the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive see <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections-research/about/sound> [accessed 05 July 2012].

⁵⁷ For the Royal Signals Museum see <http://royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk/WebSite/> For the Royal Engineers Museum see <http://www.re-museum.co.uk/> , Durham Record Office <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/Pages/home.aspx> , Royal Artillery Museum <http://www.firepower.org.uk/> [all accessed 05 July 2012].

contain valuable information on relations with Germans, although in most cases these were written about twenty years after the events.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter will outline the development of the BAOR in Germany during the period in question in terms of size and organisation before analyzing its role in British policy towards Germany. It is important to highlight the controversies the BAOR caused within the British administration when other interests clashed with the idea of using the Services to foster Anglo-German relations. This entails an examination of the views of both the Labour and Conservative administrations of the new Germany. The relationship between the BAOR and the CCG in Germany at the beginning of the period under observation here also requires further analysis.

The third chapter will examine the portrayal of Germany and its people in Britain in order to shed light on the views that would have influenced young Britons joining the BAOR. The focus will be on media likely to have been encountered by young British men such as the British press, non-fictional as well as fictional literature and war films. The chapter will also highlight the impact of grass-root level initiatives on the perception of Germany. Finally, it will consider the impact of Germany's economic recovery on British opinion.

The focus of chapter four will be on the German perspective of relations with the BAOR. It will analyze the changing expectations of and demands by the German civilian population as well as Federal and *Land* administrations during a period of fundamental changes in Anglo-German relations. Attempts to use the BAOR in order to undermine German cooperation with the West will be scrutinized as well as German efforts to counter these threats. Economic, political and social contexts will be explored here. Furthermore relations between Germans and NATO soldiers of other allies will be scrutinized in order to provide a comparison.

Chapter five is an exploration of the BAOR's own attempts to adapt to the changing nature of Anglo-German relations throughout the period in question. This involves constraints caused by the organisational structure of the Services in Germany, the impact of Service accommodation on levels of contacts, official attempts by units to improve relations in local towns as well as the experiences of individual officers and ranks. A comparison of RAF and Army initiatives, as well as attempts to minimize negative publicity caused by incidents is important here.

Chapter six is entitled 'The British Administration in Germany and the BAOR'. It discusses the attempts by the administration in London as well as on the ground in Germany to influence the BAOR in order to use it as a tool to tie the Federal Republic into the Western system of defence. This includes the use of the BAOR to strengthen the Adenauer government, to promote British values, and to control Germany at a time of increasing independence of the young Federal Republic. To a large extent, it also involves mitigating problems caused by the presence of the BAOR. This chapter, which constitutes the focal point of the thesis, will examine the crucial period of the mid-1950s, when German sovereignty fundamentally changed both Anglo-German relations in general as well as the position of the BAOR in Germany.

Chapter seven is the conclusion of the thesis. It will evaluate the efforts made by both the BAOR as well as the British administration to improve Anglo-German relations by utilizing the presence of the Services. It will also shed light on whether German sovereignty did change the position of the BAOR vis-à-vis the German population and administration in the period immediately after Federal German sovereignty was established. Finally, the chapter will answer the question of whether or not the BAOR was able to effectively adapt to serve its new policy purposes.

Chapter Two: The British Army of the Rhine as a Factor in British Policy towards Germany

We have never doubted that many of the bad old nationalistic elements in the community have survived. [...] However, it is not in Parliament that [they] do harm. It is on the street corners and in public meeting places that they work upon the humiliated pride and dormant brutality of the German people.¹

Introduction

It was doubts about the re-emergence of German nationalism among the British administration on the highest levels, as expressed in the Foreign Office brief above, which led to the consideration of utilising the BAOR as a force to foster democratic elements in Germany. Before progressing on to the Services themselves and the initiatives introduced by the civilian administration in Germany to improve relations with the Germans in the next chapters, it is important to consider some of the attitudes of the most high-ranking staff of the Foreign Office in London and the British High Commission in Germany. After all it was these attitudes that helped to shape as well as implement British policy towards the Federal Republic. Many members of the British civilian and military administration in Germany during the period in question had had first-hand experiences with Nazi Germany before and during the war and therefore attitudes towards the FRG were heavily influenced by these experiences. It is

¹ NA, FO 1030-253, United Kingdom Delegation Brief, The London Conference, May 1950, p. 3.

important to consider the attitudes of some of the senior British personnel in Germany before moving on to mass public opinion and its impact on the Services in chapter three. The antipathy towards German nationalism, combined with the determination to pursue a pro-German policy, influenced the British administration's view of the BAOR as both a factor as well as a potential problem for Anglo-German relations.

It is furthermore essential to highlight the nature and development of the British troop commitment in Germany in order to understand how the Services could be utilised as a tool for improved Anglo-German relations. This chapter will therefore analyse the organisational structure of the British military presence in Germany as well as the adaption of the BAOR to political changes in the context of Anglo-German relations and the Cold War. This chapter will also establish the structure and responsibilities of the British civilian administration in Germany, before addressing the question of what exactly Foreign Office expectations of the BAOR's role in Anglo-German relations were at the beginning of the period under observation here. The analysis of the British administration and its relations with the BAOR and the Germans in this chapter will also consider the significant changes in the relation between occupiers and occupied caused by the establishment of the Federal Republic in May 1949. In order to understand the value of the BAOR as a tool for better relations between Britons and Germans, the political functions of the BAOR during the period in question require analysis. This also entails an exploration of political controversies over the size of Britain's troop commitment as well as friction caused between different government departments over policy direction in regards to the BAOR.

The Transformation of the BAOR and its Adaption to Political Change

The dramatic events of the early Cold War period in Europe and the accompanying deterioration of East-West relations led to significant changes in size and role of the BAOR in Germany. The BAOR of the post-war period

began, just like its 1919 predecessor, as an army of occupation in a defeated Germany. The British Army had traditionally been used to garrison the Empire and only fought in Europe during wartime as expeditionary forces.² When war ended, the Army normally demobilized and returned to its former tasks in the Empire and at home. However, this is not what happened after 1945. Of course large-scale demobilisation of British soldiers in Germany did take place after 1945, due to strong pressure from the Treasury to cut defence spending as quickly as possible. However, the Occupation of Germany agreed on at the 1945 Potsdam Conference and, soon thereafter, the emergence of the Cold War, prevented the disbanding of the British Expeditionary Force in Germany. 21st Army Group instead became the British Army of the Rhine in August 1945. Initially, the BAOR of 1945 was made up of three corps districts with several divisions. Each corps was made up of up to 450,000 men and each division numbered up to 150,000 men. However, most of the wartime units were demobilized during 1946 and by January 1947, the British troop presence had been reduced to three divisions.³ Only thereafter was the BAOR increasingly expanded as well as turned into a permanent military force in Germany. The 1947 National Service Act, introducing universal conscription in peacetime for an indefinite period for the first time in British history, meant that from January 1949 onwards, the ranks of the BAOR were also filled with National Servicemen. These young Britons made up for the shortfall in recruitment among regular soldiers after 1945.⁴

Britain's first post-war global policy paper of May 1947 defined the Soviet Union as the potential enemy of Britain. However, due to Russian technological backwardness and economic problems, Britain did not expect Russia to be in a position to resort to war in Europe before 1957. Until the spring of 1950, Britain

² Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 1.

³ Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 3.

⁴ Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up: A History of National Service*, London, 2004, p. xvi.

therefore continued to give the Middle East the highest strategic priority, while Europe was only a part of the overall defence strategy.⁵ This was reflected in a stagnation of troop numbers in Germany. In 1947 the Imperial General Staff, the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for Air as well as the Military Governor of the British zone agreed that 'the figure of about 55,000 should be regarded as the absolute minimum size of the Army which should be maintained in Germany in the foreseeable future'.⁶ However, even in 1947 this figure had only been accepted by the Military Governor under great pressure as 'the need [was] really for larger forces'.⁷ Britain's containment policy in Europe during this period focused on the rebuilding of the political unity of Western Europe through the 1947 Dunkirk Treaty and the Western Union of 1948 rather than on increasing military strength.

Events such as the 1948 Czech coup and the Berlin blockade increasingly challenged the British perception of the Soviet threat in Europe being a political and economic rather than a military one. The initial plan to counter the Soviet forces in Europe with only two divisions and a tactical air force of some 141 aircraft was therefore reversed and, also in response to pressure from Britain's continental allies, London agreed to increase its armed forces in Germany.⁸ The number of troops in Germany was now to be determined by two factors:

The first is to support the prestige and authority of Military Government in the British Zone of Germany. The second is to act as part of the covering

⁵ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent? Britain's Motives for Troop Reductions in West Germany, 1955-1958', in: *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1997, p. 46.

⁶ NA, FO 371/76629, Memorandum, 29 January 1949, p.1.

⁷ NA, FO 371/76629, Memorandum, 29 January 1949, p. 3.

⁸ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 47.

force behind which the military resources of the Western Union can be mobilised in the event of war with Soviet Russia.⁹

In January 1948 British forces in Germany totalled eleven armoured regiments and fourteen infantry battalions (exclusive of those in Berlin).¹⁰ British troop strength in Germany rose steadily after 1950, when the Korean War led to heightened tensions in Europe. A clear shift in Britain's defence strategy from the Middle East to Europe led to the increase of troops on the continent by nearly two divisions, bringing the total of British divisions in Europe to four by 1952.¹¹ Whereas in September 1950 there were 44,000 British personnel in Germany, this increased to 50,000 by December and 52,000 by January 1951. Numbers thereafter increased by an average of 5,000 per month up to April and 65,000 by July 1951. This rise coincided with the increase of the US military presence in Germany from one to five divisions. The US contingent now stood at 81,000.¹² At the same time the total number of French troops in Germany was 55,000. Allied troops therefore amounted to a combined total of 186,000, as against an estimated total of 320,000 Soviet troops in the Soviet zone of Germany.¹³ At its peak in 1956, the BAOR was made up of four divisions containing twenty-one battalions of infantry and sixteen armoured regiments, totalling around 77,000 personnel.¹⁴ However, by this time the British military believed that West German membership of NATO and German rearmament would facilitate a reduction in Britain's contribution to NATO forces on the Central Front.

⁹ NA, FO 1030/123, Letter Robertson to Bevin, 4 January 1949.

¹⁰ Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 4. Battalions were made up of between 600 to 1,000 soldiers.

¹¹ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 49.

¹² Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 19.

¹³ NA, FO 371/85220, Strength of BAOR, 4 December 1950.

¹⁴ NA, FO 371/85220, Strength of BAOR, p. 22.

Due to the development of American hydrogen weapons, British strategic planners now concluded that the military importance of British forces was considerably reduced and that the threat of a limited war in Europe appeared increasingly unlikely, making the BAOR an exclusively political force.¹⁵ Britain's worldwide defence commitments contributed to already adverse economic trends, including its declining trade competitiveness worldwide. These problems, combined with the shock of the Suez crisis and the sterling crisis of 1957, led to an increasing determination to significantly cut the number of troops in Germany.¹⁶ Bonn's growing unwillingness to foot the bill for Allied troops in Germany further exacerbated British problems. The Eden government's determination to secure reductions in military spending therefore ensured that the commitment to maintain 77,000 men on the continent was by 1956 looking increasingly untenable.¹⁷ In 1957 the government also announced the end of National Service, with no more call-ups after 1960. In line with the overall reduction of British forces worldwide, the BAOR was to be reduced from 77,000 men in 1957 to 44,900 men by 1963.¹⁸ This plan was however met with a barrage of opposition from Britain's European allies, which led to Britain being forced to reduce the planned cuts of the BAOR. The resistance to British troop reductions was mainly due to the difficulties encountered when Western Europe sought to increase the size of its armed forces after the outbreak of the Korean War as well as West Germany's unexpectedly slow build-up of its new defence forces. There were also continental fears of a 'nuclearization of NATO'.¹⁹ As a result the now all-volunteer BAOR only saw a reduction in size to approximately 55,000 men by 1959.

¹⁵ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 55.

¹⁶ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 56.

¹⁷ Spencer Mawby, *Containing Germany: Britain and the Arming of the Federal Republic*, Basingstoke, 1999, p. 185.

¹⁸ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 59.

¹⁹ Saki Dockrill, 'Retreat from the Continent', p. 46.

Although never considered strong enough by the Commanders-in-Chief to successfully stop a Soviet attack on Western Germany, the BAOR significantly grew in numbers during the period in which a war scenario similar to that in Korea appeared the most likely. Arguably this increase in size was in part politically motivated as French and American troop contributions were directly connected to the British commitment in Germany. Above all, the BAOR was an expression of the political will to defend the Federal Republic, regardless of military realities:

Germany has to be convinced of the growing strength of the West and its ability to defend her on the Elbe. The reinforcement of troops and provision of heavy equipment suitably deployed and in evidence might provide the answer.²⁰

Once the immediate threat of a conventional war in Europe receded, the BAOR was mainly utilised as a political tool in a European context but, as the following chapters will demonstrate, above all on an Anglo-German level. It was the organisational structure of the Services and their widespread physical presence throughout the entire British zone, which arguably turned it into a resource for establishing close contacts with the population of its host country.

The Organisational Structure of the BAOR

Although it was known as the British Army of the Rhine, the area of the BAOR Occupation extended well beyond the Rhine into northwest Germany. The number of principal garrison cities in Germany exceeded twenty-five, which were spread throughout the two *Länder* of North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower

²⁰ NA, FO 371/93375, G10110/56, Ernest Davies, Report on Parliamentary Under-Secretary's Visit to Germany, 26 January 1951, p. 7.

Saxony.²¹ From April 1948 the BAOR headquarters were located at Bad Oeynhausen, North Rhine Westphalia. In October 1954 HQ BAOR moved to Rheindahlen near Mönchen Gladbach. The two main administrative components of the BAOR were Hamburg District and Hannover District. Rhine District had been transformed into headquarters for Rhine Army Troops in 1947.²² However, the organisational structure continually changed with the size of the BAOR, with Rhine District reappearing by 1952, along with a new Lübbecke District. Nonetheless, by 1957 only the Hannover and Rhine Districts were still in existence. The main supply headquarters were located at Düsseldorf and the communications headquarters was established at Emblem in Belgium. New reinforcements to Germany passed through Emblem to be dispersed to their various bases. From Rheindahlen, where the RAF also had its headquarters, along with the 2nd Tactical Air force and NORTHAG, BAOR's troops were commanded by a four-star general.²³ The three armoured divisions of the BAOR were spread over twenty different locations throughout North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony. The increase in size of the BAOR led to the creation of a new division (11th Armoured) in September 1950. 6th Armoured Division was formed in the UK in 1951 as a strategic reserve but also moved to Germany in 1952.²⁴ As previously noted the period from 1951 to 1956 marked the high point in strength for the BAOR, with four divisions and nine brigades, along with supporting units.²⁵ These divisions were similar to their World War Two

²¹ For a complete list of principal garrison cities in Germany see Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 145.

²² Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 3.

²³ Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol: The British in Germany since 1945*, Edinburgh, 2003, p. 24.

²⁴ Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 19.

²⁵ BAOR during this period was made up from the 2nd Infantry Division, the 6th Armoured Division, the 7th Armoured Division and the 11th Armoured Division. A

counterparts in organisation and much of the equipment was from this period as well. The reduction of the size of British forces in Germany after 1956 led to the disbanding of 6th Armoured Division and a complete reshuffle of the remaining units, leading to the BAOR being made up of the 2nd Division, 4th Division and 5th Division by 1958.²⁶

As the military requirement for the BAOR throughout its existence was constant readiness for a Soviet attack, frequent exercises took place all throughout the British zone. The physical presence of the Services in the British zone was further highlighted by regular patrols of the border with East Germany from 1949 onwards. This, together with the frequent reorganisation of the forces and their high number of garrisons, provided for frequent contacts with the local population.

The Organisational Structure and Aims of the British Administrative Presence in Germany prior to 1949

Up until 1949 the effort to use the BAOR as a tool for German integration was largely led by the British Element of the Control Commission for Germany (CCG(BE)). As this chapter will demonstrate, this division of the British presence in Germany into civilian and military elements, and the resulting internal organisational problems between the BAOR and the CCG, promised to constrain the integrative ability of the BAOR, quite apart from any problems arising over contact with local Germans. After the cessation of hostilities the CCG, under the auspices of the Foreign Office, soon took over the governing of the British zone from the Army and, although ultimately responsible to the Secretary of State for War, a junior Minister was appointed to oversee the

division numbered up to 20,000 troops and was made up of several brigades, each numbering up to 8,000 men. Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 9.

²⁶ Graham E. Watson, Richard A. Rinaldi, *The British Army in Germany*, p. 24.

administration of an organisation approaching some 50,000 members.²⁷ John B. Hynd, Labour MP for Sheffield and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, took this position and headed the newly established Control Office for Germany and Austria from October 1945 until April 1947.

Although the CCG was not part of the British Civil Service, it shared the same administrative structure. However, due to the military nature of the Occupation at the outset, the CCG had to be integrated into a military framework. This meant every British civilian employed in Germany had to have an 'honorary military rank' according to which accommodation, transport and messing were allocated. Often this led to former privates or corporals returning with the equivalent rank of warrant officers and the right to claim corresponding privileges. The higher rates of pay, as well as for example the considerably higher number of passenger vehicles available to the CCG, instantly soured the CCG's relationship with the BAOR, as some civilians who had spent the war at home ended up with higher ranks than soldiers who had fought their way through Germany. This resentment quickly resulted in the two British presences in Germany being 'almost as far apart from each other as from the Germans'.²⁸ As late as 1948 the CCG complained that:

all efforts made by CCG to meet the Services, and to invite their interest and co-operation, have all too often met with a cold and uncompromising reception.²⁹

Attempts by the British civilian administration to impose its will on the BAOR and change the Army's relation with the Germans was therefore beset with difficulties from the outset. This became evident when early CCG attempts at re-education of German civilians in Britain were hampered by the BAOR. The

²⁷ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 53.

²⁸ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 53.

²⁹ NA, FO 1032/993, Relations between the Services and the CCG, 1948.

Foreign office sent specially selected Germans on training courses to England and asked the Army to accommodate these people in Hannover while waiting for the train to the Hook of Holland. BAOR refused point-blank and would not be influenced – even by the Foreign Office:

It is considered highly undesirable that Germans should be accommodated in a transit camp with Service personnel, from a disciplinary, security and morale point of view.³⁰

During the early period of Occupation up to 1948 the CCG was increasingly pushing for closer contacts between the British and Germans in order to promote democratic re-education, whereas the Army was consistently dragging its feet. Soon after 1945 the CCG drew up plans to re-educate the German population in order to eliminate Nazism and foster democratic thinking. In May 1947 the new attitude towards the Germans was officially communicated in an instruction stating:

We should behave towards the Germans as the people of one Christian and civilized race towards another whose interests in many ways converge with our own and for whom we have no longer any ill-will.³¹

Once again the Army had different views on this issue. An Army document regulating social contacts with Germans in 1947 began by defining Germans as 'all persons, who, during the war, lived in Germany of their own free will' before banning 'entertainment of Germans for purely social reasons by units in Messes or Clubs'.³²

³⁰ NA, FO 1032/1095.

³¹ NA, FO 1032/1465.

³² NA, FO 1030/172, Social Contact with Germans, Appendix A, p.1.

The pace of reconciliation was to increase once it became clear the western zones would emerge as a semi-sovereign state in 1949 and the end of Allied authority drew closer. The civilian administration now deemed it necessary to use all personnel including the Services in the British zone to foster Anglo-German relations. As early as 1948 the CCG therefore examined in great detail all fields of potential Army-German association - social, sporting, educational and welfare - with a view to producing practical proposals by which the Services could assist in the task of re-educating the Germans. Only in early 1948 had the Army command finally accepted the necessity of gradually changing its approach towards the German population in principle:

The Army Commander had decided that closer contact with the Germans was now desirable and that he proposed to set an example in this direction himself.³³

It was noted with relief by the CCG 'that Rhine Army policy is now positive'.³⁴ Due to the initially rather distant attitude of the British Forces, the CCG considered it essential to now take a gradual and planned approach, especially in social matters. 'It is probable that there is some resentment on the German side'.³⁵ The task of turning the BAOR into an asset for Anglo-German relations was clearly going to be a difficult one for the Foreign Office.

It was this formal and organisational approach dictated by the CCG which was to dominate early BAOR efforts. The reluctant Services claimed it was 'unwise too rapidly to turn on the tap of closer relations'.³⁶ Projects and associations might be started which, from subsequent lack of interests or

³³ NA, FO 1032/1368, Minutes of Meeting held on 18 May 1948.

³⁴ NA, FO 1014/26, Memorandum on 'Relations between Rhine Army and the Germans', 31 July 1948.

³⁵ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

³⁶ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

means, might decline instead of grow. The CCG regarded as typical the Army attitude that the Germans might well become suspicious, if a sudden, wholesale and too wide opening of doors became apparent. Whereas a more gradual and planned opening of those doors over a period of time was considered to be the right answer by the BAOR, the British administration's view of the matter and also Army attitudes differed considerably. The CCG considered that, apart from unsatisfactory Army attitudes, regulations and a general lack of awareness of the problems in Germany prevented a quickening of the pace of reconciliation. It is worth at this point to consider the CCG view of the Services.

The Control Commission View of the Army prior to 1949

As established above, the British civilian administration often took a somewhat critical view of the early Army approach towards the Germans. The attitude of Army officers was, according to the CCG, one of 'uncertainty in their 'off parade' relations with Germans'.³⁷ There was apparently no great desire by officers to associate much with Germans and if there was to be any informal association a considerable change in facilities and outlook was required.

To a certain extent it was regulations rather than attitudes which were to blame for the lack of contact. In order to ensure proper conduct the only place where a British officer could entertain a German person was at a married couple's home. If an officer met a German in the course of business he was not allowed to offer a drink, a meal or even a chair outside of the office. As there was in 1948 very little social contact particularly between officers and Germans, all commanders now apparently agreed that a start had to be made. However, the Army was rather selective in its approach. For military and security reasons all efforts had to be subject to:

³⁷ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

initially being strictly formal, German guests being 100% screened and informal parties in Messes being regarded as unsuitable at present.³⁸

The importance of ensuring that only 'good Germans' were invited to Officers and Sergeant messes was considered paramount as it would be disastrous if 'the respectable was mixed with the black market'.³⁹ This strong emphasis by the Army on 'screening' guests to limit association to 'good Germans' certainly caused a few raised eyebrows at the CCG.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the Army regarded married families as the best means of developing relations. Contacts between British servicemen and German families (or, the increasing number of British families and German civilians) were to prevent morally questionable connections between troops and civilians. The result of the slow change of Army attitude was the drawing up of very detailed plans in order to improve relations, ranging from sports, youth clubs, voluntary teaching of English in German schools, cycling and hiking to the lending of equipment to Germans.

However, neither the plan to re-educate German civilians nor the use of the Services towards this aim was met with universal praise among CCG staff. The Deputy Regional Commissioner of CCG Hamburg pointed out his abhorrence at the term re-education in regards to the German population as 'it is patronising, and is one of the reasons for resentment on the German side'.⁴¹ He furthermore emphasised what he considered his most important consideration, namely the need for a planned and thorough education of the Army before any scheme employing the Services was launched. The attempt had been made in Hamburg by the CCG to explain to local units the problems in Germany, 'but I

³⁸ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

³⁹ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

⁴⁰ NA, FO1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner Hamburg to Zonal Office of Educational Advisor CCG, 14 July 1948.

⁴¹ NA, FO1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner Hamburg, 14 July 1948.

am sure we have not even scratched the surface. I cannot believe the situation is better elsewhere'.⁴² The Commissioner pointed towards the necessity, if good was to be achieved instead of harm, to first educate the Army, which could not be a quick or easy task. Approaches to Germans also ought to be spontaneous and not forced. Contacts would therefore inevitably be patchy, slow and with many failures. Above all, in the Commissioner's view there still existed, far too generally:

the view that in all spheres we can instruct the poor benighted Germans, a tendency to consider them as uncivilised Africans.⁴³

It was therefore obvious to at least some FO staff that an immediate change of attitude of the BAOR towards the Germans would be difficult to achieve successfully. However, an accelerated reduction in size of the CCG had to be anticipated after 1949 which indicated that 'in day to day business the Army will come into more direct contact with Germans'.⁴⁴ The main problem for the CCG was that the Army had to be briefed and, more than that, convinced if it was to really lend a helpful hand. There was scepticism as to how deep such briefing would sink with people whose main objectives lay in other very different directions. 'It really amounts to a re-education of the Army before you can start re-education of the Germans by the Army.'⁴⁵ The CCG complained frequently about Army attitude when units were asked for concessions to Germans:

⁴² NA, FO1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner Hamburg, 14 July 1948.

⁴³ NA, FO 1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner Hamburg 14 July 1948.

⁴⁴ NA, FO 1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner CCG Hamburg.

⁴⁵ NA, FO 1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner CCG Hamburg.

Those of us who talked to units also know how little even Field Officers know of our aims and activities and how apathetic the troops are towards them.⁴⁶

It is evident then that prior to the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany the Foreign Office saw much room for improvement for Army attitudes towards the Germans but also that the strained relations between the CCG and the BAOR stood in the way of changing Army attitudes. The Army often referred to the CCG as 'Charlie Chaplin's Grenadiers' or 'Complete Chaos Guaranteed'.⁴⁷ Arguably the increasing run-down of the CCG therefore provided a potential opportunity for improving relations between the armed forces and the Germans. Although the CCG arguably exercised a moderating influence on strategic errors by the BAOR, this was outweighed by the strained relations between the two organisations. The withdrawal of CCG, combined with the creation of the Federal Republic, fundamentally changed the Services' relationship with both the British administration as well as the Germans.

The initial long-term aims of the first CCG-inspired efforts developed in 1948 were somewhat modest. This was partly due to the aforementioned early BAOR refusal to cooperate with the CCG and partly due to perceived German hostility towards British Service personnel. Aims included on the social side formal mess parties, the acceptance of approved Germans, informally or as guests in British clubs, as well as the provision of facilities for mutual entertainment in restaurants, cinemas and operas. Print material was considered from an early stage:

A daily newspaper, delivered on the breakfast table, might be produced summarizing varying daily German political speeches and news, and

⁴⁶ NA, FO1014/26, Letter Deputy Regional Commissioner Hamburg to Zonal Office of Educational Advisor CCG, 14 July 1948.

⁴⁷ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 53.

'united' with forthcoming British sport and entertainment, crossword puzzles, etc.⁴⁸

A small financial reward for passing a colloquial German language test was even considered in order to encourage learning of German. It was deemed unlikely that:

the right kind of social progress will ever be made except in cases where a nucleus of the British taking part are prepared to do battle with the German language.⁴⁹

From the outset, the new CCG initiatives ran into difficulties. For instance, the Army was fully employed and could not provide enough resources. Particularly the officers who would have to lead the move towards better understanding appeared unwilling or unable to make time, and therefore the CCG did not regard any forced measures as likely to succeed. Furthermore, in almost all projects the obstacle of facilities cropped up – food, accommodation, transport and, to a lesser extent, language. There was a reported lack of interest in Anglo-German discussion groups as well as the difficulty for Germans to be admitted to British cinemas. German classes were not well attended. Initial Army enthusiasm, once the decision for co-operation with the CCG was made, was evidently still muted. The envisaged solution to these problems was that the approaches to be used by the Army should be planned on a two or three year basis in order to allow for long-term planning.

The CCG itself often stood in the way of promoting its own initiatives as too close contacts with Germans could still have significant negative consequences for individual personnel employed by the Foreign Office. In May

⁴⁸ NA, FO 1014/26, Final Report on BAOR/German relations, July 1948.

⁴⁹ NA, FO 1014/26, Letter from Deputy Regional Commissioner CCG Hamburg to Zonal Office of Educational Advisor CCG, 14 July 1948.

1948 the Regional Commissioner of Schleswig Holstein voiced his disapproval of the manner in which orders concerning the treatment of officials who married German women were implemented.⁵⁰ He quoted the case of one official, who, when he married a German, was nominated for transfer to another Region, was refused by that Region, and subsequently accepted by a Division for employment at Headquarters. He also said that officials married to Germans could not be transferred to Frankfurt owing to the American attitude to the question. According to the Military Governor, security was the only criterion for the treatment of an official who married a German. Any official who did so had to be told quite plainly that there was no objection to his marriage but, dependent on the nature of his work, it might be necessary either to transfer him or to dispense with his services!⁵¹

The prospects for a rapid improvement of relations between the Services and the Germans in 1948 due to Foreign Office initiatives therefore appeared somewhat bleak. A lack of resources, a lack of personnel and a lack of motivation on the British side were difficult enough to overcome for the civilian administration. What is more, instead of being able to focus on these issues and improve Anglo-German relations a number of more serious issues such as requisitioning, manoeuvre damage and incidents of misbehaviour threatened to cause a deterioration of relations rather than an improvement. Moreover, as will be discussed in chapter three, the BAOR provided plenty of ammunition for communist anti-western propaganda. An intensification of CCG efforts was

⁵⁰ For an account on British attempts to regulate marriages between British civilian staff and German women see: Barbara Smith, 'The Rules of Engagement: German Women and British Occupiers, 1945-1949' (2009), *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*, Paper 1072, <http://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/1072> [accessed 10 July 2012].

⁵¹ NA, FO 1032/1368, Policy for Non-Fraternisation: Minutes of 16th Meeting, 18 May 1948.

therefore inevitable if any improvements were to be achieved. Fostering an interest in German affairs among British soldiers was one such approach.

The Organisational Structure of the British Administrative Presence in Germany after 1949

Anglo-German relations entered a new phase with the establishment of the Federal Republic in May 1949. This had significant consequences for the position and role of the BAOR. Negotiations with a semi-sovereign state now replaced orders and the Services soon were the largest British presence in Germany. The British Control Commission was now wound up with increasing speed. In its stead, the representative of HMG at the level of the Federal Government established in 1949 was the British High Commissioner, replacing the Military Governor. He in turn was represented by *Land* Commissioners (formerly Regional Commissioners) and, in the smallest German administrative units (*Kreise*), by British Resident Officers, each of the latter covering a group of *Kreise* in most instances.⁵² In 1950 the staff of the High Commission totalled about 6,000, widely spread across the British zone in Germany. The High Commission consisted of the secretariat and the political, economic, financial, legal and manpower committees of the High Commission. Among other divisions most notable were the police division, the intelligence division and the information and education services.

In the provinces the British held similar but smaller organisations under each *Land* Commissioner working with the four German *Land* governments, resident officers in the garrison towns and observers in the French and American zones.⁵³ The British Residents had an extensive knowledge of local

⁵² NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, February 1954 Edition, publ. 23 March 1954.

⁵³ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 219.

politics, conditions, people and large amounts of accumulated experience as well as knowledge of the German language as most of them had been in their position for a number of years.⁵⁴ A good illustration of the early development of good social relations became evident by comparing the position of the *Kreis* Detachment Commander in 1946 with the *Kreis* Resident Officer in the Federal Republic; - in very many cases the same individual. The *Kreis* Detachment Officer in 1946 was the local Military Governor with almost unlimited power, who was not permitted to have any official social relations with the Germans or the local government bodies within his district. By 1948 he lived with and among the Germans with little or no direct authority. He entertained and was entertained frequently by officials and private persons. The value of the *Kreis* Resident Officers to the development of good understanding and satisfactory social relations between the British and the Germans could, according to the CCG, not be exaggerated.⁵⁵ Their role was to provide advice to the British Forces as well as acting as negotiator and advisor in all political and social matters arising between the Services and the German authorities and people at a local level.⁵⁶ British Residents were now also at pains to distance themselves from former Military Government attitudes. From now on, Control Commission Officers would no longer give orders to Germans. The question was how the Army would adjust to this new attitude.

On all levels Foreign Office officials consistently dealt with the issue of relations between Service personnel and the Germans. The functions and responsibilities of these various levels of the UK High Commission covered most aspects of life in Germany, and exercised executive powers in the few fields still

⁵⁴ NA, FO 1013/2449, Draft of 'basic brief on Anglo-German Relations', 3 February 1954.

⁵⁵ NA, FO 1014/233, Despatch No. 19 Headquarters CCG (BE) to Bevin, Report on Social Matters, 18 February 1948.

⁵⁶ NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, February 1954 Edition, publ. 23 March 1954.

reserved to the Allies after 1949. One of many important functions of the High Commission, which was manned by experienced staff with knowledge of people, customs as well as the German language, was to negotiate between the Services and the German authorities and people, and, at the same time, to 'create and maintain the correct relations between them'.⁵⁷

One effect of the introduction of the 1949 Occupation Statute was that many of the Services' requirements previously obtained by orders now became the subject of negotiation through the Allied High Commission. On the one hand, the Occupation statute had reserved extensive rights to the Allies and there was even something resembling an Allied government. On the other hand, now Federal German constitutional rights and obligations existed. Despite the supreme Allied authority Federal German reality soon led to the transferal of many rights to the Germans.⁵⁸ This was clearly a potential source for misunderstanding and serious trouble as everything the Services required or did in Germany had an impact on the German people or the German economy. Furthermore the Services now were by far the largest visible sign of the Occupation of Germany at the time of a change of status from 'an occupation to a non-occupation regime'.⁵⁹ It was, therefore, extremely important to carefully convey to the German people and the German authorities the actions and requirements of the Forces, which, as will be shown in chapter six, the British Foreign Office duly set out to achieve.

⁵⁷ NA, FO 1013/2449, Draft of 'basic brief on Anglo-German Relations', 3 February 1954.

⁵⁸ Sabine Lee, *Victory In Europe*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ NA, FO 1013/2449, Draft of 'basic brief on Anglo-German Relations', 3 February 1954.

The BAOR as a Factor in British Policy towards Germany

Regardless of the British attempts to use the Services to improve Anglo-German relations, the BAOR was a constant factor in the political affairs between the two countries. At this point it is worth considering some of the political functions of the BAOR which were not necessarily aimed at the improvement of the dialogue between Britain and Germany but nonetheless had an impact. For instance in 1949, the year of the establishment of the Federal Republic, the British High Commissioner, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, argued that unpopular British measures, combined with the handing over of responsibilities to the Germans, made the presence of the BAOR crucial to the successful rebirth of Germany:

The possibility of serious trouble such as a general strike is a real one. This would stretch the Army to its limits even under present strength. The Germans are cynical and increasingly nationalist and hopeless in their utterances. Our policy of making Western Germany an eventual partner in Western Union is threatened by German lack of faith in this Union. The Germans are already alarmed by talk that the Western countries will 'stand on the Rhine'. They fear that Germany will be abandoned if war threatens and that therefore we are not sincere in our efforts to restore the German economy.⁶⁰

Even before the establishment of the Federal Republic in September 1949, the Military Governor of the British zone in Germany, Brian Robertson, reacted rather unfavourably to a proposal by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Slim, to cut the strength of the BAOR to 50,000 men. According to Robertson this would undermine the Forces' ability to perform their two main functions. The first function, 'to support the prestige and authority of

⁶⁰ NA, FO 371/76629, FO Memorandum on 'Strength of Rhine Army', Kirkpatrick to Bevin, 29 January 1949.

Military Government in the British Zone', was in Robertson's view particularly important in the critical year of 1949, when the establishment of a Western German government would coincide with a number of 'intensely unpopular measures'. These included reparations, the setting up of the International Ruhr Authority and the announcement of frontier rectifications. This would allow for communist propaganda and nationalist tendencies to find opportunities to inflame public opinion. The possibility of serious trouble emanating from communist agitation was therefore a real one and would stretch the BAOR to its limits.⁶¹ Secondly, a reduction of troop numbers would arouse suspicion among a pessimistic and hopeless Western German population expecting war with the Soviet Union, knowing that neither they themselves nor the Western Allies would be able to defend them. Robertson concluded with the rather pessimistic view that the Allied forces in Germany were too weak to carry out their task, namely to act as a part of the covering force behind which the military resources of the Western alliance could be mobilised in the event of war with Soviet Russia. The reduction of British forces on the continent would seriously prejudice any chances of convincing France and the Low Countries to increase their troop contributions.⁶² Although the BAOR was to act as a tool to improve Anglo-German relations, it was also a vital instrument in policing the British zone, guaranteeing British interests in Germany vis-à-vis both the Germans and the Soviets. These tasks led to the BAOR coming under increased scrutiny from the Germans.

In a report on his recent visit to Germany in January 1951, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary Ernest Davies commented on the widespread German lack of confidence in the ability of NATO to hold the line of the Elbe in case of a Soviet attack. There was widespread suspicion that the Allies had no intention to do so, but instead to immediately withdraw to the Rhine, thus leaving

⁶¹ NA, FO 1030/123, Letter Robertson to Bevin on purpose of BAOR, 24 January 1949.

⁶² NA, FO 1030/123, Robertson to Bevin, 24 January 1949.

German troops to cover their retreat. It was considered futile in such circumstances to throw Germany's lot in with the West, as the only result could be great physical destruction with no purpose. Suspicion of the good faith of the West was furthermore sustained by the maintenance of the Occupation regime, the consequent lack of equality and the continuance of restrictions on German industrial production. Restrictions not significant in themselves had become symbolic of the contradictory nature of the policy of the occupying powers, who on the one hand asked for a German contribution to the defence of the West and on the other imposed restrictions which made this more difficult. It is noteworthy that there were frequent demands, for example by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Kurt Schumacher, to be given assurances and evidence that Allied troops would be stationed in Germany in sufficient strength to defend the country effectively while a German force was being established. However, the Burgomaster of Hamburg, Max Brauer, complained that the Occupation was 'unduly extravagant' and that the Occupation Authorities were still occupying an undue proportion of accommodation and other facilities.⁶³ Ernest Davies considered it necessary to convince the Germans on a number of different fronts. These included the growing strength of the West and its ability to defend her on the Elbe; the removal of restrictions on industry useful for defence; a speedy end to dismantling; an end to the bombing of Heligoland; the transition from the Occupation Statute to a contractual agreement as well as the production of evidence of cuts in Occupation costs; and the cessation of any extravagant use of accommodation.

This view was supported by Kirkpatrick, who demanded in a letter to the Foreign Office, that the Allies 'take stock of our position'. As Kirkpatrick saw it, the Western Allies had announced that Germany was to join the community of western nations as soon as possible as a free and equal member and, at the Brussels conference indicated that this process was to be accelerated.

⁶³ NA, FO 371/93375, Report on Visit to Germany by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Ernest Davies, 26 January 1951.

Kirkpatrick urged to reflect on whether this programme could be put into effect at all, considering the manner in which departmental interests cumulatively foiled the declared policy and intentions of the Foreign Ministers:

For example, I do not see – quite apart from any defence contribution which I do not believe is round the corner – how we can bind Germany effectively to the west if the Air Ministry insists on bombing Heligoland; [...] public opinion wishes to be tough over the war criminals; [...] industrial restrictions are maintained; supreme authority is expressly reserved to the Allies in Germany, etc. etc. We could get away in my view with one or more of the above blots on our general policy, but I do not believe that we could tie Germany to the West if we insist on all our desiderata, since the cumulative effect is to undermine confidence in the belief that we do intend in a measurable distance of time to accept Germany as a free and equal member of our community.⁶⁴

Problems in relations between the British troops and the German population were compounded by the financial costs to Germany caused by the Occupation. As Ernest Bevin pointed out to the Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee, these costs included labour, accommodation, communications, travel within Germany, stores and supplies and the Deutschmark drawings of the Occupation Forces. The overall Occupation costs of the British zone for the year 1948 covered by the Germans amounted to just under £120 million (for Western Germany as a whole including Berlin the figures amounted to just over £290 million). These totals represented the cost of the services provided by the Germans for approximately 270,000 Allied troops and 10,000 Allied Control Commission personnel and their dependants. The services provided by the Germans for the ‘admittedly inadequate Occupation Forces and the High

⁶⁴ NA, FO 371/93375, Kirkpatrick (Wahnerheide) to Gainer, FO, 5 February 1951.

Commission absorb something like five per cent of the German national income'.⁶⁵ This was to increase considerably in the near future due to a considerable augmentation of the Occupation Forces as well as the envisaged raising of German divisions. Troop costs were a significant factor in Anglo-German relations and its impact on German perceptions of the BAOR will be discussed in chapter four.

A Labour government had monitored the early post-war functions of the BAOR, but following the 1951 general election, the new Conservative government of Winston Churchill took up this task. The Churchill administration was very much aware of the delicate position of the BAOR in regards to Anglo-German relations and at the highest level every effort was made to avoid any embarrassment to the Germans. This attitude was demonstrated by the controversy over the appointment of a new Commander-In-Chief of Northern Army Group in 1954. The chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field Marshal Sir John Harding, had recommended General Sir Gerald Templer as his successor. However, Templer had been the Head of the Military Government in Germany at the time of the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's dismissal as mayor of Cologne in 1945. Exasperated by the failure of the mayor to take practical steps to improve the physical conditions of his city, while he concentrated on political matters, Templer himself ordered his dismissal. Adenauer apparently bore him no grudge and although, when he became chancellor, he would never see Templer socially, he would send him a case of the best hock whenever he visited London'.⁶⁶ Harding wished Templer to spend a year as commander-in-chief of the British Army of the Rhine in order to gain some first-hand experience of NATO; but this appointment was blocked by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden. The official explanation for Eden's

⁶⁵ NA, FO 800/467, Bevin to Attlee, 25 October 1950.

⁶⁶ Michael Carver, 'Templer, Sir Gerald Walter Robert (1898–1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31747>, accessed 8 October 2009].

objection was his opposition to such a short tenure at a crucial period of German rearmament and not, as some suggested, because of Templer's brush with Adenauer.⁶⁷ Eden nonetheless made it clear in private that 'our relations with Adenauer are so important that I do not want to take any chances with them, if I can possibly help it'. He therefore favoured the Ambassador Hoyer-Millar 'to mention the matter casually to Adenauer and see how he takes it'. Although apparently not because of Templer's position in 1945, Winston Churchill intervened and advised that General Gale:

who has only been about eighteen months in Germany, should not be moved from a Command which I understand he is filling with distinction. I think it is in the public interest that he should remain where he is for at least another year.⁶⁸

The case clearly demonstrated the transformation of the position of the BAOR in Germany since Adenauer's dismissal as mayor of Cologne in 1945. It furthermore underlined the extent of British efforts to avoid any friction with the German chancellor, considered the driving force behind Germany's pro-western policy and a 'stabilising influence' by the Foreign Office.⁶⁹

Despite the Conservative government's willingness to tie Western Germany into the European defence against Communism, Britain's own attitude towards Europe during this period was somewhat ambivalent. The view of Britain's position at the heart of Churchill's 'three circles', i.e. the Transatlantic Alliance, the Empire/Commonwealth and Europe became the main source of

⁶⁷ Michael Carver, 'Templer', [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31747>, accessed 8 October 2009].

⁶⁸ NA, FO 371/109648, Personal Minute Prime Minister to Secretary of State for War, 6 March 1954.

⁶⁹ Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage*, p. 231.

Britain's post-war claim to world power status.⁷⁰ The misguided perception of Britain's role as first and foremost the principal European partner of the Americans led to the decision to not join the drive leading towards European integration and the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Churchill government saw a partnership with Germany as necessary because NATO and the Atlantic Alliance were at the centre of British policy. Britain favoured loose forms of intergovernmental cooperation in Europe but rejected supranational integration. European integration was a subordinate and peripheral issue.⁷¹ It was this attitude which increased the significance of 80,000 British troops in the British zone of Occupation as a means to exert influence outside the realm of the EEC.

Controversies over the BAOR within the British Administration

The BAOR was not only controversial in an Anglo-German and European context. It also frequently caused disagreement within the various departments of the British government. The importance of the BAOR as a factor in British policy became evident whenever the option of reducing the size of the BAOR was considered in order to relieve the British taxpayer. When the War Office considered a reduction of BAOR strength from 53,000 to 46,000 in 1949 for financial reasons without consulting the Foreign Office, this led to protest from the highest political circles. Sir Brian Robertson, who found out about the War Office plans 'by chance', complained to the Foreign Office, resulting in a letter from Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to Viscount Alexander, clearly expressing:

⁷⁰ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Clemes A. Wurm, 'Britain and West European Integration, 1948-9 to 1955: Politics and Economics', in: Jeremy Noakes, Peter Wende, Jonathan Wright (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Europe*, p. 7.

some disappointment that when an overall reduction made necessary a reduction in the strength of Rhine Army [...], no consultation with the Foreign Office took place. I am sure you will agree that the strength of Rhine Army is a very important factor in our whole political position in Germany, not only vis-à-vis the Russians, but also vis-à-vis our French and American Allies and above all the German population.⁷²

A reduction of BAOR strength not only threatened to invite the Americans to act in a similar manner and thereby endanger the entire defence of Western Europe but might cause doubts among the Germans as to the Allied commitment to defend Germany against communism. The complete withdrawal of the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO) to air bases west of the Rhine for tactical reasons in 1950 was therefore only allowed to go ahead as at the same time the number of BAOR troops was significantly increased, which would prevent a negative reaction from the Germans.

An increase in BAOR strength, desirable as it may have appeared to the Germans for the purposes of the defence against communism, also caused friction within the British administration. In December 1950 Foreign Office figures stated that the Western Allies in Germany had a combined total of 186,000 troops, as against an estimated total of 320,000 Soviet troops in the Soviet zone.⁷³ When the decision was made to increase the strength of the BAOR from 44,000 in September 1950 to 65,000 by July 1951, High Commissioner Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick in fact warned against this, as 'we should have to ask for a supplementary appropriation of Occupation costs and (...) considerable inconvenience would have to be inflicted on the German population in the matter of housing and so on.'⁷⁴ However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer dismissed his doubts and:

⁷² NA, FO 371/85220, Bevin to Alexander, 22 February 1950.

⁷³ NA, FO 371/85220, Strength of BAOR, 4 December 1950.

⁷⁴ NA, FO 371/85220, Telegram from Kirkpatrick to FO, 6 September 1950.

said that any strengthening of the Occupation forces would be good news and that the German population would have to put up with the resulting expense and inconvenience.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, as this thesis will explore, the issues of housing, Occupation costs, manoeuvre damage and land requisitioning for training grounds did cause considerable concern. The German population expected to be defended by British troops, whilst simultaneously resenting their use as armed protection for workers carrying out dismantling work in factories throughout the British zone. This was partly due to the genuine unwillingness of many young Germans to bear arms⁷⁶ and partly for economic, political and manpower reasons. Those individual Germans who were affected by British housing needs, land acquisitions and manoeuvre damage, naturally resented the British troops. Kirkpatrick's advice to 'exercise the greatest care and the most rigid economy' was therefore rather pertinent.⁷⁷

Nazi Germany, the British Administration and the Federal Republic

Despite the consistently pro-German policy Britain pursued in order to integrate Germany into the western alliance system, it is evident that many Foreign Office officials themselves shared 'the grave reservations about Germans stemming from the experience from two world wars' held in the elite sections of British society.⁷⁸ The Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin 'hated the Germans and

⁷⁵ NA, FO 371/85220, Telegram from Kirkpatrick to FO, 6 September 1950.

⁷⁶ The British Foreign Office was particularly concerned about this persistent reluctance. Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage*, p. 76.

⁷⁷ NA, FO 371/85220, Telegram from Kirkpatrick to FO, 6 September 1950.

⁷⁸ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, Not Hearts', p. 79.

refused to visit Germany'⁷⁹ whereas in 1949 Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick commented on the 'truculence and arrogance which made the Germans impossible to deal with'.⁸⁰ Anthony Eden had described the Germans as 'brutish monsters beneath a veneer of civilisation' as early as 1919.⁸¹ Ten years after the war the British Ambassador Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar warned that the German national consciousness was beginning to re-awaken, the sense of guilt for the war was faint and the German character had not fundamentally changed. 'The spirit of national egoism has, for a second time, survived defeat and occupation.' Furthermore, the German character was 'volatile and basically unstable'.⁸² Suspicions of the German character among the highest circles in London were certainly widespread and lasted into the mid-1950s.

The British High Commissioner Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick was aware of the difficult position of the Services in Germany. And Kirkpatrick saw himself as someone who was uniquely well-placed to understand the context in which the BAOR would operate. At this point it is worth considering Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick's long-standing relationship with Germany and its people. During the First World War Kirkpatrick, aged only nineteen, ran a network of British agents operating in German-occupied territory after being wounded in action against the Turks in 1915.⁸³ Having been employed by the Foreign Office since 1919, Kirkpatrick had gained detailed knowledge of and insight into the workings of the fascist states of Italy and Germany during the interwar period. He served in the British embassy in Rome and then as head of chancery in Berlin from 1933 to 1938. Moreover, he accompanied the then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to the

⁷⁹ Noel Annan, cited in: Anne Deighton, 'Minds, Not Hearts', p. 85.

⁸⁰ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, Not Hearts', p. 87.

⁸¹ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 266.

⁸² NA, FO 371/118217, WG 1071/681, Minutes P. Wright, 23 June 1955.

⁸³ Ann Lane, 'Kirkpatrick, Sir Ivone Augustine (1897–1964)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34339>, accessed 14 May 2012]

infamous meetings with Hitler during the 1938 Munich crisis. His meetings with Hitler had inspired him 'with such a physical repugnance' that he unsuccessfully asked to be excused from having to attend any more sessions of the negotiations.⁸⁴

Whatever his attitudes towards the Federal Republic were, they were undoubtedly influenced by his experience with Nazi Germany, as this time proved the most formative period of his career. According to his memoirs, in 1937 Kirkpatrick:

was told with some truth that I must be prejudiced by dislike of Germany [...]. This was scarcely odd because of the spectacle of a nation preparing ruthlessly to impose its will must be alarming and distasteful.⁸⁵

During the Second World War Kirkpatrick again worked in the propaganda and information role he had enjoyed during the First World War. He became controller of the European Services of the BBC and also was chosen to interview Adolf Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess after his flight to Scotland in 1941. In 1944 he was appointed to organize the British element of the Allied Control Commission for Germany. Promoted deputy under-secretary in April 1948, he oversaw policy administration for Western Europe and then in February 1949 became permanent under-secretary overseeing the German section of the Foreign Office, the former Control Office for Germany and Austria. Between June 1950 and November 1953 Kirkpatrick was British High Commissioner in Germany, a position carrying considerable responsibility and power.

The seat of the Allied High Commission in the Federal Republic was in the same hotel in which Neville Chamberlain had stayed during the Bad Godesberg meeting with Hitler. A constant reminder of the past was that Kirkpatrick's office as High Commissioner was in the same apartment occupied

⁸⁴ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 124.

⁸⁵ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 91.

on that occasion by the then Prime Minister Chamberlain.⁸⁶ Although his relationship with the German Chancellor Adenauer was very cordial, as late as 1959 Kirkpatrick considered it:

folly to suppose that in no circumstances can Nazism, even in a different form, ever again raise its head in modern Germany.⁸⁷

However, according to his memoirs, in 1953 Kirkpatrick found it ‘a wrench to leave Germany, where I had made many friends’ and had been intimately connected with every phase of the national life.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, as previously noted, as late as 1949 he had also commented on the ‘truculence and arrogance which made the Germans impossible to deal with’.⁸⁹ It has to be noted that not all leading members of the British administration in Germany were as reluctant as Kirkpatrick to leave the past behind when dealing with the Germans. Particularly Sir Brian Robertson, the military administrator responsible for restoring the economic, social and political life of Germany for five years, was instrumental in ‘guiding the social and democratic advancement of a future ally’. Despite his experiences of two world wars he won the admiration and friendship of Konrad Adenauer and worked devotedly to foster Anglo-German relations.⁹⁰

Unsurprisingly, many members of the British administration tasked with fostering Anglo-German relations were themselves often doubtful whether the ‘German character’ could be changed for the better. In many cases their

⁸⁶ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 222.

⁸⁷ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 254.

⁸⁸ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 257.

⁸⁹ Anne Deighton, ‘Minds, Not Hearts’, p. 87.

⁹⁰ Charles Richardson, ‘Robertson, Brian Hubert, first Baron Robertson of Oakridge (1896–1974)’, rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2011

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31616>, accessed 20 July 2012].

personal contacts with Germans both before and during the war influenced their views in the post-war period. Naturally this had an impact on both the perception of the need for a tool such as the BAOR as well as the envisaged likelihood of its success.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the British military presence in Germany in many respects offered a unique opportunity to foster closer Anglo-German relations. The increasing physical presence of British troops, spread out all across the British zone, and frequent manoeuvre exercises arguably provided ample opportunity for contacts with local communities. The British troop commitment also demonstrated British determination to defend Western Germany. At the same time however, the BAOR also posed risks due to its role of implementing often unpopular British policies. The political position of the BAOR in the early Cold War climate was precarious. It was considered too weak to halt a Soviet attack, too expensive to maintain and too much of a strain on the German economy. Yet it was a vital tool to convince the Germans as well as the French and the Americans of the British determination to protect Western Germany. It was also an important means to prevent a West German policy of neutrality in the Cold War, the ultimate goal of British foreign policy in Germany.⁹¹ The strategy to use the BAOR to improve inter-cultural discourse played a part in achieving this goal. Despite a plain refusal to co-operate immediately after the war, by 1948 at least the Army's leadership was willing to support the Foreign Office strategy of improving Anglo-German relations. This plan was nevertheless threatened by disagreements within the British administration itself. Financial constraints and the continued execution of unpopular policies agreed on at Potsdam continuously caused friction within

⁹¹ Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage*, p. 82.

both the Labour and Conservative governments. The lack of faith in German democracy among the leading administrative staff in Germany, fuelled by experiences of two world wars, also played an important part when considering the perceived necessity for the BAOR to succeed in its new role.

This chapter has demonstrated that the effectiveness of the BAOR as a tool for Anglo-German rapprochement not only depended on the changing attitudes of the Services themselves. It was closely connected to the acceleration of the process of accepting the Federal Republic as a free and equal member of the Western alliance as well as the ending of unpopular policies such as reparations and dismantling. These political steps would largely be completed by the time of the accession of the FRG into NATO in 1955 and therefore the political relations between London and Bonn arguably made the BAOR's task easier. Nonetheless, in the prevailing opinion of the Foreign Office, Federal German sovereignty also made the task of incorporating Germany into the Western orbit of defence more urgent due to 'a distinct trend [...] towards a more aggressive attitude in respect of German rights and Germany's proper place in the world'.⁹² It was this urgency which motivated much of the Foreign Office activity of the early 1950s, which will be analysed in chapter six. It will now be necessary to establish the impact of the attitudes of the British public, the Services and the British administration on the effectiveness of the BAOR as a positive force for Anglo-German rapprochement. The main aim of the following chapters is to go beyond the political context when considering attitudes towards Germany. The following sections will therefore aim to provide a more nuanced analysis of the British public's view of Germany as for example expressed in popular culture and the press. A detailed picture of the perception of Germany is crucial to allow a better understanding of relations between British troops and Germans in the British zone of Occupation.

⁹² NA, FO 371/118217, Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar, 'Memorandum on Future form of German nationalism', 8 June 1955.

Chapter Three: British Public Opinion on Germany and its Impact on the Services

It's puzzling. One part of me says remember Belsen, and such like. The other part says we'll have to forget and build up. Then one hears of Nazism not being dead... I am all at sea about Germans.¹

Introduction

As established in the first chapter, a sizeable part of the British public found itself out of step with the policy of both the Labour and the Conservative administration's policy towards Germany. The BAOR was to serve as a tool to implement this policy by developing cordial relations with the German population. However, the Servicemen stationed in Germany naturally were subject to the same influences shaping British opinion on Germany as the rest of the public. An overwhelmingly negative public opinion would undoubtedly have affected the willingness of BAOR troops to engage with the German population and therefore undermined the BAOR's value as a means for a rapprochement with the former enemy. In order to establish how effectively the BAOR could be utilised to improve Anglo-German relations, it is therefore necessary to establish a nuanced picture of public opinion on Germany in Britain. This will then allow drawing conclusions in regards to the attitudes of British troops in Germany.

As Patrick Major points out in his recent article on Anglo-German relations, most post-war historians dealing with Britain's view of Germany have generally focused on high politics in response to the geopolitical pressures of

¹ M[ass] O[bservation] A[rchive, University of Sussex], File 2565, 'Attitudes to the German People', 23 August 1948, p. 9.

the Cold War.² International political events did indeed have an influence on public opinion. The desperate humanitarian situation in Germany immediately after the war and the Berlin blockade in 1948 had an impact.³ So did the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 with its similarities to the situation in Europe. 'The parallel between Korea divided and Germany divided was apparent to everyone.'⁴ The initial success of the North Korean attack on the South Korean and American defenders sparked fears that a similar scenario was about to be repeated much closer to home. Equally, the resulting debate about German rearmament had an impact on British mass public opinion, as recorded in various opinion polls.⁵ The result was a rather more complex and less clear-cut view of Germany than two world wars and the revelation of Nazi atrocities would suggest. The realities of the Cold War led to a British policy towards Germany which attracted considerable amounts of hostile public sentiment in Britain.⁶ It is however important to stress that there were also more positive views of the recent enemy.

The first essential task of this chapter is therefore to consider both the popular and the political debates on Germany in Britain at the time, by examining both the British press as well as Foreign Office attempts to influence views of Germany. Hence this chapter aims to go beyond the political sphere, in order to establish a more nuanced picture of factors influencing those young Britons going to Germany with the Services in the late 1940s and 1950s. As the

² Patrick Major, 'Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship?', *German History*, 26, 4, 2008, 457-468.

³ John Farquharson, 'Emotional but Influential': Victor Gollancz, Richard Stokes and the British Zone of Germany, 1945-9', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1987, 501-519.

⁴ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 104.

⁵ See for example: George H. Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937-1975*, New York, 1976.

⁶ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, Not Hearts', p. 79.

Gallup polls on attitudes towards Germany of the 1950s also revealed, the British public at large was increasingly less interested in foreign policy and therefore also in political developments on the continent in general and Germany in particular. Cross-section surveys in many parts of the world have shown that popular interest in foreign affairs nearly always takes a backseat to interest in domestic politics, which in turn, is of far less concern than personal problems.⁷ The Labour Party Research Department, for instance, reported in March 1950 that only eleven per cent of people polled had views that were at all influenced by foreign policy considerations.⁸ Furthermore, there was some evidence that, in terms of politics and recent German history, many ordinary Britons deliberately turned away from 'the German problem' and tended to simply not think about Germany:

I certainly do not hate them, yet I have no particular love for them. I should like to know what the significance of this is, because I am very interested in the situation in France and Italy and even in the Balkans, but I cannot work up much interest in Germany.⁹

It is therefore plausible that many young British servicemen sent to Germany did not loathe their former enemy but simply felt indifferent towards their new host country.

This argument is further strengthened by the fact that in 1954, at the height of the controversy over the European Defence Community (EDC) and the proposal for German rearmament in the context of a European army, only one in three Britons polled by Gallup knew what EDC stood for, while only another one in three had even heard of it.¹⁰ It therefore becomes increasingly apparent that it

⁷ W. Phillips Davison, *cited in*: A. Volle., *Deutsch-Britische Beziehungen*, p. 73.

⁸ Anne Deighton, 'Minds, Not Hearts', p. 80.

⁹ MOA, File 2565, p. 9.

¹⁰ Robert J. Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out, 1937-87*, London, 1989, p 40.

is not sufficient to pursue a strictly political angle in order to establish a comprehensive picture of British opinion of Germany from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s. As John Ramsden points out, due to the introduction of National Service in 1947, a significant proportion of young British males spent months of their lives in Germany as never before or since and in most cases this was their only experience 'abroad'.¹¹ Many of these young men would have formed a view of Germany before they went there, based on factors other than Cold War politics. These views would then have influenced their expectations of, and behaviour towards, the German population they encountered. In order to gain insights into the attitudes of BAOR personnel towards the Germans, it is therefore also important to consider how Germans were portrayed in Britain by popular culture. After an evaluation of the Foreign Office (FO) position towards Germany and the British press, this chapter will highlight the perception of Germany in the British press, and in cultural sources, notably non-fictional literature, novels, comics and films on the Second World War. The BBC attitude will also be considered. As will be seen, these sources were crucial as vehicles for images and views of the Germans. The chapter also includes some more individual perspectives that were often based upon encounters between those writers and the German people. Finally, the impact of the re-emergence of Germany as an economic competitor on perceptions of the former enemy will be considered.

The British Press, the Foreign Office and Germany

The effect of the major political events following 1945 on British opinion of Germany was outlined as early as 1965 by Donald Cameron Watt. The initially overwhelmingly negative attitude towards Germany by both the elites as well as mass public opinion was increasingly challenged by the humanitarian situation in

¹¹ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 247.

Germany as well as the behaviour of the people of Berlin during the 1948 blockade. For the first time in a generation, the British were being presented with the sight of Germans 'behaving en masse in a way of which they could morally approve'.¹² As early as January 1947, a Gallup poll had revealed that nearly half of those polled felt 'friendly' towards the German people as a whole.¹³ Perhaps this somewhat surprising result was due to the reports of the devastating conditions in the *Reich* by the British press, which provided an alternative image to counterbalance the one that presented Germans as evil and abnormal.¹⁴ Despite Nazi atrocities, as Weidenfeld suggests, German suffering did not find a similar level of sympathy anywhere else in the West as it did in some British circles.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the economic and political revival of Western Germany soon led to a resurgence of hostility in many British circles. In particular the issue of German rearmament and the danger of a resurgence of Nazism in Germany were influencing the public perception of the Germans. Somewhat surprisingly, by the early 1950s opinion polls revealed a continuous and relatively even split into pro-and anti-German camps. Regardless of the attempts by parts of the press to convince Britons otherwise, a 1953 Gallup poll on the question of whether there was much chance of the Nazis again becoming powerful in Germany, established that only twenty-four per cent of those polled thought it likely.¹⁶ However, this picture changed soon thereafter. As D.C. Watt points out, a sustained anti-German campaign by the popular press helped to push up this number by October 1954, prompting *The Observer* to comment that the reading of papers like the *Daily Herald* or the *Daily Mirror* led one 'to

¹² Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 120.

¹³ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 148.

¹⁴ Evgenios Michail, 'After the War and after the Wall'.

¹⁵ G. Weidenfeld, 'Englisches Deutschlandbild', *Die politische Meinung*, 44, 1999, pp. 55-62.

¹⁶ Robert J. Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out*, p. 37.

suppose that Hitler was still alive and the Nazis back in power'.¹⁷ Of those Britons asked by Gallup, at the height of the controversy over German rearmament in 1954, if there was much chance that the Nazis would again become powerful in Germany, now forty per cent thought there was much chance, forty-one per cent were of the opinion there was not much chance and nineteen per cent were undecided.¹⁸ The idea of a rearmed Germany only ten years after the war clearly had an effect on public opinion that was not helpful to government policy. However, these figures also demonstrated that those British servicemen who did take an interest in politics were just as likely to be in the pro-German camp as in the anti-German one when considering rearmament and the resurgence of Nazism.

The policies of both the Labour and the Conservative governments were designed to integrate Germany into the western defence against the Soviet Union. It is therefore not surprising that, considering this put British politics towards Germany at odds with parts of public opinion, the Foreign Office closely monitored and, to an extent, explored means to influence the portrayal of Germany in the press:

I believe that the whole of Fleet Street is anti-German for the simple reason that the average reader in England is anti-German – and the newspapers in England pander to their readers. Unless they pander to their readers the street sales of a particular newspaper will fall.¹⁹

¹⁷ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 128.

¹⁸ Gallup poll, September 1954: 'Do you think there is much chance that the Nazis will again become powerful in Germany?', much chance: 40%, not much chance: 41%, undecided: 19%; George H. Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls*, p. 335.

¹⁹ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by C.P. Hope, 19 November 1957.

Although this statement by a Foreign Office official partly contradicted the view of Germany expressed by the aforementioned opinion polls, it certainly rang true in regards to the attitudes of sections of the British press. The press in general played a major role in shaping Germany's image in Britain. Whereas most of the quality papers like the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* reported objectively on Germany, much of the popular press had proved itself both unable and unwilling to 'free itself from the clutches of war-time propaganda'.²⁰ The reporting of parts of the popular press on Germany was in fact a constant obstacle to improved relations between the two countries. Foreign Office officials considered that the wider problem of anti-German tendencies in newspapers could arguably be narrowed down to the Beaverbrook press, and perhaps *The Times*. In addition, certain of the more left-wing weekly publications were not averse to printing anti-German material. The rest of the British press did not necessarily appear to be particular offenders in this respect in the view of the Foreign Office.²¹ Donald C. Watt supported this view and argued that, whereas news of crises and international friction was always reported, news of positive trends was often neglected. The popular press tended to vary between the themes 'foreigners are funny' and 'foreigners are dangerous'. Germany almost always fell into the latter category, as Neo-Nazism or the revival of anti-Semitism were what the press 'thought their readers would expect to hear from Germany, so this what they concentrated on providing'.²²

The *Daily Express* in particular was 'the worst offender', but it was by no means alone in its tendency to 'look for evil designs in anything the Germans do'.²³ Coverage of Germany by the *Express* was indeed overwhelmingly hostile. Moreover, the paper openly criticised German newspapers for retaliating against the negative *Express* coverage by reporting 'that a 'wave of hatred' was

²⁰ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 128.

²¹ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by J.H. Moore, 12 November 1957.

²² Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 128.

²³ NA, FO 371/130857, No 16730/IG Minute by C.M. Rose, 4 October 1957.

breaking over the English people' and that the *Daily Express* was among the leaders of the German haters. The tenor throughout the period in question was 'that Germany must not be trusted, and that in the Federal Republic a new war-loving nationalism is at work'.²⁴ The vast majority of *Express* articles either made references to British victories over the Nazis or, once Germany recovered economically, accused the Germans of 'paying the British soldier to defend them, freeing their own men to compete against Britain in the world's export markets'.²⁵ Even *The Times* published 'some pretty poisonous articles'.²⁶ As late as 1957 the issue was regarded as so detrimental to Anglo-German relations by the British ambassador to Germany, Sir Christopher Steele, that he suggested a personal appeal should be made to Lord Beaverbrook, the *enfant terrible* on this subject, to modify his attitude. One suggestion was even to ask Sir Winston Churchill to make an appeal to Beaverbrook to stop 'rocking the boat' quite so one-sidedly. The Foreign Office also considered arranging a private meeting between the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer and Beaverbrook.²⁷

However, despite the negative attitude of the right-wing *Daily Express* and the Labour-leaning *Daily Mirror*, which had reflected the anti-German views of the Labour right since the Second World War, it must be pointed out that not everything said on Germany in these papers was negative. There were frequent examples of factual and neutral reporting on day-to-day Anglo-German relations, which arguably reflected a degree of normalisation of relations between Britain and Germany. For instance, even the *Express* could not find anything negative in local German authorities inviting British Service personnel to a champagne reception on opening the new British Army Headquarters at Mönchen Gladbach in 1954.²⁸ The *Daily Mirror* printed a letter to the editor in 1954 from a sixteen

²⁴ *Daily Express*, 19 August 1954, p.2.

²⁵ *Daily Express*, 18 October 1957, p. 2.

²⁶ NA, FO 371/130857, No. 16730/IG, Minute by C.M. Rose, 4 October 1957.

²⁷ NA, FO 371/130857, No. 16730/IG, Minute by C.M. Rose.

²⁸ *Daily Express*, 30 November 1954, p. 2.

year old Londoner, who stated 'I have nothing against the Germans'. The author did not want to be told about the crimes of the past war and wanted 'there to be no grudge held against young German children'.²⁹ Even in the most anti-German newspapers there were therefore voices of reconciliation, although at times these came from the readers rather than the editors. The *Daily Express* found itself reporting positively about the German ambassador to Britain and German efforts at improving Anglo-German relations, after a reception at the German embassy in London in 1955.³⁰ Stories on British troops in Germany were repeatedly used for entertainment rather than criticism of Germany. This was demonstrated by the case of a young German who, after having posed as a Briton and served with the BAOR for two years, had been acquitted on charges of fraud, despite having 'lectured to American soldiers, telling them British tanks in Korea were fitted with electrical tea machines and special plugs for razors'.³¹ Clearly such examples of 'foreigners are funny' reporting provided a contrast to the dominating negative view of Germans.

Nonetheless, as late as 1957 the prevailing view in the Foreign Office was that:

no newspaper here will ever say anything nice about Germany. They regard the subject as unpopular with their readers and their policy in this respect is firmly fixed.³²

The British correspondents in Germany were 'largely anti-German by inclination', so that not only the policy of the papers, but also the character of the reporting of their foreign correspondents needed to change. This certainly was a

²⁹ A.H. Lanton, cited in: *Daily Mirror*, 28 August 1954, p. 2.

³⁰ Express Diary, William Hickey, *Daily Express*, 23 March 1955, p. 6.

³¹ *Daily Mirror*, 1 July 1952, p.1.

³² NA, FO 371/130857, No 16730/IG, Minute by C.P. Hope, 4 October 1957.

'Herculean task'.³³ The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that most of the German correspondents in England 'write pretty poor accounts of this country in their own papers', so that the unsatisfactory publicity worked both ways. Indeed, rather than solely blaming the British tabloids for providing a poor representation of Germany, the Foreign Office considered the German press to be equally at fault: the German correspondents in London were considered to be of rather poor quality and, politically, inclined to the left. Their reports appeared 'often tendentious and unjustifiably critical, e.g., on colonial affairs, the economic situation, etc.' If anything was to be done in Britain 'to try to put our own house in order we ought at the same time to urge the Germans to deal with theirs'. However, it appeared doubtful whether the same widespread tendency to find something evil 'in everything the British do exists in the German press to the extent that it does, in reverse, here'.³⁴

What mystifies the Germans is the hostility of the Conservative press. They reckon with anything that comes from the Left but they cannot understand the attitude of Tory newspapers when compared with the consistently friendly attitude of H.M.'s recent governments.³⁵

The subject of the British press caused much concern, particularly as 'a lot of our Press comment ran counter to the views of Her Majesty's Government on Anglo-German relations'. According to the German Foreign Office it was most noticeable that in France, the Benelux countries and in Denmark and Norway, where the population had as good if not better grounds as in Britain to mistrust

³³ NA, FO 371/130857, No 16730/IG, Minute by C.P. Hope.

³⁴ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by C.M. Rose, 8 October 1957.

³⁵ NA, FO 371/130857, WG1673/1, Letter Sir Christopher Steele, Bonn to P.F. Hancock, FO, 24 September 1957.

and dislike the Germans, the attitude of the Press was much more positive and constructive.³⁶

According to the Foreign Office the reasons for this were threefold: the attitude of the British press, the quality of British correspondents in Germany and the organisation of German information services in London. FO powers to address these issues were extremely limited and there was a real danger of doing more harm than good in attempting any improvement:

It may well be due [...] to the fact that, broadly speaking, the German alliance is accepted in England with the head rather than the heart. But, whatever the origins of this feeling, the fact is that it sells newspapers.³⁷

Clearly also, as in the case of the *Daily Express*, the anti-German attitude was a matter of policy dictated from the highest level. In this case, and given the natural susceptibilities of the press to any suggestion of official direction, the main burden of improving the situation had to lie 'in the first place with the Germans themselves'. There was comparatively little the Foreign Office could contribute to this problem but there was the hope that exchanges of visits and the experience of working together with the Germans as partners in organisations of all kinds, both official and non-official, would help to eliminate the anti-German legacy.³⁸ On the one hand, the BAOR was to be used as one means to this end. On the other hand, the negative press coverage of Germany threatened to undermine the BAOR's potential as a foreign policy tool by promulgating a negative view of the Germans.

³⁶ NA, FO 371/130857, Copy of Confidential Minute from Mr. A.L. Pope to the head of Chancery, Bonn, 23 September 1957.

³⁷ NA, FO 371/130857, Letter Pat Hancock, FO to Sir Christopher Steele, Bonn, 23 October 1957.

³⁸ NA, FO 371/130857, Letter Pat Hancock.

Nonetheless, the powers of the Foreign Office to influence the press were negligible and alternative means to make Germany more popular had to be found. According to a 1957 FO minute, unless some kind of powerful influence was brought to bear on Lord Beaverbrook himself, there seemed very little hope of changing the tone of his papers. In regards to *The Times*, that newspaper's correspondent in Bonn, a Mr Heron, wrote anti-German despatches; but *The Times* leaders on Germany were often hostile in tone and it appeared that editorial policy had set the line. *The Times* suffered from the additional handicap of having to avoid the impression of repeating its 1930s policy of keeping out of the paper 'anything which might upset the Nazis'.³⁹ Only top level pressure could bring about a change here.⁴⁰

Of course, it is no good trying to deal with the *Express* or the *Evening Standard*, or indeed the *Daily Mirror*. But the Germans would be well advised to work out a programme to cope with *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Herald*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Telegraph*, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Scotsman* and the *Yorkshire Post*.⁴¹

There was also the view that a good deal could be done to popularise Germany, as opposed to German political thinking, to try to bring it back to the position it held in the early nineteenth century:

Why don't [the Germans] do exhibitions of Nymphenburg china? They need a skilful showman to set all this up and it must be done discreetly. I think these ideas are practical but I rather despair of the German character, because I doubt if they have anyone who is imaginative enough to launch such a programme effectively.⁴²

³⁹ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by J.H. Moore, 12 November 1957.

⁴¹ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by J.H. Moore, 12 November 1957.

⁴² NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by C.P. Hope, 19 November 1957.

Despite the attempts by the Foreign Office to achieve a more positive portrayal of Germany in the British press, there was pessimism both about the press as well as the Germans:

I am afraid the problem is really deeper [...]. I think the British press will continue to tend to be anti-German for the simple reason that the Germans are going to become increasingly unpopular; and this is because they are probably going to become more and more successful and, as a result more and more German!⁴³

There were also doubts about the idea of making Germany more popular by televising Konrad Adenauer's speech during his 1957 state visit to Britain: 'The German voice is not yet sweet music to the English ear and I am afraid the *Daily Express* will have a heyday.'⁴⁴ The negative press attitude and the Foreign Office's inability to change this make the search for alternative means to improve Anglo-German relations, including the BAOR, understandable. However, BAOR soldiers were of course themselves confronted with this hostile press attitude.

Moreover, at times the BAOR itself was used as a tool by the British press to highlight anti-German views. For instance, the *Sunday Pictorial* targeted the allegedly hostile German behaviour towards British troops in 1957. In an article titled 'Yellow bellies - by order', the journalist Audrey Whiting accused 'small-time German politicians' of stirring up 'as much trouble as they can for the boys of the Rhine Army', by orchestrating vicious press campaigns and deliberately exaggerating minor skirmishes between British soldiers and local youths – 'skirmishes which are invariably started by the Germans themselves'.⁴⁵

⁴³ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by P. H. G. Wright, 14 November 1957.

⁴⁴ NA, FO 371/130857, Minute by C.P. Hope, 19 November 1957.

⁴⁵ Audrey Whiting, 'Yellow Bellies – by order', *Sunday Pictorial*, January 1957.

British readers were regaled with stories about BAOR soldiers, who were merely going for a quiet drink, being told 'out with the dirty English' by German louts. Not only this, but apparently British soldiers were now also under strict instructions 'not to rise to this kind of baiting', in order to avoid trouble. Apparently a war office spokesman blamed minor German politicians for exaggerating small incidents, as they wanted British soldiers out of Germany:

A National Serviceman from Booth, Lancashire told me: 'What it amounts to is that we are being told to behave like a lot of yellow bellies'.⁴⁶

For *Pictorial* the case was clear: 'These whipper snapper German politicians must be told by their own leaders to stop their monkey business!'⁴⁷ This kind of press coverage certainly did not aid the cause of the Foreign Office. The article unsettled at least one Briton sufficiently to write a letter to the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, asking for the latter to make a public statement in order to preserve the 'firm friendship and alliance with Britain'.⁴⁸ The German response to this essentially dismissed the allegations, blaming the 'irresponsible boulevard press', as well as the new, and not exclusively German phenomenon of the rise of the so called *Halbstarken*, or teenage jobs. The former portrayed false images by constantly exaggerating and the latter were mostly looking for fights without having any motives, let alone political ones.⁴⁹

It does not come as a surprise that the British working class, arguably the class mostly targeted by newspapers such as the *Express* and the *Mirror*, was made up of those Britons most hostile to Germany (apart from the old, who after all had experienced two world wars); those least unfavourable to Germany were

⁴⁶ Audrey Whiting, 'Yellow Bellies – by order'.

⁴⁷ Audrey Whiting, 'Yellow Bellies – by order'.

⁴⁸ B[undesarchiv] K[oblentz], B145/610, Letter by Eric Peterson, c/o Birkbeck College to Dr. Adenauer, 27 January 1957.

⁴⁹ BK, B145/610 Letter Herr von Dziembowski, Auswärtiges Amt to Eric Peterson, 7 March 1957.

the professional classes and the rich.⁵⁰ This potentially had a significant impact on the BAOR. From 1939 to 1960, the British Army's social structure, values, and way of life survived with surprisingly little change. The British officer corps was still dominated by the 'gentleman' and the Army remained essentially a working-class Army officered by the upper classes.⁵¹ This then would not bode well for British efforts to use young working-class Service personnel to improve Anglo-German relations once stationed in the British zone.

The topic of Germany was not only frequently debated in the press. The BBC also regularly featured Germany in its programmes. BBC Radio coverage of Germany during the period under observation here, although frequently touching upon issues related to the Nazi regime and World War Two, very much focused on current political, social, economic and cultural issues and trends. Political programmes ranged from German reunification over rearmament to talks on German resistance against Hitler.⁵² Cultural pieces on Germany were frequent, covering issues such as contemporary German poetry or 'the dilemma of the German novel'.⁵³ The picture emerging from the political BBC coverage of the Federal Republic was one of concern over the future position of Germany in

⁵⁰ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 262.

⁵¹ Robert M. Cassidy, 'The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Salience of Military Culture', *Military Review*, May-June 2005, <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/cassidy.pdf>, [accessed 16 June 2011].

⁵² BBC [Written Archives Centre], Reference Card A/132/P A81379, 4,000C, 17-1-57, p. 112, Commentary: 'German Re-unification again: by Lord Strang', 4 March 1957; Julia de Beausobre, 'A Matter of Conscience, A talk on letter written shortly before their execution, by some Germans who defied Hitler', 24 December 1956.

⁵³ BBC, Reference Card A/132/P A69044 5,000C, 29-6-54, p. 111, Peter Stern, 'The Dilemma of the German Novel', 29 December 1956.

Europe and direction of Anglo-German relations but not one of resentment of the former enemy.

There were also frequent cases of a thorough analysis of and positive attitude towards the new Germany. In 1955 BBC Television screened 'A Special Enquiry on Germany', a programme on the ordinary German's view of German sovereignty, unification and re-armament. The aim was to 'get a bit more behind the personality of the ordinary German man-in-the-street' and to portray Germans against the background of day-to-day life including their views.⁵⁴ The programme addressed questions such as German trade competition, alleged Nazi influence on the Bonn government, the progress of democracy and whether or not Germany could be trusted as a re-armed ally. In regards to trade competition the film provided a rather more rational view of the Federal Republic than the popular press in Britain:

Germany dominates Western European markets once more. [...] Germany's position in Europe makes her indispensable to Europe from an economic point of view. Europe cannot be prosperous unless Germany is.⁵⁵

Considering the question of 'are we re-arming the Nazis', the film provided a wide range of German views including the official government line, the views of the opposition and those of Germans at large. The very detailed analysis, which also made use of interviews with both British and German journalists, essentially

⁵⁴ BBC, T4/57 Documentaries, Special Enquiry Germany, 1954-1955, Memorandum Anthony de Lotbiniere to Imlay Newbiggin-Watts, 18 February 1955.

⁵⁵ BBC, T4/57 Special Enquiry on Germany, The Federal Republic, p. 2, 18 April 1955.

arrived at the conclusion that the FRG 'means too much to Europe's bread and butter to be treated as France would like to treat her'.⁵⁶

Not only the film's coverage of Germany was favourable but British audience opinion of the programme after its screening in April 1955 was also very positive. An estimated seventeen per cent of the British adult population saw the broadcast, which was equivalent to fifty one per cent of the adult TV public. Questionnaires completed by a sample of the audience revealed that most viewers welcomed the opportunity to hear opinions at first hand from a cross-section of Germans. 'The subject, viewers said, is much in peoples' minds at the present time and this programme presented up to date information in a most interesting way.'⁵⁷ Although one or two viewers confessed having not much interest in Germany, the majority were most favourably impressed by the information provided.

Not only did the BBC aim at a more balanced portrayal of Germany in its coverage but it also actively cooperated with the Foreign Office in order to increase the number of German listeners to its service. According to the FO a listening audience in Western Germany would be of importance not only in the event of the situation deteriorating but also 'to ensure a bearing for the British case in those matters where German public opinion takes an emotional view and about which the German press will not give the British position a fair hearing'.⁵⁸ In order to increase the BBC audience in Germany the Foreign Office decided to finance a listener competition. Around 120,000 DM was to be drawn from the budget for 'special projects of political importance' and used to pay for publicity and competition prizes. The main prizes included visits to Great Britain

⁵⁶ BBC, T4/57 Special Enquiry on Germany, The Federal Republic, p. 3, 18 April 1955.

⁵⁷ BBC, T4/57, DOC VR/55/190, Norman Swallow, Audience Research Report, 'Special Enquiry', 6 May 1955.

⁵⁸ BBC, T4/57, FC 1051/75, Memorandum FO to Office of UK High Commissioner, Germany, 9 January 1955.

as well as radio sets. The visits to London were to coincide with the 1953 coronation ceremonies. Despite fears that other European countries might complain about the preferential treatment of Germans in this matter and despite the difficulty in obtaining the required number of seats for the ceremony, one FO official remarked that there really was only one potential problem:

It would be awkward, of course, if one of the German prize-winners turned out to be Hitler.⁵⁹

The weekly BBC magazine *The Listener* featured fifteen articles on Germany in the period between July and December 1948 alone. Importantly, the attitude towards Germany rather differed from that of the Beaverbrook press. Once again German politics were covered but so were cultural subjects such as architecture, history and youth culture. The fear of a resurgence of German nationalism was a constant feature throughout the period in question. This was evident in 1949, when readers were reminded that 'experience has taught us how malignant a form German nationalism can take'.⁶⁰ In 1955 the historian Geoffrey Barraclough still warned his audience that:

Germany today is master of its own fate. The question now, before it is too late, is to ensure that it will not also be the master of Europe's fate, and of your fate and my fate.⁶¹

⁵⁹ BBC, T4/57, PB 10110/1, Letter A.C.E. Malcolm, FO London to Tangye Lean, BBC, 2 October 1952.

⁶⁰ *The Listener*, Vol. XLII, No. 1074, W.N. Ewer, 'Democracy on trial again in Germany', 25 August 1949, p. 298.

⁶¹ *The Listener*, Vol. LIII, No. 1367, Geoffrey Barraclough, 'Germany Ten Years After', 12 May 1955, p. 829.

However, despite the doubts expressed by *The Listener* that ‘there really has been a change at heart’ in Germany’, the subject was dealt with far more objectively and also positively than in parts of the popular press. As early as 1948, there were encouraging reports on German students⁶² and in 1955 the author and journalist Terence Prittie argued that, although the ‘German desire to “be friends” with other peoples was almost embarrassingly ardent and evident’, German youth was ‘the fairest [...] promise of a sound and settled German future’.⁶³ The image of a re-emerging Nazi Germany, as portrayed by the *Daily Express*, was therefore counterbalanced by a more positive, if cautious view of a country, which, ten years after the war, had ‘rejected racial theories and shrunk away from anti-Semitism, from cracker-mottoes and distorted mythology’.⁶⁴ It is likely that a considerable number of BAOR soldiers would have taken note of this.

The Battle for the British Public in Non-fiction Literature

Apart from day-to-day politics, non-fictional literature was an important means for the British press and even Whitehall to influence the public’s view of Germany, whilst simultaneously keeping the topic of Germany in the public domain over the rearmament question. Although, according to one eminent

⁶² E. M. Butler’s account of his visit to Bonn university aimed at finding out ‘what the young men and women of Germany,...were really thinking and feeling about life,...their deep, almost unconscious reaction to the situation in which they find themselves’, in: *The Listener*, Vol. XL, ‘The Faust Legend and the Youth of Germany’, 1 July 1948, p. 16.

⁶³ *The Listener*, Vol. LIII, No. 1367, Terence Prittie, ‘What do the youth of Germany want?’, 28 April 1955, p. 734.

⁶⁴ *The Listener*, Vol. LIII, No. 1367, Terence Prittie, ‘What do the youth of Germany want?’

British publisher, the British public had 'their heads well in the sand' as far as Germany was concerned and they simply did not want to recognize 'that she's there again, let alone read a long book about her', Germany was a frequent and controversial literary subject during this period.⁶⁵ One particular case of a 'battle of the books' between pro-and anti-German factions in Britain was the notorious case of the alleged Foreign Office attempt to suppress the publication of *The Scourge of the Swastika* by Lord Russell of Liverpool, then the Assistant Advocate Judge General. This case also demonstrated the struggle of the British administration to prevent damage caused to Anglo-German relations by members of its own ranks. At the end of the war, Russell had been responsible for all courts martial, war crime trials, and questions of military law in the British-occupied zone of Germany. Not only had he mistrusted Germans before 1939 but he was revolted by the atrocities which were revealed under his auspices in trials of German war criminals in British military courts in occupied Germany (1946–50). Russell believed at heart that, because of their war depravities, the German people existed on a different level from the rest of humanity.⁶⁶ In March 1951 he and his wife were assaulted by a mob in the German village of Vlotho, when Russell forced his car through a German crowd. He had ignored local police, frightened pedestrians and was therefore immediately recalled to London.⁶⁷ The next three years (1951–4), during which he worked in London as assistant judge advocate, were the most frustrating of his career. At his wife's suggestion he compiled a detailed account of Nazi war criminality which Cassell agreed to publish as *The Scourge of the Swastika*. It is worth considering the case of the alleged suppression of *The Scourge* here as it not only provided a

⁶⁵ Alistair Horne, *Back into Power*, London, 1955, Prologue.

⁶⁶ Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Russell, (Edward Frederick) Langley, second Baron Russell of Liverpool (1895–1981)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31636>, accessed 6 July 2012]

⁶⁷ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 269.

further example for the Foreign Office struggle with the press but also highlighted the difficult position of the British administration when faced with the charge of suppressing freedom of expression in order to achieve its policy objectives towards Germany.

Certain sections of the popular press jumped at the opportunity provided by the alleged government attempt to suppress Russell's publication. In the summer of 1954, Lord Beaverbrook's right-wing and anti-German *Daily Express* accused the Government of being guilty of:

an intolerable interference with the rights of the citizen. It has attempted to prevent a book on Nazi war crimes from seeing the light of day. It has exerted all its available power to achieve this purpose. And it has done so in vain.⁶⁸

The paper argued that, at the very moment when the Government was planning to rearm the Germans, the Assistant Judge Advocate General was publishing a document 'recounting the deeds perpetrated by certain Germans when Nazi Germany was armed!' The article called to 'offer to postpone German rearmament in return for real talks with Russia on the future of Germany' and the author hoped that 'some rich man will send free copies to all members of the cabinet'.⁶⁹ The Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror* demonstrated rather more restraint on the Lord Russell issue than the *Express*. In a more balanced article it provided explanations by the Lord Chancellor for attempting to prevent publication, Lord Russell's subsequent insistence on releasing the book as well as a Foreign Office statement denying any involvement in the matter. Although the *Mirror* stated that it was possible to criticise the Lord Chancellor for the attempted suppression, 'his action can be defended on the ground that he is a

⁶⁸ NA, FO 371/109733, *Daily Express*, 11 August 1954.

⁶⁹ NA, FO 371/109733, *Daily Express*, 11 August 1954.

member of the government and as such must uphold government decisions'.⁷⁰ Although the *Mirror* was by no means particularly friendly towards Germany, in many of its articles the difference in portraying the Russell case is striking. The *Express* published twenty one articles about the issue between August and December as well as publishing extracts of the book itself. By contrast, the *Mirror* only considered the case worthy of mentioning four times over the same period. The *Daily Express* used the book controversy to add to the 'consistent stream of news and cartoons designed to drive home the image of a Germany returning to the state of 1939', whereas the *Daily Mirror* arguably downplayed the issue and thereby followed the Labour party line, which was slowly accepting the inevitability of German rearmament.⁷¹

The details of the *Scourge of the Swastika* controversy clearly demonstrate how non-fictional literature was used as a means to influence public opinion. The official explanation for the Lord Chancellor's refusal to grant publication of *The Scourge* was that, considering Russell's position, it was unacceptable for him to influence controversial contemporary politics. Lord Russell rejected the Lord Chancellor's view. He resigned his post as Assistant Judge Advocate General and published his book, forfeiting his government pension in the process. The *Daily Express* alleged that Lord Russell had been refused permission to publish his work by the Foreign Office. However, the Lord Chancellor insisted the responsibility for the decision to be entirely his⁷², which is not entirely convincing, considering confidential FO correspondence on 'influencing the publication of certain books'.⁷³ The Lord Chancellor had carefully

⁷⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 12 August 1954, p. 9.

⁷¹ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 128.

⁷² NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/9, Memorandum by F.A. Warner, 11 August 1954.

⁷³ NA, FO 371/109733 CW1671/10(1), Minute F.A. Warner to Sir Frank Roberts, 11 August 1954: 'In view of the fuss occasioned by the banning of Lord Russell's book on war criminals, you might just like to be reminded that there are two

considered 'whether anything further could be done to prevent Lord Russell from publishing this book but concluded that it could not.'⁷⁴ Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick expressed his view on Russell clearly in a handwritten note, simply stating 'he is not quite sane.'⁷⁵

The publication of what Lord Russell described as 'a solely factual and historical' account of Nazi war crimes certainly caused controversy in Britain.⁷⁶ In the words of the *Observer*, the 'most serious problem of our age is exploited with a tastelessness and sensationalism normally associated with the worst kind of journalism'. It was no answer to say that Lord Russell had limited himself to extracts from the published records, as 'the same defence could be made by any hack serving up selected extracts from divorce or murder cases.'⁷⁷ The book title, wrapper and general presentation differed sharply from hitherto published war crime accounts in their sensationalism.⁷⁸ According to a report by the Lord Chancellor's Office, much of the press comment on this affair had been undoubtedly favourable to Lord Russell. However:

many of the more reputable papers have thought it clear that the publication of such a book by a person in Lord Russell's position should not be countenanced.⁷⁹

other books connected with Germany, the publication of which H.M.G. are at present seeking to influence'.

⁷⁴ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/9, Memorandum by F.A. Warner, 11 August 1954.

⁷⁵ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/10, Letter A.M. Palliser to I. Kirkpatrick, 10 August 1954.

⁷⁶ NA, FO 371/109733, Letter Goldstream to Russell, 23 July 1954.

⁷⁷ NA, FO 371/109733, *The Observer*, 22 August 1954, 'Note by the Lord Chancellor's Office', p. 5.

⁷⁸ NA, FO 371/109733, 'Note by the Lord Chancellor's Office', p. 5.

⁷⁹ NA, FO 371/109733, 'Note by the Lord Chancellor's Office', p.8.

Controversial or not, the book proved hugely popular with the British public. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who considered the publication enormously damaging, personally thought it necessary to inform the Foreign Office in November:

that he has heard that Lord Russell of Liverpool's book has already sold 60,000 copies and is being reprinted as fast as possible as the demand is very great.⁸⁰

Although Russell's intention was to ensure German atrocities were not forgotten, some evidence suggests that the British public was not reading it for that reason. Images shown in the book included shrunken heads found at Buchenwald concentration camp and, according to Wendy Webster, school children in Britain secretly passed the book around under their desks. There was a perception of the 'pleasure of horror' and in fact the alleged effort to ban the book most likely led to the surge of interest.⁸¹

Literary attempts to influence the British public's view on Germany did not end with *The Scourge of the Swastika*. In the midst of the controversy over Russell's book, the High Commission in Bonn informed the FO that the widow of a Berlin socialist executed after the failed July plot against Hitler, had recently published a book on the plot, called *Das Gewissen steht auf* (*Conscience in Revolt*).⁸² Apparently this was:

very well written and gives an interesting account of the part played in the plot by various Germans from all walks of life. Apart from paying tribute to

⁸⁰ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/21, Letter to A.A.S. Stark, 1 November 1954.

⁸¹ Wendy Webster, 'From Nazi-Legacy to Cold War: British Perceptions of European Identity, 1945-1964', in: Michael Winte, Menno Spiering (eds.), *European Identity and the Second World War*, Basingstoke, 2011, p. 104.

⁸² Annedore Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, London, 1957.

the memory of these people, the book gives a general impression of the better side of Germany under the surface.⁸³

The German Federal Press Office decided on publishing an English version of the book, 'particularly in view of the criticisms of Germany in some parts of the British press'.⁸⁴ As Robert Birley pointed out in his introduction to *Conscience in Revolt*:

When Western Germany became a possible partner in an alliance, the character and traditions of the people could no longer be ignored. It is not surprising, therefore, that several books, widely publicised and widely read, should have appeared, reminding Englishmen of the atrocities of the Nazi regime. This book is in no sense an answer to them. But it is an essential part of the evidence, and one largely neglected in this country.⁸⁵

Moreover, in October 1954, Norman Wymer, a literary adviser to Odhams Press publishing company, sent a letter to Anthony Eden to enquire if the foreign secretary personally objected to encouraging Konrad Adenauer to write a book describing the position in Germany at the time and 'telling of his efforts to stamp out Nazism and re-build the country into a peace-loving nation'. As so much had been written about Nazi atrocities:

to prejudice the general public against Germany it occurs to me that it might be helpful to the cause of better understanding between Britain and Germany to produce a book giving the new German viewpoint: a book

⁸³ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/18, Letter E.J.W. Barnes to F.A. Warner, Western Department FO, 8 September 1954.

⁸⁴ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/18, Letter E.J.W. Barnes to F.A. Warner.

⁸⁵ Robert Birley, in: Annedore Leber, *Conscience in Revolt*, p. vi.

designed to remove public distrust and, instead, sow the seeds of confidence and friendship.⁸⁶

This book was considered a good antidote to the Lord Russell type of publication, though it obviously could not appear for some time. However, the need would be just as great in 1955 'when, as we hope, a beginning will be made on the new German defence contingent'.⁸⁷ This request clearly demonstrated that, although the tabloid press and parts of the publishing industry were mostly interested in portraying Germany as evil, this was not universally the case. Typically though, the Foreign Office was careful to not promote its pro-German policy at home too much. A draft Foreign Office reply stated that Eden saw no reason why Wymer should not write to Adenauer personally but, as 'he regards this as a matter which does not concern him, he would not wish to be quoted as having expressed a view'.⁸⁸ According to the Head of the Central Department of the Foreign Office, Patrick Hancock, the whole proposal in fact came close to being imprudent:

What would we think if a German wrote to the Secretary of State suggesting that Sir Anthony Eden should publish a book and adding that in that case Dr. Adenauer would not mind?⁸⁹

The battle of the books continued throughout the entire period in question. Books on German resistance were 'usually reviewed as being much ado about nothing', while accounts of the Holocaust mainly ignored Hitler's

⁸⁶ NA, FO 371/109733, CW 1671/22, Letter from Norman Wymer to Anthony Eden, 28 October 1954.

⁸⁷ NA, FO 371/109733, Minute by T.R.M. Sewell, 2 November 1954.

⁸⁸ NA, FO 371/109733, Draft Private Secretary to Norman Wymer, November 1954.

⁸⁹ NA, FO 371/109733, Minute by P. Hancock, 3 November 1954.

Gentile victims.⁹⁰ Whitehall continuously aimed at halting this trend. According to a Foreign Office minute, there were at least two other books connected with Germany, 'the publication of which H.M.G. are at present seeking to influence', i.e. prevent. One, *The London Cage*,⁹¹ by a retired Colonel revealed British methods of interrogating POWs in the Second World War, as well as revealing several instances of improper treatment of Germans, which 'might cause us some political embarrassment in Germany'.⁹² The second, as yet unnamed, book threatened to reveal 'much accurate information about our Intelligence Service, together with the names of many officers who are still serving in it.' These cases were brought up 'because there may be growing accusations in the press that the Foreign Office are trying to suppress all freedom of speech about Germany. The fact that the decision in both cases would be taken on grounds quite unconnected with the political situation in Germany 'would of course be overlooked by the Beaverbrook press.'⁹³ Even though opinion polls revealed a certain apathy in regards to the German question, there is certainly ample evidence that efforts were made to influence views through publications on both 'good and bad Germans'.

The Representation of Germans in British Novels

More so than in non-fictional literature, young British men about to go join the BAOR would likely have come across Germany in novels. David Lodge, drawing

⁹⁰ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 265.

⁹¹ Eventually published in 1957 and heavily censored: Alexander P Scotland, *The London Cage*, London, 1957.

⁹² NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/10(1), Minute F.A. Warner to Sir Frank Roberts, 11 August 1954.

⁹³ NA, FO 371/109733, CW1671/10(1), Minute F.A. Warner to Sir Frank Roberts.

on his own experience of national service, pointed out in his *Ginger, You're Barmy*, that the favourite form of escape literature among soldiers of the modern Army was not pornography, nor westerns but war-books.⁹⁴ This idea is certainly supported by the fact that, according to a Gallup poll, Nicholas Monsarrat's war novel *The Cruel Sea* topped the list of best-selling books in 1952, ahead of Winston Churchill's war memoirs.⁹⁵ The portrayal of Germans in Monsarrat's novel was rather stereotypical, if not shrill. The only Germans encountered in the book were sailors of a German submarine, which the main character, British corvette commander Ericson, had just despatched to the bottom of the sea. One German was portrayed as raising his right arm and roaring out 'Heil Hitler', while he was still in the water swimming towards his rescuers.⁹⁶ The U-boat commander himself was 'tall, dead-blond and young', with 'pale and slightly mad eyes'. In typical Nazi fashion, he was full of contempt 'that twitched his lips and nostrils', due to the 'hatred of his capture by an inferior'.⁹⁷ The German officer's behaviour was described as so appalling that Ericson had to restrain himself to not shoot him right there and then. Later the U-boat captain started crying during the sea burial of British and German sailors, having been:

emotionally shocked out of the arrogant mould: he admitted bereavement [...] It was probably the swastika, Ericson reflected: the dead sailor from his crew would not bother him, but the 'gesture of honour' implied by the burial party and the enemy ensign would knock him out.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ David Lodge, *Ginger, You're Barmy, An Uncompromising Novel of Army Life*, London, 1970 p. 178.

⁹⁵ Robert Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out*, p. 36.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Monsarrat, *The Cruel Sea*, London, 1951, p. 236.

⁹⁷ Nicholas Monsarrat, *Cruel Sea*, p. 238.

⁹⁸ Nicholas Monsarrat, *Cruel Sea*, p. 240.

The Germans in *The Cruel Sea* were all of the same type: 'We can only shoot them, and hope for a better crop next time'.⁹⁹

The post-war popular book market was effectively dominated by war books and auto-biographies.¹⁰⁰ *The Cruel Sea* was still at the top of Gallup's list in 1955, followed by two other war books, *Reach for the Sky* and *HMS Ulysses*.¹⁰¹ However, when one compares the portrayal of Germans in the 1952 novel *The Cruel Sea* with that in *Reach for the Sky* of 1954, striking differences become apparent. The Germans encountered by the book's main character Douglas Bader, an RAF pilot shot down over France, were often 'types after his own heart and he would have liked to have had them in his wing. What a damn silly war it was'.¹⁰² The Germans went to great lengths trying to fix the pilot's prosthetic leg, leaving him 'impressed and rather touched',¹⁰³ and they even allowed him to climb into a German fighter plane when meeting a distinguished German fighter ace. Although a number of subsequent encounters with Germans in POW camps provoked much 'goon-baiting' from the British POWs, many of the German officers portrayed in *Reach for the Sky* were 'tolerant and sympathetic'. Douglas Bader 'had to admit that some of the Germans were incredibly decent and reasonable, and had a passable sense of humour'.¹⁰⁴ Once the hostilities ended, Bader found it difficult to express his feelings towards some of his fellow comrades, as:

⁹⁹ Nicholas Monsarrat, *Cruel Sea*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁰ John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War': British War Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No.1, 1998, p. 36.

¹⁰¹ Robert Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out*, p 45.

¹⁰² Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky: The Story of Douglas Bader*, London, 1954, p. 291.

¹⁰³ Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky*, p. 287.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky*, p. 336.

the trouble was he *did* feel sorry for them [the Germans]. Now there was nothing to fight, some of the hate seemed to have withered, but he felt it unwise to try and explain it to the others because they were still living in the war and would not understand.¹⁰⁵

It is in fact difficult to imagine a more positive portrayal of the former enemy only nine years after the war's end.

The popularity of war novels certainly kept the issue of Germany in people's minds but in some cases the portrayal of the former enemy marked a distinct contrast to the 'goon baiting' still practiced by parts of the British press at the time. Military campaign histories such as *The Story of Dunkirk* (1955) sold an impressive 150,000 copies in only a few months and had to be re-printed.¹⁰⁶ As Penny Summerfield points out, in contrast to the previous decade, when sensitivities towards the feelings of the bereaved may have held back publishers, in the 1950s Britain remembered the military campaigns of the Second World War in the rites and rituals of public commemoration, as well as in literature.¹⁰⁷ Several commentators have argued that, in an era only gradually emerging from austerity, when erstwhile enemies were outstripping Britain economically and the British Empire was breaking up, the nation took comfort from the war as a period of British success and prestige.¹⁰⁸ As for example John Ramsden remarks, young British readers could read dozens of books a year about prisoner of war camps, combat and espionage as well as boys' comic books constantly reinforcing the stereotype of the German Nazi soldier.¹⁰⁹ The mass market in Britain was indeed flooded with hardback and paperback versions of *The Dam Busters*, the *Colditz Story* or *Reach for the Sky*. The latter

¹⁰⁵ Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky*, p. 354.

¹⁰⁶ Penny Summerfield, 'Dunkirk and the Popular Memory of Britain at War 1940-1958', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, 2010, p. 797.

¹⁰⁷ Penny Summerfield, 'Dunkirk', p.796.

¹⁰⁸ Penny Summerfield, 'Dunkirk', p. 797.

¹⁰⁹ John Ramsden (1998), 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 37.

not only appeared in hardback and in paperback, but also in its first three years in an abridged version, a special young people's edition, and a simplified English edition.¹¹⁰ What Ramsden nonetheless overlooked is the portrayal of Germans as:

ordinary people [...]. He felt no rancour towards the soldiers who had winkled him out and as far as he could see they felt no rancour for him.¹¹¹

Prisoner of war books were so successful they effectively became a separate market niche in their own right. It was these 'railway bookstall titles' which young Britons, about to be despatched to Germany in an Army uniform, would have most likely encountered. It is however important to stress that the picture of Germans emerging from these novels was not always that of the goose-stepping Nazi shown in *The Cruel Sea*.

The Portrayal of Germans in Comics

Comics were another medium that possibly influenced the young soldier and his perception of the Germans. However it is more difficult to emphasise the nature and cultural impact of comics than of mainstream novels and films or the daily press. This is partly due to the nature of the content of the comics, and partly due to the target audience being young boys rather than adults. It is questionable if the comics published in the 1950s would have been read by many Servicemen. It is therefore necessary to briefly consider the portrayal of Germans in comics of the preceding decades. Writing during the 'phony war' in early 1940, the phase of the conflict between the declaration of war in September 1939 and the Battle of Britain from Spring 1940, George Orwell suggested that boys' weeklies were a source of patriotism and implicit

¹¹⁰ John Ramsden (1998), 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p.39.

¹¹¹ Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky*, p. 304.

conservatism, although their main aim was to amuse their adolescent and teenage readers. He also observed that although the characters, from schoolboys to authority figures, were mostly middle-class and upper class, their readership was predominantly working class. The staple comics such as the *Gem* and *The Magnet* also played to racial and national stereotypes, although it is relevant to consider Orwell's list of European stereotypes. This included the Frenchman ('excitable, gesticulates wildly'), the Spaniard ('sinister, treacherous') the Italian ('excitable, grinds barrel organ') and even the Swede and the Dane ('kind hearted, stupid') but did not include the German.¹¹²

Comics had been a source of mirth and comfort to young boys during the First World War, and Orwell implied that the same would be the case during the Second World War. However, he noted that Nazi Germany and Hitler had only just begun to creep into the stories in boy's weeklies during the late 1930s:

If a Spaniard appears, he is still a 'dago' or 'greaser'; no indication that things have been happening in Spain. Hitler and the Nazis have not yet appeared, or are barely making their appearance. There will be plenty about them in a little while, but it will be from a strictly patriotic angle (Britain *versus* Germany) with the real meaning of the struggle kept out of sight as much as possible.¹¹³

Orwell was arguing that the patriotism of the comics was mostly assumed and promoted within non-political narratives that played on the essential correctness and decency of the British versus the 'foreign' enemy.

In fact, paper shortages permanently closed down some boy's publications, including the *Gem* and the *Magnet*, both of which had ceased publication by 1940. During the post-war 1940s, one notable comic that continued from the interwar period was *the Hotspur*, begun in 1933 as an

¹¹² George Orwell, 'Boys' weeklies' in George Orwell, *Inside the Whale and other Essays*, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 188.

¹¹³ George Orwell, *Inside the Whale*, p. 196.

extension to the D.C. Thomson Empire. The *Hotspur*, published from 1933 to 1959, was almost completely devoid of references to the Second World War. The content was mostly concerned with the adventures of public schoolboys and their headmasters, detective fiction, the Wild West, adventures in the great outdoors, and iconic examples of modern trains, boats and planes. In general, adolescent and young teenage boys during the Second World War and its early aftermath, those who would become the conscripts of the post-war years, had less exposure to comics due to the paper shortage. And what they did read was rarely full-blooded patriotism, but serial escapism.¹¹⁴

In 1947 *The Eagle* was begun, a new title for the Hulton Press, which also published the *Picture Post* until it wound up in 1957, and a number of other populist weekly papers. Edward Hulton was a conservative in politics but he was no xenophobe, having been a supporter of Labour's reconstruction plans.¹¹⁵ Yet his weekly magazine for boys remained essentially non-political in terms of references to party politics or ideologies, and non-nationalistic in relation to the Germans. *The Eagle* was more captivated by the Wild West of nineteenth century North America than the recent war in Europe, and by science fiction, modern motor cars, trains, weapons and rockets. 'Dan Dare the pilot of the future' rather than Adolf Hitler characterised the content of *The Eagle*. The Reds were from Mars, not Russia. *The Eagle* was a publishing phenomenon of the 1950s with a circulation, at its height, of over a million.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *The Hotspur*, Issues 557-701, London, D.C. Thompson, 1947-1950.

¹¹⁵ Colin Seymour-Ure, 'Hulton, Sir Edward George Warris (1906–1988)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40161>, accessed 27 August 2012]

¹¹⁶ James Chapman, 'Onward Christian Spacemen: Dan Dare – Pilot of the Future as British Cultural History', *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2008, p. 55.

Despite the lack of overt references to present political developments, Dan Dare was nonetheless informed by the cultural and political circumstances affecting Britain during the 1950s. James Chapman argues *The Eagle* can be read as a narrative of British power in the early period of the Cold War. Whether this narrative was understood by its contemporary juvenile readers is however highly unlikely. Arguably the geopolitical context of the Korean War was projected onto the first Dan Dare adventure, in which the planet Venus was divided into two hemispheres. However, after defeating the enemy and reuniting the planet, the comic in fact goes on to endorse Britain's policy towards her new German Cold War ally:

'You mean you are not going to enslave us or take our land?' [asks a defeated enemy] 'And breed another war?' Dan replies. 'No, my friend, we of the Earth have learned our peace-making in a hard, bitter school. Now we have a one-word policy for both victor and vanquished -- disarmament!'¹¹⁷

This reference clearly related to the Allied treatment of Germany at the end of the Second World War rather than endorsing stereotypes from the past conflict.

Nonetheless, as David Kynaston points out in his discussion of comics in austerity Britain, most of them were based more on British class caricatures than nationalistic stereotypes, and dealt with familiar people in familiar landscapes. He does not mention the war, or the Germans, in his analysis of boy's weeklies after 1945.¹¹⁸ Indeed it was not really until the later 1950s and early 1960s that the pictorial celebration of the Second World War took off. The War Picture Library, published by the Amalgamated Press/Fleetway from 1958 and the *Commando* picture-books (D.C. Thompson) were all about the blood and guts of warfare. And from 1962 Captain Hurricane of *Valiant* (I.P.C.) made his

¹¹⁷ James Chapman, 'Onward Christian Spacemen', p. 66.

¹¹⁸ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51*, London, 2007, pp. 504-6.

appearance, to the trembling fear of his enemies, namely the Japanese ('slant-eyed weevils') and the Italians ('ice-cream wallahs'). The Germans were rarely called names, but were characterised as hard-faced men in uniform who said '*Himmel*' a lot.¹¹⁹ Such depictions were stronger and undoubtedly more violent than were to be found in boy's weeklies during the war, and came almost a generation after the war had ended, and as conscription ceased. Despite their popularity, which considerably increased after the period under observation here, comics were therefore less relevant in the context of public opinion on Germany than for example novels and war films.

British War Films and their Portrayal of Germans

If the topic of World War Two and Germany was popular among young British Servicemen in literature, then the same certainly applied to films. Whereas novels arguably appealed more to middle-class readers, war films certainly also attracted large working-class audiences. The 1950s were the final period in which the cinema was still the principal medium of communication and attitude formation in Britain. In 1955, twenty-three million Britons attended the cinema at least once a week (down from thirty million five years earlier).¹²⁰ Movies about the Second World War and the Allied fight against Nazi Germany were produced at a rather impressive rate, both in Britain and the US throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. British audiences were influenced by a large number of films in the 1950s. *The Wooden Horse* (UK 1950 – 'a standard, solid POW drama'¹²¹), *The Colditz Story* (UK 1955 – 'probably the most convincing of the British accounts

¹¹⁹ *Valiant*, Issues 1-20, London, IPC Magazines, October 1962-February 1963.

¹²⁰ Nicholas Pronay, 'The British post-bellum Cinema: a survey of the films relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960, in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1988, p. 39.

¹²¹ John Walker (ed.), *Halliwel's Film Guide*, London, 1991, p. 1213.

of POW life¹²²) and the famous Hollywood production by Billy Wilder, *Stalag 17* (US 1953 – ‘quite different from the understated British films on the subject’¹²³), were typical examples of the frequently produced POW dramas.¹²⁴ Overall, the portrayal of Germans in British and American films between the 1930s and 1980s was overwhelmingly negative.¹²⁵ However, it must be considered whether this also applies for the time period under observation in this thesis.

Between 1948 and 1958, at least forty war films involving Germans arrived in British cinemas, at times at a rate of nearly one every month.¹²⁶ This points towards a much higher level of engagement with at least some, albeit not the most fruitful or productive, aspects of the ‘German question’ than the political polls of the 1950s suggest. War films were rarely mentioned in lists noting the best films of the year and hardly ever appeared in film festivals abroad. In fact many film critics were frankly hostile towards the cliché-ridden portrayals of the ‘stiff upper lip’. Of *The Ship That Died Of Shame* (UK 1955, ‘a thin and rather obvious melodramatic fable’¹²⁷), one reviewer noted in 1955 that:

¹²² John Walker, *Halliwel’s*, p. 225.

¹²³ John Walker, *Halliwel’s*, p. 1028.

¹²⁴ Richard Falcon, ‘Images of Germany’, p. 18.

¹²⁵ Guy Cumberpatch notes that in a corpus of 370 British and American films (or rather film synopses) produced between 1929 and 1989, German characters were four times as likely to be portrayed negatively as positively. Cited in: Richard Falcon, ‘Images of Germany’, p. 8.

¹²⁶ According to John Ramsden, the overall number of British War films for the decade of the 1950s was around eighty, including those dealing with Japan and other theatres of war. For a list see: John Ramsden, ‘Re-focusing ‘the People’s War’, p. 62.

¹²⁷ John Walker, *Halliwel’s*, p. 983.

British film stars may not be the best in the world, but they are certainly the most waterproof. 'Above us the waves' seems to be their motto.¹²⁸

Despite being branded 'old-fashioned', 'socially conservative' and irresponsible in regards to attitudes towards future warfare by film critics, war films proved immensely popular with audiences. A Gallup poll indicated that the most popular movie in 1955 was *The Dam Busters*.¹²⁹ The film told the story of the 1943 Royal Air Force attack on the German Möhne, Eder and Sorpe dams with the so-called 'bouncing bomb', in the hope to cripple German industry. It mostly focused on the technicalities of destroying the German dams rather than on the enemy. Although the carnage caused by the bombing was briefly shown and the high number of British casualties was evident, the film was above all a glorification of British ingenuity in the face of adversity.¹³⁰ War films were the first or second top-grossing British films in almost every year between 1955 and 1960.¹³¹ The idea of war films being particularly popular among British Service personnel is supported by the 1952 account of one National Serviceman, produced shortly after his arrival in Germany. Although pointing out that *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (US 1949 – 'celebrated star war comic, still quite hypnotic in its flagwaving way'¹³²) had been the first war film he had seen in a while, it had reminded him of the summer exercises in which he took part that year in Germany. He thereafter frequently mentioned war books and films in his

¹²⁸ Peter Baker, Editor of *Films and Filming*, cited in: John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 41.

¹²⁹ Robert J. Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out*, p 45.

¹³⁰ The British film encyclopaedist Leslie Halliwell aptly described the film as an 'understated British war epic with additional scientific interest and good acting and model work, not to mention a welcome lack of love interest'. John Walker, *Halliwell's*, p. 261.

¹³¹ John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p.42.

¹³² John Walker, *Halliwell's*, p. 949.

diary.¹³³ It is interesting that in this case the British film *Rommel* (US 1951 – a ‘vivid but scrappy account of the last years of a contemporary hero’¹³⁴) even motivated the conscript in question to learn more of the German language. He had read the book and wanted to see the film in a German cinema where it was shown in German. Despite all criticism of the genre, here was a curious case of war films bringing the German language closer to a young Briton.¹³⁵

Overall the portrayal of Germans in war films throughout this period presents a rather less one-sided and negative picture than one might anticipate. Firstly, a number of films did not in fact feature any Germans at all as in the case of *The Dam Busters*. Secondly, films like *The Battle of the River Plate* (UK 1956) were in fact criticised in reviews for their pro-German attitude and the fact that, as the *Daily Herald* put it, ‘the Germans get all the glory’.¹³⁶ British productions developed throughout the period in question from *The Wooden Horse* (1950) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953) to *The Dam Busters* (1955) and *The One That Got Away* (1957 – a ‘true life biopic, [...] all very well done’¹³⁷). The majority of these films were preoccupied with the depiction of Allied soldiers rather than Germans. They also were centrally concerned with ‘promulgating a selective myth of national identity and national cohesion’ within British society. Nonetheless, the change in the portrayal from the inhuman, yelping and barking goons in *The Wooden Horse*, to that of Hardy Kruger in *The One That Got Away* only seven

¹³³ N[atational A[rmy] M[useum], File No. 2006-12-77-82, Letters from National Serviceman Cpl. Malcom Barker, Queen’s Royal Rgt., to his mother, 15 September 1952.

¹³⁴ John Walker, *Halliwel’s*, p. 287.

¹³⁵ His curiosity was further heightened by the fact that two of the former German generals interviewed by the author of ‘Rommel’ lived in Iserlohn, the town he was stationed in. A fellow conscript offered to show their residences to him. NAM 2006-12-77-82, 12 October 1952.

¹³⁶ John Ramsden, *Don’t Mention the War*, p. 306.

¹³⁷ John Walker, *Halliwel’s*, p. 822.

years later, is quite remarkable.¹³⁸ In fact, it was probably in large parts the at times even heroic portrayal of Germans in *The Battle of the River Plate*, which led to the film being the most successful imported film in Western Germany that year.¹³⁹ However, it was also voted the third-best film of the year by people interviewed by Gallup in Britain.¹⁴⁰

According to *The Times*, the reason for the positive portrayal of Germans was partly to be found in the 'semi documentary tradition which has gained so great a reputation for British films of war. It is a fine tradition, a noble tradition', which properly presented Germans as soldiers going about their jobs.¹⁴¹ Despite the sometimes hostile reception of the British press, by the mid-1950s, at least in British (as opposed to American) films, more rounded characterisations of Germans emerged. Increasingly the German film characters accepted defeat 'like a sportsman'. The fact that Germany by the 1950s was one of the most lucrative film markets in the world might partly explain the motives for this new-found 'brotherly love'. This was impressively demonstrated by the contrast between Monsarrat's novel *The Cruel Sea* and its film adaptation.¹⁴² The grotesque Nazis of the novel were in fact completely eliminated from the film and the only comment by the British corvette captain about German U-boat crews was that 'they look a lot like our boys'. The opening

¹³⁸ Richard Falcon, 'Images of Germany', p. 19.

¹³⁹ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 306.

¹⁴⁰ Robert J. Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out*, p 52. Incidentally Halliwell was less enthusiastic. 'A sympathetic view of a German hero [...] is the most notable feature of this disappointingly patchy and studio-bound war epic, with too many actors in ill-defined bit parts, too undisciplined a storyline, and too confusing scenes of battle.' John Walker, *Halliwell's*, p. 85.

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, Wednesday, 26 July 1950, p. 8 and 26 March 1953, p. 12.

¹⁴² Halliwell characterised the film as a 'competent transcription of a bestselling book, cleanly produced and acted; a huge box office success.' John Walker, *Halliwell's*, p. 254.

narration of the film stated that 'the only villain is the sea – the cruel sea – that man has made even more cruel'.¹⁴³ The effect of the changing attitude towards Germans in British war films of the period on the average British conscript is likely to have been noticeable.

Many of the war films of the 1950s could not have been made without the active co-operation of the Services themselves. For the armed forces, in the aftermath of the 1939-45 experience, the portrayal of British efforts on film was evidently an important issue. The Royal Navy hosted its own annual Royal Naval Film Corporation dinner, at which actors and producers could be wined and dined. The RAF had a special trophy for 'the best interpretation of the RAF to the public' each year, unsurprisingly won in 1955 by *The Dam Busters*.¹⁴⁴ Support by the Services ranged widely from the training of actors to the provision of equipment. This culminated in the entire Mediterranean fleet staging a sea exercise to facilitate the filming of *The Battle of the River Plate*. Naturally, in return for their efforts, the Services were granted every opportunity to recruit young cinema goers into its ranks. Measures included window displays in cinemas, parades outside of theatres. In at least one case in 1955, when showing *The Dam Busters*, there even was a RAF recruitment centre *inside* a cinema in Rugeley in Staffordshire.¹⁴⁵ In this particular case there was also a display of medals and photographs, and a gala opening with an RAF guard of honour, fanfare trumpeters and the local civic leaders; an RAF cake-making competition for local bakers was organized, with all proceeds going to the RAF Benevolent Fund.¹⁴⁶ Although this sort of practice may well have increased the number of volunteers to the Services, it is questionable whether they aided the government's policy to turn Western Germany into a staunch ally by promoting

¹⁴³ John Walker, *Halliwel's*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 51.

¹⁴⁵ John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 April 1951, 22 December 1955, cited in: John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 53.

understanding between British soldiers and German civilians, let alone the future German armed forces. Critics frequently pointed out that there existed a public appetite for war-glorifying films, and that those films depicting the futility of war due to the horrors experienced by all sides, or those showing British war crimes, regularly flopped at the box office.¹⁴⁷

The Impact of Individual Encounters with Germans on British Opinion

A point worth making in regards to public perception of Germany is that, despite the revelations of Bergen-Belsen and other concentration camps, the scope and detail of the horrible crimes committed by Germans were arguably not as much discussed in public during the 1950s as for example during the Auschwitz trials of the 1960s.¹⁴⁸ It is this background which partly explains the outrage caused by publications like Lord Russell of Liverpool's *The Scourge of the Swastika* in 1954. Although British perceptions of Germany had naturally been influenced by the revelation of Nazi war crimes in 1945, there are individual accounts by Britons which portray a more nuanced picture about attitudes to Germans. Geoffrey Gorer thought it worthy of attention that Germans, like foreigners in general, appeared frequently in non-marital sexual relationships of English people interviewed for his 1955 work on the 'English character':

I would suggest this is a cross-cultural phenomenon, rather than a reflection on the sexual habits of most peoples other than the English. The foreigner is 'less dangerous', less likely to be censorious; and foreign techniques of courting and flirtation, with their greater apparent

¹⁴⁷ John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing 'the People's War'', p. 42.

¹⁴⁸ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 318.

aggressiveness and confidence may well be more successful with the 'exceptionally shy' English than they would be in their own countries.¹⁴⁹

Whereas this phenomenon would certainly have affected the experiences of many young British servicemen spending their time in Germany, a considerable number of British women came into contact with German men, too. Political views of Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s therefore have to be considered in the example of a miner's wife from Essex, whose one real love affair outside marriage had been with a married German Prisoner of War.¹⁵⁰ Of course this did not always lead to a better view of Germans, as probably proven by a 24-year old working-class girl from Ilfracombe, who had an affair with a German man 'who, realizing we were getting serious, told me he had no room for marriage in his plans'.¹⁵¹ It is likely that for some Britons the personal became semi-political. The lived experience of relationships between the English and the Germans went to the heart of popular perceptions of Germans, if only for a minority. The controversial issue of relationships between Britons and Germans so shortly after the war was taken up in films such as *Frieda* (UK 1947 – 'stuffy and dated drama about how one English family learned to love one particular German'¹⁵²), portraying the difficulties of married life of a British soldier and his German wife in Britain shortly after the war. Symptomatic of changed attitudes, rather more Londoners interviewed by Mass Observation in 1947 approved than disapproved of the lift of the ban on marriages between German prisoners of war and English girls. Nonetheless, one man said of English girls marrying German POW's:

¹⁴⁹ Geoffrey Gorer, *Exploring English Character*, New York, 1955, p. 93.

¹⁵⁰ Geoffrey Gorer, *Exploring English Character*, p. 88.

¹⁵¹ Geoffrey Gorer, *Exploring English Character*, p. 88.

¹⁵² John Walker, *Halliwel's*, p. 410.

I think if an English girl goes so low she should be segregated. If there aren't enough Englishmen, heaven help us!¹⁵³

Despite this view, the encounters of individual Britons with Germans after the war have to be taken into account when considering British views of Germany. Famous German individuals, such as the much-revered Manchester City goalkeeper Bernd Trautmann, certainly helped to improve the view of ordinary Germans.¹⁵⁴ He was however only one prominent example of a multitude of contacts between Britons and Germans after 1945. Contacts on a broader scale were also established very soon after the ending of hostilities through a multitude of British initiatives. For instance, the twinning of German and British towns and cities began as early as 1947 as the example of Reading and Düsseldorf demonstrates. Lord Pakenham, the Minister in charge of Occupation Affairs and the Regional Commissioner for North Rhine-Westphalia warmly welcomed an initiative by the Mayor of Reading. This initiative attempted to 'establish friendly associations' with a German town and, as one local paper reported, 'friendly correspondence [...] would go far towards breaking down the suspicion and antagonism that comes from suffering and despair'.¹⁵⁵ The project had apparently been given 'warm approval' by representative citizens of the town. The 'attitudes of grassroots movers and shakers in politics, religion, academia, the arts, business and the unions' often expressed themselves in immediate practical action, and the need to 'inculcate the young with principles of European co-operation and peace'.¹⁵⁶ It is doubtful whether town twinning programmes had any mass appeal during the period in question but local

¹⁵³ MOA, File 2565, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ See for example: John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, p. 325.

¹⁵⁵ *The Reading Citizen*, June 1947, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Margaret Brown, 'Towns that Build Bridges', *History Today*, Vol. 48, Issue 8, 1998.

initiatives such as this have to be added to the broader perception of Germany at the time.

The Impact of Germany's 'Economic Miracle' on British Opinion

Finally, economic factors must be considered when discussing British views of Germany during the period in question. The town twinning programmes mentioned above were initially often a means to assist the war-torn German towns and cities. However, the German economics minister Professor Ludwig Erhard's 'social market economy' was transforming the Federal Republic quickly. With the aid of the European Recovery Program (ERP), German industries were reviving and general living standards were rising so fast they were exciting jealous comments in Britain. As early as 1948, *The Listener* commented on the fact that British officials in Germany could no longer afford to eat in German restaurants. One British official summed up his feelings by saying that the British in Germany were in danger of becoming 'the poor relations of the Germans'.¹⁵⁷ Britons were compelled to eat dreary official rations while some of the Germans 'who used to be glad to accept a tin of corned beef [...] now eat roast goose'.¹⁵⁸ In 1950, with a general election in the offing, the Labour Parliamentary Secretary for Food told British voters that Germans were to be pitied, not envied for the fact that food-rationing in the FRG had been abolished. According to her this merely allowed the wealthy to buy up available supplies.¹⁵⁹ However, in the same year, the leader of the West German Trade Union Federation told the German press, having just returned from a UK visit, that the British people were living 'worse than the Germans'. The German delegation

¹⁵⁷ *The Listener*, Vol. XL, Reginald Peck, 'How the Germans live', 2 December 1948, p. 843.

¹⁵⁸ *The Listener*, Vol. XL, Reginald Peck, 'How the Germans live', p. 843.

¹⁵⁹ Anthony Mann, *Comeback: Germany 1945-1952*, London, 1980, p. 193.

'could hardly satisfy its hunger in Britain and he was glad 'to get a square meal when I got back to Germany'.¹⁶⁰ When Sir Brian Robertson ordered British clubs in Germany to be opened to German guests in 1950, one British observer was told by a resident of Düsseldorf that 'we don't want to go there anyway. The food is quite ghastly'.¹⁶¹

In 1952 and 1953 the graphs marking Western Germany's economic progress continued their vigorous upward flight and complaints in Britain against German export competition reached a peak.¹⁶² According to one British journalist the sharpness of the German export challenge in the first instance, coming as it did in markets where Britain had held undisputed sway since the end of the war, provoked apprehensions as exaggerated as they were uninformed.¹⁶³ The German export drive was aided by a series of fortunate circumstances like the Korean War, the poverty of the home consumer, the lack of defence industry and the fact that Germany was regarded as politically neutral, thus a more desirable trading partner. This applied particularly in areas where Britain's image had suffered, as in the Middle East.¹⁶⁴ Comments among British producers grew so acrimonious by 1954 that the Foreign Office became concerned lest a serious deterioration in Anglo-German relations ensue.¹⁶⁵ Some British car makers blamed their failure to sell their products in Germany on the intensity of German nationalism, 'drummed into them over the past seventy years, and particularly by Dr. Goebbels'.¹⁶⁶ Others adopted a more

¹⁶⁰ Anthony Mann, *Comeback*, p. 194.

¹⁶¹ Anthony Mann, *Comeback*, p. 194.

¹⁶² Alistair Horne, *Back Into Power*, London, 1955, p. 235.

¹⁶³ Alistair Horne, *Back Into Power*, p 245.

¹⁶⁴ Alistair Horne, *Back Into Power*, p 246.

¹⁶⁵ Alistair Horne, *Back Into Power*, p 247.

¹⁶⁶ Richard Weight, 'Losing the Peace: Germany, Japan, America and the Shaping of British National Identity in the Age of Affluence' in: Lawrence Black,

open-minded perspective, while still finding fault with the Germans. The journalist Fyfe Robertson wrote to the *Picture Post* in 1955, claiming that the Germans had a 'new secret weapon' namely 'hard work':

The Germans are steadily taking over our markets. They've rebuilt their cities, re-equipped their industries, and achieved a remarkable degree of prosperity in a remarkably short time, *with scarcely any rise in prices.*

But, as David Kynaston shows, Robertson went on to ask whether the difference between the two countries was that the British were not working as hard as the Germans, not giving 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'.¹⁶⁷ The notion of a resurgent German nationalism was increasingly accompanied by the fear of German economic competition, which inevitably highlighted the economic problems facing Britain:

'After 1945' seems to have had the same effect on the Germans as 1940 had on us.... I can think of a gloomy list of signs ever since the war that all is not well with us.¹⁶⁸

A less ambiguous hatred of the Germans and undoubted resentment of their economic recovery was evident at the very apex of British politics. As Peter Hennessey has pointed out, Harold Macmillan 'simply could not stand the Germans' and he even shocked the Duke of Edinburgh with a rant against the crawling Huns. As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1955-56, when the German economic recovery was forging ahead, Macmillan became acutely aware that the economic balance of power was shifting away from Britain to Germany and

Hugh Pemberton (eds.) *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War 'Golden Age' Revisited*, Aldershot, 2004, p. 205.

¹⁶⁷ David Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57*, London, 2009, p. 616.

¹⁶⁸ *The Listener*, Vol. LV., No. 1412, R.V. Jones, 'The German challenge to Britain', 19 April 1956, p. 440.

other members of the European Coal and Steel Community.¹⁶⁹ Or, as the *Daily Mirror* put it in 1957:

The old Teuton, fatter than ever, sits in the best and most lavish counting-house outside the shores of the United States. Who really won [the war]?¹⁷⁰

As David Kynaston has argued, the *Daily Mirror* along with the *Daily Express* was the most popular daily newspaper in Britain, selling over four million copies by the early 1950s.¹⁷¹ The readership of the *Mirror* was overwhelmingly working class, while the *Express* was read by people across the working and middle classes, and British soldiers will have been regularly exposed to such reports.

Conclusion

The picture emerging of the influences on young British men and their views of Germany was not exactly positive, although it was not quite as negative as might be expected so shortly after the Second World War. Although public opinion on political issues regarding Germany appeared equally split into pro- and anti-German camps, large parts of the British press were clearly anti-German to an extent that caused concern in the Foreign Office. Whitehall's reluctance to impede freedom of expression effectively reduced the control it might have exerted on anti-German publications, thereby increasing the necessity to establish other means of improving Anglo-German relations.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Hennessey, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, London, 2006, p. 389.

¹⁷⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 7 August 1957, p.4.

¹⁷¹ David Kynaston, *Family Britain*, pp. 171-82.

Whereas Foreign Office influence on the press was very limited, more was achieved by influencing the publication of non-fictional literature – the *Scourge of the Swastika* being a notable exception. The constant reminders of the Nazi past and warnings of the re-emergence of right-wing politics in Germany in the British press would undoubtedly have left an impression on young Servicemen. There is however also evidence that some young Britons were unwilling to accept the negative view of Germany and particularly German youth presented to them. It furthermore has to be stressed that, despite the widespread hostility in the popular press, a normalisation of relations was evident even in papers like the *Daily Express*. The BBC attitude towards Germany, although not always friendly, was clearly more nuanced and positive. Equally, despite the fact that British victory in the Second World War was increasingly glorified during the years of austerity and slow economic recovery, the countless non-fictional books, novels and war films released during the period in question did not always portray the Germans in a bad light. War movies and novels were increasingly popular and, as several observers pointed out, served to provide comfort by retelling stories of British glory and prestige. Nevertheless, it appears that, at least during the period in question (and in marked contrast to the stereotypical Nazis emerging in the following decades), the Germans portrayed in a number of films and novels were ordinary people not unlike the British, who happened to fight on the wrong side of the conflict and occasionally even ‘brought a breath of the chivalry lost from modern war’.¹⁷²

Despite stark and controversial reminders of the Nazi past such as *The Scourge of the Swastika* and widespread scepticism as to the future of the Federal Republic, the subject of Germany in British popular culture was rather more complex and less one-sided than might be expected. British Servicemen going to Germany would have most likely absorbed both the image of the goose-stepping Nazi as well as that of the ‘ordinary people’ already encountered by a number of Britons in the form of German POWs. Despite the predominantly working-class composition of the Services this arguably made the prospects of

¹⁷² Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky*, p. 290.

using the BAOR as a tool for Anglo-German rapprochement more promising than the negative views of the popular press suggest. The next chapter will look across the Channel and consider the German perspective by analysing the view of the British Occupation forces held in the Federal Republic. This also entails an analysis of the problems caused by the presence of up to 80,000 Britons in the British zone of Occupation. This picture was equally complex and diverse.

Chapter Four: German perceptions and criticisms of the BAOR

Introduction

The German national newspaper *Die Welt* reported in October 1952 that a fight in a bar in the town of Hameln had led to a British Army wife beating unconscious the owner of the pub. A German disabled war veteran had blamed a group of ten British soldiers and their wives for his injury and subsequent fate, which led a soldier to attack the man. The wife of the disabled German then used his crutches to knock out the British soldier. In return the British wife accidentally beat the publican with a bar stool when he tried to calm the argument. 'When the police arrived all they found was the publican with a head wound'.¹

It was the projection onto a national stage of seemingly minor and at times even comical incidents like this one, which regularly influenced German perceptions of the British occupying forces. Local incidents commonly caused controversy, first in the local and then in the national press, as well as leading to repeated political attacks by anti-Western political parties. As the German journalist Paul Sethe wrote in 1951, 'in the past six years the number of anglophiles in Germany has dropped steadily' and bitter feeling had grown up among Germans 'against this island nation'.² In order to establish how exactly the problems caused by the presence of the BAOR impacted on Anglo-German relations from the local to the highest levels and how both the British and German authorities worked on eliminating them, it is essential to understand the nature and causes of grievances perceived by the German civilian population.

¹ [Landesarchiv Niedersachsen], NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 60/55 Nr. 1142 p. 27, *Die Welt*, 6 October 1952.

² NA, FO 371/93379, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 March 1951.

This chapter will therefore focus on the German views and experiences of the presence of the BAOR in the British zone. Some of the German official and individual attempts at improving relations will also be explored after establishing the main causes of discontent among the population. The grievances suffered by Germans at the hand of the BAOR can largely be divided into three major categories, namely economic, political and personal issues. Although there was always a degree of overlap between the economic issues, the political processes as well as the lived experiences of Germans and Servicemen, they will be largely addressed separately in this chapter.

The first category to be analysed here concerns the economic demands of the British Forces to ensure the functioning and efficiency of the Services. These demands regularly caused outrage among the civilian population. According to the German Member of Parliament and leader of the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), Franz Josef Strauss, Germany paid the same amount of money towards the Occupation as France was using to pay for its entire army, air force, colonial troops as well as the war in Vietnam. According to Strauss, an Occupation soldier in 1951 cost nearly ten times as much as that of 1918 and for every two Occupation soldiers there were nine civilians employed in Germany.³

The financial impact of the Occupation was frequently criticised by German politicians and the press. Nonetheless, the majority of West Germans in 1949 thought that the establishment of a German army in order to replace foreign troops was neither necessary nor desirable. In addition to pacifist sentiments so soon after the war, there were also economic arguments in support of this view, as a German army would attract young men from essential industries, which could ill afford such loss. A German army would also imply an increase in national expenditure and taxes. 'They consider that the Allied policy during and since the war, carries with it the obligation on the part of the Allies, to

³ NRW [Hauptstaatsarchiv, Düsseldorf, Ministerialarchiv], NW 115/174, *Ruhr Nachrichten*, 16 February 1951.

defend Western Germany'.⁴ On the one hand, therefore, a strong presence of British troops in the FRG was a reassuring factor for the majority of the German population. On the other hand, the economic damage caused by British troops in Germany, in addition to the regular Occupation costs, was under constant scrutiny. Manoeuvre damage, the requisitioning of training grounds, private houses, hotels and public buildings as well as noise pollution by aircraft caused the most frequent complaints. These complaints regularly evolved around material issues at a time of economic hardship for most Germans, which often stood in stark contrast to the standard of living of the British Services. In most cases the economic grievances caused by the Occupation subsequently generated social tensions between Britons and Germans, as will be seen in the case of the requisitioning of housing.

Secondly, in the political sphere there were a large number of problems caused by British official communications or rather the perceived lack thereof. On several occasions the Foreign Office or the Services themselves caused offence when implementing decisions in Germany, usually made in cooperation with the Bonn or *Land* governments, without sufficiently communicating these arrangements to local communities. Subsequently this frequently led the press to not only criticise the perceived British arrogance towards local and national German government bodies, but also the general lack of effort by senior British officers, unit commanders as well as Foreign Office officials to publicise decisions. The increasing level of sovereignty of the Federal Republic after 1949 in fact exacerbated this problem and led to the growth of German demands to be treated as equals rather than occupied enemy territory.

The third and arguably most difficult category for the British and German authorities to address was made up of the actions of individual soldiers and negative experiences by individual civilians. These were often caused by or involved drunkenness, violence, theft, cultural issues, sexual jealousy or the

⁴ NA, FO 371/85226, Monthly Report of *Land* Commissioner North Rhine Westphalia Bishop to High Commissioner, December 1949, p.2.

recent history of Anglo-German relations. An entirely independent problem which influenced all three categories was that of mishaps and errors by British personnel occurring on all levels. Furthermore, as seen above, a significant factor in turning minor complaints into threats to Anglo-German relations on a national level was the German press, both in the FRG as well as the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

It is important to analyse how these different categories developed during the period in question and how they impacted on the various strands of Anglo-German relations. Of particular importance were the frequent cases of local discontent spreading into the highest circles in London and Bonn. This chapter will use three specific examples to analyse how the discontent caused by troops was used by those political groups of the left and right in Germany (and Britain), that were against German cooperation with the Western Allies in the climate of the early Cold War. The most controversial examples this chapter will examine in order to highlight the economic, political and personal aspects involved, are the requisitioning of housing, manoeuvre damage and, curiously, fox hunting by British troops. Furthermore the increase in German official concern over damage caused by troops requires analysis. As the British Services were not the only NATO troops in the British zone of Occupation, a comparison to the behaviour of Canadian troops will shed further light on the popularity of British troops. Finally, the quality and success of attempts by German non-governmental organisations as well as the Federal and *Land* governments at countering the dissatisfaction of the public with British troops will be considered in detail. Although a wide variety of initiatives were taken, there is also some evidence demonstrating a lack of interest among some German ministries to fund projects.

Economic Causes of Discontent: Requisitioning of Housing and Land

For the German population the issue of requisitioning was mostly an economic problem during times of hardship. It nonetheless caused social tensions between occupiers and occupied in its wake. As a result much of the activity of German authorities in regards to this issue consisted of reacting to the anger caused by the Services. In order to function as a defence against the perceived Soviet threat, the British Forces required large training grounds. According to a British report the amount of land under requisition in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in 1952, exclusive of the land on which requisitioned houses and workshops stood, amounted to 125 square miles, approximately one per cent of the entire *Land*. These figures excluded new British demands for four new airfields, a large training area for Dutch troops, an air-to-ground firing range of large dimensions, extensions to installations allowing for the accommodation of an additional 10,000 Belgian troops and the requirements of a Canadian brigade among others.⁵ In addition, some British officials had doubts whether at any point anybody kept the increasing Allied demands under co-ordinated review and predicted a strenuous German opposition to the loss of any more agricultural land. Particularly in larger cities the lack of housing, due to bomb damage and requisitioning of accommodation by the Army, caused severe resentment. Requisitioning of land also came at a high social and financial cost. A planned airfield in the Niederrhein area in 1951 required the eviction of 151 farms at a cost of up to six million Deutschmark (DM).⁶

Due to its scale, the requisitioning of training grounds and accommodation was a potential and often real point of friction between the German civilian population and the Services, and one which was regularly

⁵ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate to *Land* Commissioner on 'Military Accommodation Programme and Allied/German Relations generally', 19 March 1952.

⁶ NRW, NW 115/174.

observed by the Foreign Office in London. Most German cities and towns suffered from severe housing shortages due to Allied bombing during the war.⁷ The most heavily populated areas of Germany lay in the British zone and most of the major and many of the smaller towns had been severely affected by the strategic bombing campaign unleashed in order to undermine German morale during the war. In 1943 alone the city of Wuppertal, in the industrial heartland of the Ruhr, lost 153,000 homes; the nearby Krefeld lost over forty per cent of its housing that year with over 90,000 people left homeless. Eighty five per cent of Cologne was destroyed and ninety per cent of Hannover lay in ruins.⁸ Nonetheless, in the FRG in 1951 the Allied Forces had in their use thousands of requisitioned houses, rooms and flats, plots of land as well as hotels, restaurants and numerous other installations.⁹

From the outset of the British Occupation one of the most publicised scandals, which caused much damage to relations with the local population, was the high number of premises requisitioned and subsequently left standing empty. In the early days of Occupation the Army often simply moved out of houses without derequisitioning them. At times the Services refused to relinquish empty accommodation in case units arrived from abroad. In other cases houses were either kept through oversight or the 'well-known Army principle of never giving up property once acquired'.¹⁰ It is important to consider how German attitudes to requisitioning developed once the BAOR was transformed from an occupation to an allied force, a key element at the heart of

⁷ See for example: Jeffrey Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War Two*, New York, 1993.

⁸ NA, AIR 48/223, 129, *cited in*: Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 35.

⁹ Overall the Allies had under requisitioning over 16,000 houses, 11,000 plots of land, and 679 barracks, over 13,000 flats, over 8,000 single rooms, 1,200 hotels, and 600 restaurants; NRW, NW 115/174, *Kölnische Rundschau*, 16 July 1951.

¹⁰ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 138.

this thesis. Unsurprisingly, once the Federal Republic was established, German resentment of requisitioning grew. The German press carefully monitored the situation and reported that, despite a considerable effort by the British to reduce these figures, according to the German finance ministry there were still 60,000 requisitioned buildings in 1951.¹¹

The lack of suitable accommodation in the British zone immediately after the end of the war due to bombing and the arrival of refugees is well-documented.¹² In the British-occupied *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein nearly three million refugees had to be accommodated alongside the 1.6 million residents. The population of Lower Saxony had grown from 4.5 million in 1939 to 6.7 million in 1947. In the British-occupied Rhineland alone there were two hundred camps with nearly 100,000 refugees.¹³ By February 1947 906,000 refugees from the east had arrived in North Rhine Westphalia.¹⁴ The arrival of British families, beginning to join Service personnel in 1946, had naturally exacerbated the ‘unparalleled’ housing situation in the zone.¹⁵ Many Germans were evicted at short notice from their homes to make room for British families.¹⁶

What is less well documented is that the issue of requisitioning continued to threaten relations between BAOR and the Germans throughout the entire period under observation here. The British Düsseldorf Resident reported as late as September 1954 that the city’s population still grew by five hundred a day

¹¹ The Allies had returned 14,000 houses, 13,000 flats, 1,600 hotels and restaurants and 3,900 office buildings by 1951. NRW, NW 115/174, *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 18 August 1951.

¹² See for example: Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People* as well as Volker Koop, *Besetzt: Britische Besatzungspolitik in Deutschland*, Berlin, 2007.

¹³ Volker Koop, *Besetzt*, p. 91.

¹⁴ Volker Koop, *Besetzt*, p. 99.

¹⁵ Commander-in-Chief and Military Governor, Air Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, *cited in*: Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 137.

¹⁶ Volker Koop, *Besetzt*, p. 152.

and that despite signs of new dwellings, the 'hard core of bunker inhabitants' remained a constant figure.¹⁷ In contrast to this, British soldiers and their families often found life in the British zone extremely comfortable. For example the fifty families of the 15th/19th King's Royal Hussars in the city of Lübeck on the Baltic coast lived in requisitioned homes and flats in what had been before the war the smartest area of town. It was not unusual for a senior NCO, his wife and one child to live in a six-bedroom house surrounded by a vast garden and to receive the services of a nanny and a daily help, all free of charge.¹⁸ Many of these benefits enjoyed by British troops in Germany were only slowly given up in 1956. This change of heart did however not occur in order to improve Anglo-German relations but rather because the Germans were no longer required to pay for the costs of the cheap German labour used for the provision of domestic servants for British officers. According to Harold MacMillan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'somebody else' had been paying for the privileges and:

People in the forces will, I am sure, realise that the situation is different when this heavy new burden falls on their own people in the United Kingdom.¹⁹

In fact the secretary of state for war very much regretted abolishing the benefits enjoyed particularly by British officers in Germany, as these had hitherto been beneficial for the recruitment of new officers. The luxurious life in Germany was to counterbalance the hardship endured in other stations around the world.²⁰

¹⁷ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Düsseldorf Report, 30 September 1954.

¹⁸ Jeremy Bastin (1981), *The History of the 15th/19th the King's Royal Hussars, 1945-1980*, Chichester, p. 52.

¹⁹ NA, CAB 129/82, C.P. (56) 157, Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Forces Conditions in Germany, 27 June 1956.

²⁰ NA, CAB 129/82, C.P. (56) 155, Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War on Forces' Conditions of Service in Germany, 25 June 1956.

This luxury was obvious to the local population and shaped the German attitude towards the Forces' accommodation situation. The generally slow speed of derequisitioning of homes was a frequent point of complaint by Germans.²¹

The German press and many political parties constantly campaigned against requisitioning, thereby causing problems for the Bonn government. For example in 1951, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on the Social Democrats' (SPD) demand that the government ensure no more housing was to be requisitioned in case of any further increase of Allied troop strength in Germany. In addition, the restrictions prohibiting Germans sharing accommodation with Service personnel should be abolished.²² Furthermore in 1951 the SPD issued an official request to parliament demanding the government reach an agreement with the Allied High Commissioners to not remove victims of Nazi oppression, refugees, those affected by the war and those displaced by the Occupation regime from their current premises. The fulfilment of this demand would arguably have left very few properties for the BAOR to requisition. The SPD also demanded that the necessary housing and installations for Allied troops should be built immediately.²³ This put additional pressure on the Bonn government to spend more money and resources on housing at a time when the increase of BAOR troops itself heightened the Occupation costs for the FRG. There was evidently a demand by the German population that the transformation of the BAOR from an occupation force to an ally should go hand in hand with a reduction in the often lavish accommodation of British troops. The British attempts to accommodate these demands will be analysed in chapter six, following an examination of German civilian attempts to wrestle the control of their homes from the British.

German civilians displaced and dissatisfied by the Occupation regime (the so-called *Besatzungsverdrängte*) increasingly organised their protests and

²¹ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Düsseldorf Report, 30 September 1954.

²² NRW, NW 115/174, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 January 1951.

²³ NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 3 January 1951.

founded official organisations in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony.²⁴ According to a 1951 German press report, the number of people with claims against the German government due to requisitioning was as high as 3.5 million:

For six years these people had been waiting for the return of either their homes or other property like furniture requisitioned by the Allies.²⁵

The same newspaper estimated that the number of displaced persons as a result of requisitioning made up as much as 6.8 per cent of the entire German population.²⁶

The *Besatzungsverdrängte* organisations arranged frequent demonstrations throughout the British zone and their demands continuously increased throughout the early 1950s. Postulations ranged from the return of the requisitioned properties and the exclusive housing of Allied troops in barracks to the repatriation of all Allied families to their home countries and a general end to the 'colonial policies' ostensibly represented by the BAOR.²⁷ The *Besatzungsverdrängte* organisation of North Rhine-Westphalia threatened to take legal action against the state of NRW, after a man had been removed from his house by a force of 'nearly fifty policemen'. This incident had occurred although the requisitioned property in question had stood empty for a long time. Apparently the return of the house had been promised repeatedly and this was

²⁴ One example in North Rhine Westphalia was the *Notgemeinschaft der Besatzungsbetroffenen* (Hardship Association of those affected by Occupation), expanded in 1951 to *Schutzverband der Besatzungsbetroffenen Düsseldorf und Umgebung* (Association for the Protection of those affected by Occupation in Düsseldorf and surrounding areas), NRW, NW 115/174.

²⁵ NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 11 January 1951.

²⁶ NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 11 January 1951.

²⁷ NRW, NW 115/174, Head of Press Office (Chef der Pressestelle), 9 February 1952.

only the latest in a series of cases in the area.²⁸ At least one protest march by the organisation in the town of Detmold had to be dispersed by the police as it threatened to turn violent.²⁹ In January 1952, desperate German families in the town of Herford moved back into their requisitioned homes without permission. The local German authorities issued severe warnings to the residents, as it would be impossible to protect the families should British personnel forcefully remove them.³⁰ In 1953, despite the protests by displaced Germans, there were still British couples without children living in entire houses by themselves in Herford. An attempt by displaced homeowners to move into their empty but requisitioned houses ended with water and electricity supplies being cut off and German guards, employed by the BAOR, enforcing the strict isolation of the Germans in question.³¹ The pressure of the *Besatzungsverdrängte* groups also contributed to the pressure on the German authorities.³² These cases demonstrate how the unpopularity of British requisitioning not only affected German views of Allied troops, but also how the image of the *Land* and Federal Governments suffered as they enforced unpopular measures previously agreed on with the British. The largely economic issue of requisitioning, therefore, also had political implications for both Britain and Germany.

Cases of displaced persons illegally occupying their still requisitioned houses were reported by the press as late as 1955. Interestingly, there were some similarities here with the occupation of military accommodation by homeless squatters in Britain in 1946. In Britain as in Germany the military seemed indifferent to the problems of ordinary people, despite the possession of many unoccupied or partly occupied premises during a period of housing

²⁸ NRW, NW 115/175, *Die Welt*, 22 April 1953.

²⁹ NRW, NW 115/175, *Freie Presse*, 27 April 1953.

³⁰ NRW, NW 115/175, Chef der Pressestelle, 31 January 1952.

³¹ NRW, NW 115/175, *Ruhr Nachrichten*, 29 May 1953.

³² NRW, NW 115/175, Chef der Pressestelle, 26 May 1952.

shortage.³³ The German authorities continually attempted to force the occupants to leave their properties by cutting off water and electricity supplies. The *Besatzungsverdrängte* organisations on the other hand keenly supported the individuals in question, much to the frustration of the British authorities.³⁴ In one case a local German court forbade neighbours of one particular property illegally occupied by their owners to install an alternative gas supply to the house. The court also ordered the owner to leave his home, which after a lengthy court case he did in January 1956 as the requisitioning continued until May of the same year.³⁵

In several cases where homes had been requisitioned but subsequently left empty by the British, landlords and families in need of housing simply moved back in as a sign of protest. For example in the small Westphalian town of Lübbecke, where 160 houses with 1,500 rooms had been requisitioned, seven families moved back into their requisitioned but empty homes and raised the European flag as a sign of protest.³⁶ Lübbecke had a population of approximately 7,000 people with an additional 3,000 refugees when it became one of the key British administrative centres of the British zone in 1945. And the housing situation continued to be severe even after barracks for British troops were built in 1948.³⁷ Once more this situation led to the formation of local protest organisations which supported those Germans occupying their homes. The Lübbecker *Notgemeinschaft* telegraphed the minister president of North Rhine-Westphalia as well as the Personal Security Advisor to the German chancellor, Dr. Blank, to advise them that the seven families had moved in, claiming their

³³ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, pp. 122-23.

³⁴ NRW, NW 115/175, *Westfalenpost*, 12 November 1955.

³⁵ NRW, NW 115/175, *Abendpost*, 10 January 1956.

³⁶ NRW, NW 115/174, *Freie Presse*, 27 January 1951.

³⁷ Stadtarchiv Bad Oeynhausen, B II 18, cited in: 'Lübbecke und die Britische Kontrollkommission 1945', *Lübbecke Kompakt*, available at <http://www.luebbecke.de> [accessed 25 January 2012].

rights in accordance with the Basic Law of the FRG. The British, however, demanded the immediate evacuation of the flats, threatening to otherwise arrest the families in question, who then left without causing further incidents.³⁸ It was events of this type which occurred all over the British zone, particularly in those more rural areas which had been spared the worst of the Allied bombing and therefore were inhabited by a large number of refugees from bombed-out cities and the east. The establishment of friendly relations between troops and communities which had to make way for British families as late as ten years after the end of hostilities was undoubtedly going to be a difficult task.

The worst area of the British zone of Occupation in regards to requisitioning was without doubt the area of Bad Oeynhausen, which housed the headquarters of the BAOR until 1954. The town had largely escaped bomb damage during the war but an unwelcome surprise of a different kind affected the majority of inhabitants in 1945:

‘Baddo’ as it was called, was a very pleasant spa, about twice the size of Southwell in Nottinghamshire, with twice the population. Unfortunately the 10,000 ‘Deuschers’ had been evicted from their nice little town to make way for 1,000 officers and 2,000 other ranks who acted as clerks, batmen, drivers, runners and every kind of dogsbody to the officers.³⁹

The town was substantially requisitioned until 1954:

The railway station itself is requisitioned, and Germans using it are segregated to some extent. I find it impossible to imagine a situation anywhere else parallel to that which still obtains in this town, seven years

³⁸ NRW, NW 115/174, *Freie Presse*, 27 January 1951.

³⁹ Lance Corporal Gordon Cox, RAMC Bielefeld, *cited in*: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 61.

after the end of hostilities and on the eve of the Federal area resuming sovereignty.⁴⁰

Barbed wire fences separating the British from the Germans in Bad Oeynhausen were only removed in 1951, when seventy hectares of requisitioned land, including the spa gardens, were handed back to the Germans. Nonetheless, forty per cent of all available living space in the town continued to be requisitioned by the BAOR.⁴¹ By the time the British headquarters at Bad Oeynhausen were finally closed, the physical and economic damage caused by the BAOR was considerable. The town had lost, 'apart from [the damage caused by] the thirty-two minor and medium fires, the Protestant church, a 750,000 DM bathing house and four private residences', all of which had been requisitioned by the British. A local newspaper article outlined how under British 'rule', the largest thermal spring in Europe had remained closed to anyone but the BAOR and how the only public building in town accessible to the German public had in fact been a public lavatory. The entire train station with all ticket offices and waiting rooms was reserved for 'the handful of British tourists', while the last remaining church bells were not allowed to ring for German but only for English services.⁴²

Requisitioning caused more than economic grievances. For an increasing number of Germans, it stood in the way of achieving the re-establishment of German sovereignty. As diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany on the highest levels increasingly normalised, it was economic questions such as requisitioning, which threatened to turn the BAOR into a liability rather than an asset to Anglo-German relations. The ostensibly economic grievance of

⁴⁰ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate to *Land* Commissioner on 'Military Accommodation Programme and Allied/German Relations generally', 19 March 1952.

⁴¹ NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 2 July 1951.

⁴² NRW, NW 115/175, *Der Nordwestspiegel*, 3 June 1954, p.3.

manoeuvre damage also clearly highlights how economic damage translated into political problems.

The BAOR and the KPD: Manoeuvre Damage and its Political Consequences

Besides the requisitioning of land and property, there was a further major source of complaint throughout the entire period in question. At least once every year the British Services, together with their allied NATO forces, conducted large-scale manoeuvres across wide parts of the British zone. These inevitably caused damage to property and distress to local inhabitants. Roads were damaged by tanks and armoured vehicles, farmers lost their crops, damage to forests and even houses and farms frequently occurred. Furthermore there were a number of areas constantly affected by their proximity to training areas, which led to an increasing resentment of British troops as well as the fear of a rise of political extremism. Manoeuvre damage therefore quickly developed into an economic problem with serious social ramifications. On a tour of damaged areas near the Rheinsehlen training area in 1951, a British officer met with local German farmers and officials affected. The officer concluded it was important to note that all the locals had a full understanding that considerable damage was to be expected and unavoidable and that they accepted necessary damage with equanimity. They were however becoming increasingly resentful and bitter over what appeared to be unnecessary, avoidable and even wilful damage. 'The Germans met had a genuine fear that extremism in political feeling is being engendered.'⁴³

British fear of providing political extremists in Germany with ammunition over the actions of the BAOR was not unfounded. West German communist

⁴³ NA, FO 1010/171, Report on damage caused by Training in the Rheinsehlen training area, 1951.

groups in particular made good use of the issue of Occupation Forces. A 1953 British Information Services Report highlighted the 'increasingly frequent and more scurrilous' attacks on the Allied Defence Forces by the communist press in Germany. The campaign magnified every small incident involving an Allied soldier, even remotely, into an act of terrorism or drunken brutality; training damage was pictured as wanton destruction which was ruining the farmers; and protests against the requisitioning of land for airfields or training purposes, as well as against the preparing of roads and bridges for explosion charges, were published almost continuously under bold and provocative headings. In the run-up to the 1953 German general elections, the same type of material was repeated ad nauseam in the communist press as electioneering propaganda in favour of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). The communists specifically linked the Federal Government with the Allied troops and demanded 'Out with Adenauer, out with the Occupation troops. Vote KPD'.⁴⁴ Communist agitators frequently used British plans to create new training areas or enlarge existing ones to claim that:

In the interest of war preparation they will first take your land and then your sons shall be driven to the slaughter for the profiteering interests of the war-mongers in this country and abroad. The bombed cities are still lying destroyed, the tears of widows and orphans have not yet been dried, and *again the same hands – which are still smeared with the blood of the last war – are grasping at your land, at your houses, at your lives.*⁴⁵

It is evident from this type of propaganda that relations between British troops and the German population really were a potential source of major problems for West German integration as well as European defence. Although Adenauer's

⁴⁴ NA, FO 953/1424, Information Services Quarterly Report, 30 July 1953.

⁴⁵ NA, FO 1013/1978, translated copy of KPD pamphlet, Siegen, 1951 (italics added to translation in red pencil presumably by British officer).

Christian Democrats (CDU) comfortably won the 1953 election and the number of communist votes dropped below the five per cent mark required to enter parliament, prior to the election the Federal Government feared that Germans at large had not yet been convinced by the idea of democracy.⁴⁶

The communist press in Germany as well as in Moscow used every opportunity to campaign against the BAOR. In a number of cases this proved hugely damaging to the Services as well as Anglo-German relations. This damage took months of intense efforts from both Bonn and London to undo. Often these incidents were in fact instigated by local communists. An article in the weekly national paper *Die Zeit* traced how one such incident had turned into the number one news issue for a whole week throughout the entire country. It began with a typically brief British military press note, announcing the enlargement of the Teutoburg forest training area. The local communist press as well as the Soviet news agency TASS then jumped at this and fuelled speculations with rumours. A local communist newspaper article, headed 'Warmongering in Teutoburg forest demands first victims', called for protest after the alleged eviction of 266 people from the Teutoburger Wald region to make room for manoeuvre areas. The article repeatedly referred to Allied war preparations and highlighted the danger for the water supply as well as for the lives of local inhabitants and called for mass protests to preserve the existence of communities as well as peace.⁴⁷ Local German opinion apparently had been affected by the behaviour of a particularly insensitive British Army officer:

who made it very clear he did not like Germans and the memory of British tanks in 1945 destroying twenty houses in the village despite there being no German soldiers left and white flags hanging out of the windows.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Alistair Horne, *Back into Power*, p. 194.

⁴⁷ NRW, NW 115/173, *Volksecho*, 18 March 1950.

⁴⁸ NRW, NW 115/173, *Die Zeit*, 30 March 1950.

The issue was then picked up by the non-communist press. According to the conservative newspaper *Westfalenpost*, the potential environmental impact of the decision to extend the British shooting range which had led to the evacuations had been brought to the attention of UNESCO. Environmental concerns now added to the economic problems caused by the affair. The British allegedly had ordered the residents of several villages to evacuate their homes for three days per week when BAOR planned to practise artillery and machine gun shooting.⁴⁹ The forested area to be destroyed by British troops was valued at fifteen million DM and considered vital for the local tourism and logging industries.⁵⁰ GDR propaganda now also seized the opportunity to attack the BAOR. *Radio Leipzig* reported that many inhabitants of the area had protested in the name of the National Front of the Democratic Germany against the destruction and colonization of their *Heimat* and for national and economic independence. It also referred to the rise in number of members of the National Front of the GDR in North Rhine Westphalia.⁵¹

Despite British attempts to calm the mood and explanations as to the real aims of the extension of the training area, the German press continued to doubt British promises and the plight of the local population received attention even in the non-affiliated press.⁵² Only at a later date did the West German press report that the evacuation was merely designed as a safety measure around the actual practice area which had been used since 1945, that only two families, who had previously been informed about this, had to leave their homes for three days per week and that logging could continue on the days when no practice took place.⁵³ Arguably as a result of this negative publicity, the decision on the extension was

⁴⁹ NRW, NW 115/173, *Westfalenpost*, 20 March 1950.

⁵⁰ NRW, NW 115/173, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26 March 1950.

⁵¹ NRW, NW 115/173, *Sender Leipzig*, 28 March 1950.

⁵² NRW, NW 115/173, *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 March 1950.

⁵³ NRW, NW 115/173, *Radio NWDR*, 27 March 1950, NW 115/173, *Westdeutsches Tageblatt*, 28 March 1950.

referred back to the British High Commissioner, General Robertson, and also became a matter for the Federal Government.⁵⁴ The subject dragged on for weeks and ended with a British announcement to reverse the decision to expand the training area.⁵⁵ On the same day however, the British announced the requisitioning of a different area in the *Sauerland* area, which promptly caused renewed uproar in the press.⁵⁶ This example highlights only one of many cases receiving national attention due to a combination of factors: requisitioning and training exercises exacerbated by a perceived lack of communication by British authorities; alleged actions by British officers; and an at least partly hostile German press. The British military presence did not only threaten to cause resentment due to economic grievances, but also due to becoming subject to political agitation by the KPD.

The threat to Anglo-German relations posed by the KPD was taken seriously by both the German and British administrations. The communists had entered the 1949 Federal Parliament with 5.7 per cent and the 1953 election still returned around 600,000 communist votes in the FRG. The poor performance of the KPD in 1953 was at least in part attributable to the brutal Soviet suppression of the June 1953 uprising in the GDR.⁵⁷ This was certainly greeted with satisfaction by the British High Commissioner Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar.⁵⁸ The fear of the potential consequences of anti-Western propaganda nonetheless increased over time. Only the banning of the KPD in 1956 finally alleviated the perceived threat posed by the extreme left to the newly established German democracy.

⁵⁴ NRW, NW 115/173, *Westfälische Nachrichten*, 5 April 1950.

⁵⁵ NRW, NW 115/173, *Der Mittag*, 9 May 1950.

⁵⁶ NRW, NW 115/173, *Rheinische Post*, 10 May 1950.

⁵⁷ Alistair Horne, *Back into Power*, p. 191.

⁵⁸ NA, FO 371/109264, Annual Political Report for 1953, Hoyer-Millar to Eden, 15 March 1954, p.2.

As with requisitioning, manoeuvre damage not only caused problems for Anglo-German relations but also for the German *Land* and Federal Governments. Once the Occupation status had given way to that of equal partnership, the demands of the German population grew rapidly. These demands could then be taken up by the press. There was to be no military training and shooting on German public holidays. The damage to trees in requisitioned training areas was to be minimised and, among other demands, there was to be no low level flying of aircraft. Throughout the period in question, warnings by local German officials about the political consequences of manoeuvre damage steadily increased.⁵⁹ According to the trade minister of Niedersachsen, by 1953 the anger of the population was mainly targeted at the Bonn government which, considering the looming elections, was a problem. Furthermore many of the claimants of previous years were still waiting for compensation for manoeuvre damage.⁶⁰ The number of disgruntled German voters was potentially growing year by year. In addition to these problems, the actions of individual officers threatened to exacerbate an already tense situation in some parts of the British zone.

Fox Hunting as a Cause of Inter-cultural Friction

Hunting impressively demonstrated the fragile nature of Anglo-German relations at the local level. It also highlighted the willingness of both the Services and the Germans to use the issue of 'friendship' as a bargaining token. What was intended to promote inter-cultural communications was instead sometimes a significant hindrance. The traditional British way of fox hunting had been outlawed in the Federal Republic as this was considered cruel to animals. After

⁵⁹ NI, Nds. 50 Acc. 96/88 Nr. 167/3.

⁶⁰ NI, Nds. 50 Acc. 96/88 Nr. 167/3 Wirtschaftsminister Seebohm to Ministerpräsident Kopf, 30 June 1953.

1949 this ban therefore also applied to Allied troops in Germany. In spite of the Bonn government banning the practice, at least in one case a local British unit had rather strongly demanded an exemption.⁶¹ The British desire to use dogs for fox hunting in the town of Wolfenbüttel even led to the British Resident Officer in the area, Colonel Day, responsible for liaising between troops and German civilians, to use his influence with local German politicians. Apparently the British Resident and Captain Lord Blandford of the 'Life Guards' put considerable pressure on the German official responsible for hunting in the town of Wolfenbüttel. A letter by Lord Blandford to the German official used drastic language to highlight the potential damage of the hunting issue for Anglo-German relations in general. Apparently fox hunting was:

taking place in a large number of European countries and the only reason it was outlawed in Germany was due to Hermann Goering's decision in 1937.⁶²

It is doubtful this letter would have swayed the German official's view in favour of the British request.

The British government had informed BAOR units that, in the interest of Anglo-German friendship, hunting was now only allowed for troops with permission of the local German owners. It was these owners who, in the eyes of some officers, endangered this friendship by their refusal to 'leave a few hares, which was really not much to ask'. After all, British officers had spent:

considerable amounts of time and money to buy and train their dogs and would, due to this unfriendly and short-sighted action of yours, receive preciously little joy and amusement in return.⁶³

⁶¹ NI, Nds. 50, Nr. 248, Teil 2, p. 254, *Wolfenbütteler Zeitung*, 7 November 1952.

⁶² NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 253, Letter Lord Blandford, 8 November 1952.

⁶³ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 253, Letter Lord Blandford.

Lord Blandford stressed that the Germans had to be aware that Anglo-German relations in the area would suffer considerably, unless the Germans were willing to compromise.⁶⁴ This thinly veiled threat was however only the beginning of the conflict over fox hunting in Wolfenbüttel.

The German official, Herr Lieberkuehn, subsequently complained to the Lower Saxony *Land* government. Apparently British troops had harassed him after he refused to grant the desired exemption for British fox hunting in the area. According to Herr Lieberkuehn, such decisions could only be made in Bonn or Wahnerheide and local Germans were very upset about the British practice of employing dogs for the chase. To make matters worse, the night following the refusal of an exemption, the house of Herr Lieberkuehn was attacked by 'heavy and very heavy' British pyrotechnic devices and it appeared obvious that this was a response to the refusal.⁶⁵ The excuse given by the British for launching three 'attacks' during that evening was that apparently the soldiers launching the flares meant to deliver an ovation to their commanding officer to celebrate 'Battle of Hastings Day' and that they had accidentally picked the wrong house!⁶⁶ The German police report concluded that the flares used could easily have caused the entire house to burn down and that the home of the commanding officer was in a completely different part of the town.⁶⁷ Naturally the incident, which caused considerable damage to the house as a number of small fires were started, was gratefully taken up by the communist press in the GDR.

⁶⁴ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 253, Letter Lord Blandford.

⁶⁵ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 248, Letter Mr. Lieberkuehn to Niedersachsen Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry, 11 November 1952.

⁶⁶ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 250, Letter Mr. Lieberkuehn, 11 November 1952.

⁶⁷ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 257, Bericht Nr 104.

This was a remarkable case of the problems incurred by the attempts by individual officers to circumvent British orders from high levels on the ground. The consequences in return had to be dealt with by the Minister President of the *Land* government as well as the British *Land* Commissioner. The issue was finally resolved with a British apology to Herr Lieberkuehn and the end of fox hunting in the area. The British hunting dogs were returned to England.⁶⁸ It is however questionable whether, after this incident, the local BAOR unit had much interest in improving Anglo-German relations. Incidentally a British Information Services report for 1952 highlighted the emergence of 'a violent and obviously organised Press campaign in Lower Saxony against hunting by Allied troops'.⁶⁹

Actions by Individual Officers as Social Causes of anti-BAOR Sentiment

There is further evidence demonstrating the damage done to the British image in Germany by individual officers. At times apparently insignificant episodes caused enormous problems. It is worth considering some examples here in order to understand the varied nature of German grievances against the BAOR. In September 1952, the senior head of the Lüneburg City Council was denied access to the tennis court of his requisitioned estate by a British officer. Claiming the borders of the requisitioned area were unclear, the German official went on to openly attack the British officer in a public council meeting. The incident led to a formal protest by the city council and naturally attracted the attention of the press. One parliamentarian stated that the Lüneburg public was aghast, that seven years after the war, a single British officer could still remove the first representative of a large city council from his own private property using military police. 'Incidents which may still be possible on the Fiji Islands should belong to

⁶⁸ NI, Nds. 50 Nr. 248 Teil 2, p. 265, Vermerk, 17 January 1953.

⁶⁹ NA, FO 953/1423, Information Services Quarterly Report, December 1952.

the past in Europe'.⁷⁰ This in return caused a letter of protest from the British *Land* Commissioner of Lower Saxony and a very lengthy argument between German and British officials aiming to establish whether or not the tennis court had been requisitioned. British officers in command in 1945, when the requisitioning took place, had to be consulted and detailed plans of the property were produced in order to establish the exact boundaries of the requisitioned premises. Both the British and German authorities once again had to spend considerable amounts of time and effort to minimise the damage and propaganda value for both left and right wing political factions in Germany. There was another noteworthy case of this kind in the summer of 1952, when an officer drove his tank into the garden of a restaurant in Lower Saxony because he had been refused a drink. Having caused one thousand pounds worth of damage, the officer was officially severely reprimanded – unconfirmed reports however had it that subsequently he had been congratulated by his commanding officer for 'showing initiative'.⁷¹ Similar ground for complaints were provided by one British Major who had to be dealt with by the Military Police in Hamburg after crashing his private car into a German taxi and kicking the driver in the stomach, whilst 'under the influence of drink'.⁷² This type of incident provided ample ammunition for the German press to ridicule British attempts to use the BAOR to display the values of Western democracy. German complaints about British behaviour were however not limited to the actions of individual officers.

⁷⁰ NI, Nds. 50 Acc. 96/88 Nr. 163/3, *Lüneburger Landeszeitung*, 25 September 1952.

⁷¹ Alistaire Horne, *Back into Power*, p. 134.

⁷² NA, FO 1013/2075, Hamburg Public Safety Report, Public Safety Branch, *Land* Commissioner's Office, 28 June 1954.

Incidents caused by British Troops

The relations between troops and civilians were frequently over-shadowed by minor as well as major incidents caused by British troops in Germany. The frequent reports of clashes between soldiers and Germans gave an indication that things did not always progress as smoothly as planned. British Resident Officers generally produced positive reports in regards to relations between British troops and German civilians, but the monthly newsletters issued by the Public Safety Department of the British High Commission shed a somewhat different light on the situation on the ground. For example the April 1954 Public Safety Report for the Westphalia area listed two serious late night incidents between soldiers and civilians. One German civilian died from his injuries and one British soldier was stabbed in the back and seriously wounded.⁷³ The same report listed for July 1954 nine cases of malicious damage by British personnel, ten common and four indecent assaults and one case of rape by Servicemen, not to mention seven brawls involving Service personnel as well as four thefts.⁷⁴ In Hamburg one typical incident occurred in May 1954, when 'a soldier grabbed a German woman by the breast and hip and offered her five DM for permission to have sexual relations with her'.⁷⁵ Local incidents such as these caused frequent complaints but particularly during the mid-1950s the behaviour of British troops in some parts of Germany deteriorated and caused major reasons for concern.

⁷³ NA, FO 1013/2075, Public Safety Reports, Special Police Corps Monthly Letter, April 1954.

⁷⁴ NA, FO 1013/2075, Public Safety Reports, Special Police Corps Monthly Letter, April 1954.

⁷⁵ NA, FO 1013/2075, Public Safety Reports, Special Police Corps Monthly Letter, April 1954.

Incidents caused by Canadian Troops

Despite the threat caused to Anglo-German relations by certain British actions it is noteworthy that Canadian troops were often regarded as far worse than the British and there were widespread complaints about drunkenness, violence, prostitution and black market activities recorded by the German authorities.⁷⁶ One example involved twenty five Canadian soldiers organising the raid and destruction of a bar in the town of Bergen and injuring the guests because the publican had called a Canadian officer to calm an argument between Germans and Canadians a week before.⁷⁷ As a result three Canadian soldiers were sentenced to one and a half years in prison with hard labour. In an additional incident in December 1951, two Canadian officers were set upon by a group of twenty German youths armed with sticks and chains. There were further reports of unprovoked attacks in the town by German youths leading up to the incident in the pub.⁷⁸

As in Britain, relations between troops and civilians caused comments in the Canadian press. The fact that the Federal Archive in Koblenz holds records of Canadian press reports on relations between troops and Germans demonstrates the considerable level of concern among the German authorities. The *Vancouver Sun* reported in 1956 that Germans 'resented the presence of Canadian troops in their country' and although there was little open hostility, there was continual sniping at Canadian soldiers in the German press. Going further, the article claimed that 'the effort at good community relations appears to be all one-sided – on the part of the Canadians.' According to the *Vancouver Sun* the German attitude towards Canadian soldiers was hardly surprising inasmuch as many Germans, opposed to rearmament, resented their own

⁷⁶ NI, Nds. 100, Acc. 60/55, Nr. 1142, p. 2, Letter Dora Dittmann to Canadian Camp Commander Hannover, 10 September 1952.

⁷⁷ NI, Nds. 100, Acc. 60/55, Nr. 1142.

⁷⁸ NI, Nds. 100, Acc. 60/55, Nr. 1142, p. 60.

soldiers and it was therefore likely that Canadian and German troops were likely to get on much better than Canadian troops and German civilians.⁷⁹ One Canadian reporter claimed he had not found a single man who did not want to go home as soon as his tour of duty was completed. One frequently heard Canadian reaction was that 'the Germans like our money but not us'.⁸⁰ According to the German embassy in Vancouver, the *Vancouver Sun* consistently demonstrated a hostile, subjective and tendentious attitude towards Germany.⁸¹ Clearly it was not only Anglo-German relations which potentially posed a threat to the German commitment to Western defence in the British zone of Occupation. However, the fact that Canadian behaviour was rated worse by many Germans arguably worked in favour of the British.

German Official Concerns over British and other Allied Troops

As the above examples demonstrate, the presence of British troops in particular and Allied troops in general was not universally welcomed by the German population. In 1952 a survey by the German political opinion polling company Emnid Institute attempted to gauge how successful the Allied attempt to transform Occupation troops to protective forces had been. Only fourteen per cent of those polled throughout the three western zones saw the troops as 'welcome protection'. Sixty-seven per cent regarded them as either unavoidable or even as an unwelcome nuisance. This view was spread equally across all zones.⁸² Despite these somewhat negative attitudes towards Allied protection, a

⁷⁹ BK, 145/610, *The Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1956, 'Germans snipe at Canadian troops: 'Go home, Canucks' is attitude overseas soldiers run up against'.

⁸⁰ BK, B145/610, *The Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1956.

⁸¹ BK, B145/610, Bericht Nr. 191/56 Konsulat der Bundesrepublik, Vancouver.

⁸² NRW, NW 115/175, *Rheinische Post*, 08 April 1952.

poll conducted by the American High Commission resulted in seventy-five per cent of respondents being against a withdrawal of Allied forces from Germany due to fear of a Soviet attack. Seventy-four per cent thought it unwise to engage with the Soviet suggestion to withdraw all Allied troops from Germany. This constituted an improvement as, at the end of the Berlin blockade in 1949, only forty-six per cent had declared support for a continuation of the Occupation.⁸³ These figures therefore suggest a fairly widespread and increasing German willingness to accept the presence of Allied soldiers for reasons of anti-communist expediency. The statistics do not however demonstrate a particularly friendly attitude towards the Occupation troops.

Despite this, the behaviour of the soldiers in Germany was rated better than their role as 'welcome protectors'. Forty-one per cent of those polled by Emnid thought the behaviour was very good or good, thirty-four per cent answered average or bad. In fact the British fared the best with forty-eight per cent very good or good and only twenty-two per cent average or bad.⁸⁴ German sources suggest that the unpopularity of French and American troops was at least partly due to German resentment of the allegedly poor behaviour of Black American and French Moroccan troops. According to a report by local German officials on relations in the southern German *Land* of Baden Württemberg, it had been Moroccan troops which had committed 'countless cases of rape' in 1945.⁸⁵ The American troops not only demonstrated appalling, 'rowdy-like' behaviour but particularly Black American soldiers were blamed for continuous sexual assaults of German women. French Moroccan soldiers were frequently the subject of

⁸³ NRW, NW 115/173, *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, 7 June 1950.

⁸⁴ NRW, NW 115/175, *Rheinische Post*, 08 April 1952.

⁸⁵ [Politisches Archiv des] A[uswärtigen] A[mtes, Berlin], B86/937 507/81/38/2, Deutscher Städtetag an Auswärtiges Amt, Stimmungsbericht des Städteverbands Baden Württemberg, Dr. Krebsbach, 9 January 1960, p. 4.

complaints to German authorities.⁸⁶ Statistics compiled by German authorities in areas occupied by French and American troops revealed a long list of crimes, including numerous cases of rape of children (both girls and boys) and pregnant women, murder and assault among others.⁸⁷ Compared to the severity of these cases the behaviour of British troops indeed appeared rather better and the issue of racial prejudice was largely non-existent in the British zone of Occupation. These statistics somewhat reflect the findings of this chapter as the unpopularity of British troops did not necessarily stem from their behaviour but rather from the economic disadvantages, political resentment and inconvenience caused by their presence.

It is nonetheless somewhat surprising that the highly rated British behaviour did not continue throughout the period in question and in fact gave rise to increasing concern by German Federal and *Land* governments. Particularly after the admission of the FRG as a full member into NATO, German official concerns and attempts to improve relations and minimise crimes committed by soldiers grew. Apparently the behaviour of at least some British troops markedly deteriorated, particularly in the period of 1955 to 1957. At the very moment London and Bonn considered relations between the BAOR and Germans crucial to ensure West German integration into the Western orbit, local incidents in Germany indicated a turn for the worse in several areas. By 1955 the frequent occurrence of incidents as a result of the actions of individual servicemen therefore caused serious concern to the Federal Government. In particular, serious crimes like theft, rape and even murder gave constant rise to complaints by the German press.

The growth of British crime did not go unnoticed by the German public. According to an opinion poll on German views on the behaviour of Allied troops

⁸⁶ AA, B86/937 211-81-24-1-2360/56, Aufzeichnung vom 6. Juli 1956, Graf von Baudini an Bundesminister des Innern, der Verteidigung und der Justiz.

⁸⁷ AA, B86/937 MB 1531/56, List of crimes compiled by Minister President of Baden Württemberg, 18 July 1956.

in the FRG published in *Die Welt* in July 1956, only three per cent of those questioned held the behaviour of Allied troops to be very good. Thirty-one per cent considered it to be good, forty per cent fair and seventeen per cent bad. Nine per cent expressed no view. In answer to a further question, forty-five per cent considered the presence of Allied troops to be an unavoidable necessity, and thirty-eight per cent an undesirable burden. In fact the poll taken in 1952 had shown more positive results, and, although the Chancery of the British Embassy in Bonn considered the reaction of the public as quite reasonable, there was little doubt that the results had been influenced by recent press publicity given to incidents in which troops were involved.⁸⁸ Consequently in July 1956 Bonn sent requests for statistics on the numbers of incidents and cases of prosecution to the *Land* governments. Furthermore the Federal Interior Ministry (*Bundesinnenministerium*) inquired about the quality and truthfulness of local German press articles. These steps were taken in order to consider whether or not to take diplomatic steps.⁸⁹

The increasing number of press reports on crime committed by Allied soldiers had already led the NRW interior ministry to list all crimes by Allied soldiers for the second half of 1955 and first half of 1956. The statistics revealed an increase in the number of crimes by British soldiers.⁹⁰ Particularly incidents involving drunkenness in bars and restaurants showed a rise for the English (from eighteen to twenty-eight). Burglaries rose from thirty-one to forty-eight.

⁸⁸ NA, FO 371/124625, Letter Chancery British Embassy Bonn to Western Department Foreign Office, July 31, 1956.

⁸⁹ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 9.

⁹⁰ Sexual offences by British soldiers rose from fifteen to eighteen, those committed by Belgians rose from two to three and those by Canadians decreased from six to one; violent crimes committed by British soldiers rose from forty-six to sixty, those committed by Canadians decreased from eighteen to thirteen whereas those by Belgians rose from eleven to twelve; NI, NW 179/1336, p. 1.

According to the Interior Ministry of NRW, the level of crime had decreased slightly among the Canadians, whereas it had risen significantly among the British. There had been no change in troop numbers among any of the forces. The Interior Minister demanded that the Minister President should point out the rise in crime to the British authorities and suggest measures to deal with them, such as an increase in military police, the eviction of criminal elements and sharper punishment.⁹¹ The demand even included a template for a letter of complaint to the British Land Liaison officer.

Moreover, concerned German officials even noticed the damage to Anglo-German relations caused by the BAOR in Britain. In September 1956 one observer highlighted the negative publicity the rise in crime had caused abroad, particularly in the Beaverbrook press, which apparently had blamed the rise in crime on a resurgence of German nationalism. According to the Beaverbrook press, the best solution to this problem was the complete withdrawal of Allied troops from Germany. As a consequence it appeared wiser to deal with the issue informally with the British Land Liaison Officer rather than file an official complaint.⁹² Nonetheless, the interior ministry did send an official letter to the Land Liaison Officer and pointed out that in some garrison towns, mainly Minden, Detmold and Münster, the number of crimes had risen alarmingly, whereas in other places this had not been the case. The letter asked to prevent crimes specifically over the Christmas period, as of January 1957 a large number of civilian properties in these areas was due to be requisitioned by British troops.⁹³ Despite this effort at least one German newspaper reported that over Christmas numerous incidents had occurred in eastern Westphalia.⁹⁴

⁹¹ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 1-3, Letter Interior Minister to Minister President NRW, 5 September 1956.

⁹² NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 7, Letter Ministerialrat Dr. Kordt, 29 September 1956.

⁹³ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 51, Letter Herr Biernat to Mr. Plaice, 17 December 1956.

⁹⁴ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 49, *Rheinische Post*, 29 December 1956.

Not all *Land* governments chose to complain formally to the British as in the case of NRW. The Interior Minister of Lower Saxony in fact decided against reporting individual cases to the Federal Government as requested, as he did not want to draw further attention to the issue. The reason for his decision was that 'relations were rather better than those in the American zone'.⁹⁵ The minister also pointed out that many cases reported in the German press turned out to be false and he was in fact against any diplomatic steps as a result of recent cases.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, between July 1955 and July 1956 302 British soldiers committed crimes in Lower Saxony, including two cases of manslaughter, seventeen cases of rape and 130 cases of theft.⁹⁷

Despite the attitude of the Lower Saxony Interior Ministry, the Federal Government was so concerned about the behaviour of Allied troops, that a meeting with members of the military police of all three Allies was organised at the British headquarters in Lower Saxony in November 1957 to find solutions to the most pressing concerns. A Federal Interior Ministry consultant outlined some of the main German apprehensions.⁹⁸ The problem of relations involving soldiers had long been a concern of the Federal Government and German statistics showed that in some areas since the spring of 1955 relations had deteriorated significantly. The timing of this deterioration of relations was important as it occurred at exactly the time the Federal Republic was to be treated as an equal ally against communism. The Federal Government had begun collecting data in 1955 when reports of incidents increased. The nationality of troops was an important factor and figures for American troops in Bavaria and Baden Württemberg were 'alarmingly high'. Conditions in the northern states with British troops were significantly better despite a number of

⁹⁵ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 11, Letter Ministerialrat Dr. Kordt, 29 September 1956.

⁹⁶ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 11, Letter Ministerialrat Dr. Kordt.

⁹⁷ NRW, NW 179/1336, p. 49, *Rheinische Post*, 29 December 1956.

⁹⁸ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 122-130.

serious incidents. According to the Germans the general reasons for misbehaviour were in some cases still the idea of being in occupied enemy territory, the fact that most soldiers were young and unmarried, they had too much money and some wished to import 'cowboy manners' from their homeland.⁹⁹ The Interior Ministry stressed the view that no army stationed abroad could afford to accept attacks on the civilian population, as this undermined morale and discipline and as a result endangered fighting power and capability of the troops. The Federal Government therefore clearly regarded the issue as a real threat to the defence of Western Europe.

In order to improve relations, the German Interior Ministry suggested soldiers should engage socially with Germans for example in sports clubs. This was considered more productive than having sports events with teams from each country as this interaction potentially proved counterproductive. These measures however were only considered to be feasible when involving 'the older, more reasonable, intellectually interested soldiers'. In many cases all efforts with 'the young, inexperienced, intellectually close-minded, primitive soldiers' would be doomed to failure.¹⁰⁰ In the view of the Germans this type of soldier often left home for the first time and was confronted with problems he then failed to deal with. Apparently such people naturally tended to spend their free time consuming alcohol and consorting with the local 'Frauleins'. It was felt they did not use their time in Germany for their own more ostensibly rational personal development. The ministry advised that if all efforts failed to bring this type of soldier into the fold of civilian life, the only thing left was strict disciplinary supervision. Finally, the Germans urged the Allies to be more careful in their selection of troops sent to Germany in the first place:

⁹⁹ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 130.

One might consider if it was possible in the interest of good relations to only send soldiers to Germany who can be expected to behave and send those home who do not.¹⁰¹

Despite the Federal Government's concern over the situation in some parts of the country, German crime statistics of 1957 revealed just how favourably the behaviour of British troops compared to that of the Americans. Between July 1956 and September 1957 US troops in Bavaria committed eight murders, 319 cases of grievous bodily harm and 136 cases of robbery as well as 207 cases of rape. The corresponding figures for the British area of Lower Saxony were zero murders, twenty-seven cases of grievous bodily harm, nine cases of robbery and twenty-three cases of rape. Corresponding figures for North Rhine-Westphalia, which was also predominantly under British control, were zero murders, sixty-four cases of grievous bodily harm, twenty-six cases of robbery and thirty-six cases of rape. The overall number of offenders in Bavaria during this period was 714, whereas in Lower Saxony this figure was remarkably low with only twenty-six British offenders. In North Rhine-Westphalia there had been 195 delinquents during the period in question.¹⁰² The collection of data by the Federal Government continued and in March 1957, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed a list, compiled by the *Länder*, of incidents between the Allied Forces and the local population for the eighteen months ending December 1956. For Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate (the areas in which French and American troops were stationed) the total was 1,051; in contrast to this North-Rhine Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein (the British and Belgian area) totalled a mere 137 incidents. The British Foreign Office had added that 'even after making allowances for the

¹⁰¹ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 130.

¹⁰² NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8, p. 152.

greater number of the American forces, we had every reason to feel satisfied with the general behaviour of our troops'.¹⁰³

Although the statistics provided by the German authorities do not indicate an overall rise or fall of crimes committed by the BAOR, they certainly demonstrate the restraint exercised by British troops compared to the other Allies. Overall the British Forces were therefore relatively well-behaved. According to the British Embassy most disturbances were of very recent occurrence and should be seen against the background of the generally acceptable behaviour of the British Services in Germany.¹⁰⁴ German official attempts at reconciliation, analysed in the next section, were therefore not terminally undermined by the articulated disquiet about the excesses of some members of the BAOR.

German Efforts at Conciliation

The attitudes of the German civilian population towards British troops varied considerably depending on the geographical location, proximity to the Soviet zone of Occupation as well as whether garrisons were in urban or rural locations. The official history of the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars, who arrived in the northern German city of Lübeck in October 1949, described the attitude of the 250,000 inhabitants as ambivalent. In the eyes of the author (who wrote his account in 1981) this depended mainly on just how much the Germans needed to get on with the military authorities in order to make a living. The black marketer with his suitcase, who came around the married quarters exchanging Deutschmarks for Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) cigarettes, 'was charm himself'. The civilians employed in the camp were polite enough during

¹⁰³ NA, FO 371/130776, WG1195/16 Minute British Embassy, Bonn to FO, London, 12 August 1957.

¹⁰⁴ NA, FO 371/130776, WG1195/16 Minute British Embassy, 12 August 1957.

the hours of work and the shopkeeper would almost literally roll out the red carpet when a soldier or his wife entered the shop. The remainder apparently steered clear of any social contact and, in case there was interaction, this was kept brief. 'However, these were still the days when a pretty German girl would somehow manage to swallow her pride when a bar of chocolate or a packet of cigarettes were on offer'.¹⁰⁵ The citizens of the Westphalian town of Münster apparently developed a somewhat stolid, almost off-hand attitude to the very considerable British Army garrisons that surrounded the city. The British troops considered Westphalians in general and Münster in particular to be traditionally anti-military:

However, if one is to indulge in generalizations it is probably best to record that the further away from the East German border the less spontaneous Anglo-German relations tend to become and the faults do not all lie on one side.¹⁰⁶

German attitudes in smaller towns recorded by British observers were often more favourable. One of the regular visitors to the Sergeants' Mess of the 15th/19th Hussars in the small town of Wesendorf was the local German policeman, who arrived on his bicycle each Saturday just before lunch and left around mid-afternoon. However, as a figure of authority, he came into his own when the British military band gave an open-air concert in the village square, which ended with the playing of the two national anthems. The large German crowd stood firm during the playing of the German anthem but began to wander off during 'God Save the Queen', presumably from ignorance rather than bad manners. 'One loud grunt of disapproval from the policeman and the crowd

¹⁰⁵ Walter L. Vale, *The History of the South Staffordshire Regiment*, Aldershot, 1969, p.51.

¹⁰⁶ Walter L. Vale, *South Staffordshire Regiment*, p.100.

stopped in its tracks where it remained until dismissed.¹⁰⁷ At times during exercises in the German countryside, troops found they even had to fend off curious local Germans from neighbouring villages hoping to pick up ‘the odd treat’, such as a bar of chocolate or ‘finding’ some useful spare bits and pieces with which to mend their cars’. Fencing off the entire area was no option as ‘we’re supposed to keep good relationships with the locals’.¹⁰⁸

Despite the hostility in parts of the German press and public, there were large-scale, concerted efforts by German authorities and also by non-governmental organisations to improve relations between Allied soldiers and civilians. The Anglo-German Association (*Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft*), founded in May 1949 in Düsseldorf, quickly became the most prominent organisation fostering understanding between the British and German people. Its privately organised bilateral Königswinter Conferences aimed at getting Britons and Germans together once a year to ‘discuss matters of particular substance and moment (sic)’.¹⁰⁹ Although non-governmental organisations largely focused on Anglo-German relations in general rather than BAOR in particular, the annual appeal ‘Christmas in peace and freedom – union of hearts’ by the Anglo-German Association, which was widely advertised in the German national press, stood out as a prominent example to include service personnel.¹¹⁰ This appeal called for Germans to invite Allied soldiers into their homes for Christmas. In particular troops who spent their first year in Germany were to be shown a traditional German Christmas. Noteworthy was the non-

¹⁰⁷ Jeremy Bastin, *King’s Royal Hussars*, p.60.

¹⁰⁸ David Finlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds! A Wry Look at National Service*, Glasgow, 2006, p. 168.

¹⁰⁹ Sir Robert Birley, Educational Advisor to the British Military Government, *cited in*: Peter Alter, ‘Building Bridges’, p. 341.

¹¹⁰ See for example *Neue Zeitung*, 27 November 1951, cited in: BK, B145/610/250-2-2, Einladung von Angehörigen der Besatzungsmacht durch deutsche Familien zu Weihnachten, 1951-56.

military character of the appeal, as the invitations were designed as a thank you to those Allied soldiers who had themselves provided many German children and elderly people with gifts in the past. The invitations by German families were to be sent to local unit commanders and contain special requests in regards to age, profession, religious affiliation and language skills of the soldiers.¹¹¹ To further emphasize the non-military character, the appeal was continuously widened so that by 1954 this also included foreign students and refugees from the eastern bloc. In order to tempt more people to join the appeal, the organizers constantly pointed out the value of the invitations to the Germans, who could improve their language skills and learn about other cultures.

German official efforts also continuously increased on all levels throughout the period in question. German politicians made regular appeals to both the German population as well as British troops to improve relations. For instance, as early as May 1951 the Minister President of NRW, Karl Arnold, called for an improvement of relations between the British and the German civilian population when visiting BAOR HQ at Bad Oeynhausen. He suggested transforming the BAOR from an occupation force to a protection force, as this would surely improve relations. He also asked for the British officials to work towards this aim.¹¹²

In order to improve Anglo-German relations further, the state-run northern German radio station (*Norddeutscher Rundfunk-NDR*) broadcast a programme in December 1956 on the relations between the civilian population and Allied troops. This included a two minute address by the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, thanking those who worked to create friendly and cordial relations. Adenauer stressed the willingness on both sides from the grassroots of local people up to federal authorities and Allied headquarters to foster better relations. He also reminded his German audience of the many benefits they had gained from the presence of Allied troops, ranging from sports grounds built by soldiers

¹¹¹ BK, B145/610/250-2-2, *Neue Zeitung*, 27 November 1951.

¹¹² NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 26 May 1951.

and support of children in need to employment opportunities. Furthermore, he stressed the considerable economic benefits presented to the Germans by the presence of the troops.¹¹³

Efforts by the various German ministries affected by relations with the British Services varied in scope and success. The German Foreign Office compiled a directory for Allied soldiers to improve relations between themselves and German civilians. This effort came at the height of the debate about misbehaviour of Allied troops in November 1956. The means to improve relations was to be the personal and professional interests of the soldiers stationed in Germany. The directory aimed to provide an overview of cultural and professional bodies in Germany which could be of interest, in order to foster contacts with the local population. Copies were initially sent to the American and French headquarters but British and Belgian troops were also supplied with them. The compendium was divided into trades, industries, agriculture and forestry, sports, music and arts, technology (engineering), universities and tourism. Essentially this provided a detailed list of a wide range of trades and leisure activities, ranging from subjects as diverse as agriculture and boxing to dog training.¹¹⁴ An accompanying letter from the German Foreign Office to all Minister Presidents asked for any additional suggestions to be made by any of the ministries involved. The trade and transport minister of NRW highlighted that companies and factories had already offered guided tours for Allied soldiers and their wives which had been a success.¹¹⁵ The Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Forestry added that a useful addition would be to include youth organisations in

¹¹³ NRW, NW 115/174, *Rheinische Post*, 26 May 1951.

¹¹⁴ NRW, NW 179/685, *Wegweiser für alliierte Soldaten in Deutschland*, November 1956.

¹¹⁵ NRW, NW 179/685, p. 33, Letter from Minister for Economics and Transport to Minister President of North Rhine Westphalia, 22 January 1957.

Germany, as most young soldiers had expressed the desire to establish contacts to organisations related to those in the home country of the soldier.¹¹⁶

Despite good intentions the compilation of the directory above all provided an example of a lack of co-operation between the German and British authorities as well as demonstrating the complexity of such a task in the FRG. The publication of this expensive brochure was significantly delayed due to a legal battle with the German printing company, as large numbers had been printed before important amendments had been made which essentially rendered them worthless.¹¹⁷ When it was finally available, it proved rather less popular with the British than had been anticipated. The reason for this was simple. Although the directory demonstrated the willingness of German authorities to improve relations, the British response to the directory, which was essentially a very long list of addresses and phone numbers, was reserved at best because it was written in German. The German Press and Information Bureau offered 3,000 free copies of the directory to the British Embassy but the reply to the 'generous offer' stated that, 'due to the very particular nature of this guide book', it was of very limited use to the simple soldier:

If in the future you should again consider producing brochures *in English* for Allied Service personnel I would be most grateful for an opportunity to see a draft as we or the military authorities surely would be able to make some useful suggestions *before* the brochure is actually printed.¹¹⁸

Other promising German initiatives completely failed to materialise. A member of the German Lower House (*Bundestag*) suggested the German-wide

¹¹⁶ NRW, NW 179/685, p. 36, Letter dated 08 February 1957.

¹¹⁷ BK, B145/60, 250-4.

¹¹⁸ BK, B145/60, 250-4, Letter from JM Fisher, British Embassy, Bonn, to Hanns Küffner, Presse-und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Bonn, 16 May 1958 (Italics added by the author).

establishment of meeting places for Allied soldiers and German youths, based on one successful example in the American zone of Occupation. The idea was to organise coach tours, dances, movie screenings and talks, aimed at both Allied soldiers and Germans. The plan envisaged three such meeting places in the British zone (as well as eight American and three French) and was in principle approved by all German ministries involved. However, when it came to funding the project, after a lengthy debate the idea was axed. The defence ministry refused to contribute the 300,000 DM necessary for the year 1957. As the project only involved German civilians, the Defence Ministry did not consider itself responsible. The Interior Ministry refused to pay on similar grounds, as the impact of the project was mainly related to foreign policy. As the Foreign Ministry disagreed with this assessment, the Member of Parliament was duly informed that there were no federal funds available for the project.¹¹⁹ The apparent lack of interest on the part of the federal ministries involved raises the question how seriously at least some German ministers were taking the issue of relations between Allied soldiers and German civilians.

Despite the varying attitude of German ministries, it was the concern over crimes committed by Allied troops that led the German Foreign Ministry to establish an inter-allied commission, involving the embassies of the FRG and those of the Allies. Its overall aim was to examine incidents between troops and Germans. The German Interior Minister, Defence Minister and Federal Press Office were also involved. Depending on the subject of the meetings, commanders of Allied headquarters and local German officials were also in attendance.¹²⁰ The findings of this group again stressed that in general the British efforts to bring troops and civilians together compared rather favourably to those of the United States. The statistics of negative incidents also put the

¹¹⁹ BK, B136/5528, 4-24109-2175/57, Begegnungsstätten der Soldaten der alliierten Einsatzkräfte mit der deutschen Bevölkerung und deutschen Soldaten, 2 September 1957.

¹²⁰ BK, B145/610, 250-2.

British into a rather favourable light. According to the German Foreign Office, the comparatively low number of incidents involving British soldiers was partly due to successful British measures, such as the establishment of local Anglo-German committees; jointly organised events; the distribution of English books on Germany; and the showing of films about Germany. Further measures included discounted travel in Germany for BAOR soldiers and the encouragement to join activities of the Anglo-German Society.¹²¹

Despite the aforementioned concerns about crime levels among Allied troops among *Land* governments, by November 1957 the German Foreign Ministry decided that the situation had sufficiently improved and postponed a planned meeting of the Allied working party, due to 'the lack of specific concerns'.¹²² It is therefore apparent that despite a temporary rise in crimes committed by British troops between 1955 and 1957, in the view of the German Foreign Ministry the situation had improved by the end of that year. It was not until the 1960s that the behaviour of British troops became the focus of federal concern and the German Foreign Office suggested a renewal of the talks between Germans and the BAOR.¹²³

¹²¹ BK, B145/610, 211-81-24-03/3620/56, Aufzeichnung über die Besprechung am 28. September 1956 im Auswärtigen Amt über Übergriffe von amerikanischen Soldaten gegenüber der deutschen Zivilbevölkerung.

¹²² BK, B145/610, 250-1-III, Rundbrief betr. Arbeitskreis zur Verbesserung der Beziehungen zwischen der deutschen Bevölkerung und Angehörigen der Stationierungsstreitkräfte; Verschiebung einer geplanten Sitzung im November 1957.

¹²³ BK, B145/610, 301-81-24-3/1364/62, Schnellbrief Auswärtiges Amt an Bundesministerien des Innern und der Verteidigung, 15 June 1962.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that, from a German perspective, the presence of the BAOR in Germany increasingly threatened Anglo-German relations precisely because of the improvement of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic and its new western partners in the defence against communism. The requisitioning of housing and land, imposed on German communities in 1945, continued into the late 1950s and attracted increasing hostility by the significant number of civilians affected. Added to this was the regular negative attention troops attracted due to manoeuvre damage, which was frequently used by the German press to stir up anti-British sentiment and even invited communist propaganda. During election campaigns, the presence of British troops was a potential problem to be exploited. It was used in attempts to damage the reputation of the Christian Democrats under Konrad Adenauer. Even when acting within the boundaries of policies agreed between London and Bonn, the BAOR often attracted widespread criticism due to the lack of communication with the German press as well as local German officials. This in particular was harmful to relations and frequently caused lengthy arguments and complex attempts at minimising damage at the highest levels.

When considering German efforts at improving relations, it has become evident that, compared with French and American troops, the British were regarded as very civilised and willing to facilitate more harmonious relations between Servicemen and civilians. Many of the official German efforts - such as the directory for Allied soldiers - were well-intended, yet, through a lack of consultation with the British, severely flawed and often not very effective. Whereas many non-governmental organisations successfully brought British troops and German civilians together, there was a notable reluctance in the German Interior and Defence ministries to fund initiatives, even when these clearly had been proven to be successful. It is however also apparent that, according to the German administration, the rise of incidents caused by British soldiers noted after 1955 had been sufficiently brought under control by 1957.

This chapter has therefore shown that efforts to utilise the BAOR as a tool to improve Anglo-German relations were regarded as rather less urgent in Bonn as might be expected considering the view of the British Foreign Office. However, before analysing the British administration's concerns over the impact of the changing relationship between Britain and Germany caused by Federal sovereignty in 1955 and its attempts to change the behaviour of the Services, it is necessary to consider the position of the Services themselves. In order to fully understand the relations between the BAOR and the Germans, the next chapter will analyse the situation in Germany as seen by British troops. It will also evaluate the efforts made on all levels by the armed forces themselves to work towards better Anglo-German relations.

Chapter Five: The Soldiers, the Airmen and the Germans: Military Strategies to improve Relations with the German Population

Introduction

The *Westdeutsches Tageblatt*, a local German newspaper, reported in 1952 that attempts to improve Anglo-German relations by both British troops and Germans showed some signs of success. However, a number of difficulties had to be overcome, including:

the typical Anglo-Saxon lethargy which prevents the English from actively looking for new friends and learning new languages as well as the German tendency to come across as too friendly and therefore give the impression of ingratiation.¹

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, any lack of contact between Services and Germans was not necessarily due to an overly friendly attitude on the side of the Germans. However, many observers commented on the perceived lack of effort by British troops to overcome their 'Anglo-Saxon lethargy'. This thesis has analysed the view of the British and German media as well as those of the administration in Bonn of the Services' efforts to improve relations. This chapter will consider the BAOR and its own efforts, both on the official as well as the more individual levels. On the one hand the focus here will be on changes made by the Services prior to 1955, when the Federal Republic's sovereignty fundamentally changed relations between Bonn and London. On the other hand, this chapter will explore some measures taken by the Services in 1956 and 1957 in order to demonstrate to what extent the Services could be

¹ NRW, NW 115/175, *Westdeutsches Tageblatt*, 14 February 1952.

utilised to bring about an improvement in relations. As shown in chapter three, a number of incidents caused by British soldiers threatened to seriously undermine Anglo-German relations. It is important to highlight some of the underlying reasons for these incidents from a Service perspective. The chapter will begin by exploring the operational difficulties encountered by many regiments in Germany, which often made organised efforts to improve relations with Germans somewhat difficult. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the life of BAOR officers and ranks in Germany as well as the more personal contacts with the local population. The changing attitude towards Germany of regimental magazines, among other factors, was a contribution to an improved understanding. It is the aim of this chapter to investigate the attitudes and behaviour of the Services in the run-up to Federal German sovereignty in 1955 as well as to highlight some of the problems and attempted solutions by the Services once Germany was a fully established member of the Western community. There is ample evidence of very thorough and successful attempts by British forces – incidentally RAF units - which require investigation. The measures introduced by the RAF will also be compared to those of the Army. The analysis of Service attitudes and efforts will then allow for conclusions to be drawn in regards to the value of the BAOR in the context of the improvement of Anglo-German relations envisaged by the Foreign Office.

Operational Difficulties

Throughout the period in question, the British Armed Forces in Germany faced considerable pressures in fulfilling their military role in the Cold War. As a consequence, the improvement of relations with the local population was not necessarily a priority for the military leadership. As established in chapter two, General Brian Robertson himself considered the role of the BAOR to be largely political. He was gravely concerned about the present position of the forces in Germany: 'It was not, properly speaking, a trained army and to put it in the field

if a crisis arose would present very great difficulties indeed'.² It is important to consider the consequences of this weakness for the troops involved. The Chiefs of Staff of the British Forces in Germany had serious concerns in regards to the ability of the BAOR to successfully repulse or even slow down a Soviet attack. According to a report on the perceived lack of reinforcement on the operational plans of the British Forces in Germany, the efficiency of the troops varied considerably between the various arms of the Services. British military planning for a potential Soviet attack assumed that there would be 'no warning period which will enable any preparatory mobilisation measures to be taken.'³ However, there were considerable shortages in regards to manpower and the BAOR in fact relied on the arrival of reinforcements from Britain in case of an emergency in order to become fully operational. These vital reinforcements were unavailable at unit locations until at least six days after an initial attack.⁴

According to a 1953 report by the Chiefs of Staff, the Royal Armoured Corps had only enough men to crew fifty per cent of their tanks, Field Regiments of Royal Artillery could only man seventy-five per cent of their weapons, whereas light anti-aircraft regiments could only man half of their guns.⁵ Royal Artillery headquarters was only able to operate by withdrawing officers from regiments. Royal Engineer units were only able to produce fifty per cent of their 'working numbers'.⁶ This situation was regarded as particularly grave in view of

² NA, FO 800/467, File 176 Ger/48/43, Secretary of State's conversation with General Robertson, 27 July 1948.

³ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Copy of Minute from R.N. Gale, Chairman, Commanders-In-Chief Committee, British Forces, Germany to Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, 4 August 1953.

⁴ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, The effect of the present reinforcement policy on the operational plans of the British Forces in Germany , 4 August 1953, Annex, p. 10.

⁵ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Annex, p. 3.

⁶ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Annex, p. 4.

extensive demolition programmes to be carried out to slow the Soviet advance and 'the fact that seventy per cent of the engineer effort is German Service Organisation (GSO), regarding whose loyalty we have grave doubts'.⁷

As early as 1948 the potentially dangerous position of BAOR in regards to its dependence on German labour for administrative support had become evident. If those 150,000 Germans employed by the BAOR should prove unreliable due to communist action, 'our forces there would ultimately be greatly handicapped and movement on any substantial scale would be difficult'.⁸ The Royal Signals fared little better as 'the present strengths [...] would make the provision of adequate communications forward of Headquarters Northern Army Group very difficult'. Rear of Headquarters Northern Army Group the situation was 'deplorable. Even if existing units are made up to Higher Establishment, the barest essential communications cannot be provided'.⁹ The position of the Infantry varied considerably in battalions but all battalions were short of men and support companies had been 'pared to the bone'.

The Royal Air Force in Germany apparently was in no better condition. In case of an emergency it would not be possible for the Army to take over stocks of aviation fuel stored in Antwerp and arrange for distribution of fuel to RAF airfields unless more trained personnel was made available. The Royal Air Force was 'at the moment in danger of a breakdown in the command organisation due to deficiencies of Signals personnel' as well as having its operations seriously curtailed due to shortages of personnel and resources.¹⁰ The Chiefs of Staff demanded as essential that reinforcements were 'trained men, in every way qualified and fit to undertake the operational tasks required of them'. The report concluded that:

⁷ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report, Annex, p. 4.

⁸ NA, FO 800/467, Memorandum Alexander to Attlee, 14 February 1948.

⁹ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report, Annex, p. 4.

¹⁰ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Annex, p.5.

in order to be operationally effective, the British Forces in Germany need considerable reinforcement of men who are ready immediately to carry out their operational tasks between Simple Alert and D-Day and sufficiently in advance of D-Day, to enable them to be absorbed into their units. It will be impossible under present arrangements to ensure that these reinforcements will start arriving at unit locations before D-Day plus six.¹¹

The outlook in case of a Soviet attack was indeed bleak. Despite the desire to assure the Germans that the Allies would hold the river Elbe in case of a Russian attack, there was no mention of any plan other than to fall back to the Rhine in British COS reports on the subject. The effect on the Army of manpower shortages during the withdrawal phase following a Soviet attack was considered to be grave:

The delay imposed on the Russians will be reduced as the covering forces as at present constituted will be too weak. [...] The danger of successful airborne 'coup de main' action against both the Rhine and Maas bridges will be greatly increased. During the initial phase of the Rhine battle, the inability of all arms and services to deploy a reasonable fighting potential will cause unacceptable delay in the preparation of the Rhine position.

The success or failure of the British Forces in Germany was therefore 'gravely prejudiced by the lack of a comparatively small number of trained men'.¹² This lack of resources might partly explain why many personal recollections by unit commanders of their time in Germany focus very little on relations with the Germans. For example, one regimental commander in his account of a three

¹¹ NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Annex, p. 10.

¹² NA, FO 371/104044, COS Committee Report COS (53)376, Annex, p. 7.

year period in Germany only mentioned Anglo-German relations once, when he met an officer of the new German army in 1957, whom he found a 'sound, level-headed and practical officer', despite having spent eleven years in Soviet captivity.¹³ The absence of any major initiatives by the British Army can therefore at least be partially explained by the military situation and the lack of personnel.

The military preparedness and performance during manoeuvres did not boost either British or German confidence in the BAOR's ability to stop a Soviet attack. According to the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine* newspaper, the 7th Tank Division had performed abysmally in a manoeuvre in 1950. Apparently the Commander of BAOR, General Keightley, had accused the division of being 'slow, lacking any element of surprise and generally not being what it was in 1945'. According to the article, much of the equipment was outdated and nine out of ten vehicles were 'scrap'.¹⁴ The serious situation in Germany did not only affect the higher echelons of the British Forces and their ability to spend much thought on Anglo-German relations. For many British soldiers stationed with BAOR during this period the international situation, combined with the perceived unpreparedness of the BAOR, proved rather unnerving:

Korea was on and communist domination was feared in the West. The Armoured Corps was on forty-eight hour standby, looking at the Russian tanks looking at them and knowing that war was the squeezing of a trigger away. We didn't have Centurion [tanks] then, we had obsolete Valentine Archers designed in 1939, and we got numerous calls to arms in the middle of the night, with rumours of Russian attacks. Truthfully

¹³ R[oyal] S[ignals] M[useum], File No. 936.1, David Horsefield, Personal account of time as Commander Royal Signals 2 Infantry Div. BAOR 1956-1959, 1985.

¹⁴ NRW, NW 115/173, *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, 03 October 1950.

there were occasions when we thought we would never see another dawn.¹⁵

Glyn Jones, a wireless operator at Royal Artillery Battery HQ in Düsseldorf, felt bemused when told by his sergeant that he was an essential cog in the wheel that would roll back the Russian hordes. He himself was rather less confident as 'in two years I [had] fired ten rounds from a rifle, ten from a Sten, five from a revolver and I'd never been on the field guns'.¹⁶ Considering this situation, it may not come as a surprise that many units as well as individual soldiers stationed in Germany considered Anglo-German relations to be a comparatively minor issue. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that particularly during this period, several unit commanders noted that relations with the Germans returned 'back to normal' and that an increasing number of Anglo-German social events were organised by British regiments.¹⁷ Apart from the impact of the Cold War, issues such as the nature of the accommodation of troops in Germany also had an impact on relations between the Services and the Germans.

BAOR Accommodation in Germany and its Impact on Community Relations

Although some wives of Service personnel stationed in Germany felt guilty about living in comfortable houses in the UK, whilst their husbands were 'probably in some horrid slum', the barracks in Germany that housed British troops were in

¹⁵ Alan Tizzard, Tank Commander in the 10th King's Hussars at Iserlohn, 1950, *cited in*: Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p.133.

¹⁶ Glyn Jones, *cited in*: Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p. 134.

¹⁷ RSM, File No. 938.1/7, p. 1, Brigadier C. T. Honeybourne, OBE, Account of 7th Armoured Division, Royal Signals, October 1954-November 1956.

most cases a pleasant surprise for British soldiers.¹⁸ Most had been built in the 1930s by the German armed forces and were centrally heated, double-glazed, had constant hot water and men slept two to six to a room. One National Serviceman commented:

We had a camp cinema the size of the Odeon, Leicester Square, an indoor sports complex that included a full-size hockey pitch, and an officer's mess like the Taj Mahal. There was a gymnasium that could have been a venue for the Olympic Games, swimming pools and acres of playing fields.¹⁹

All British garrisons in Germany were self-contained units. As a result contact with the local population was to a certain extent limited. Facilities for off-duty recreation were often provided within the barracks. The Army Kinema Corporation provided recent releases of popular films and the British Forces Broadcasting Services provided a mixture of record request programmes and military gossip.²⁰

For the single soldier the social life was straightforward. He could have a drink or a meal in the NAAFI canteen or, with a pass and in uniform, he could go into the town and spend the evening until midnight in a 'Gaststube'.²¹ However, in more remote garrisons this proved difficult. For example, the 15th/19th Hussars at Wesendorf found themselves in a small village with little to offer by way of entertainment. The nearest town of any size was Celle, which was too far away

¹⁸ D[urham] R[ecord] O[ffice], DWn 20/468/1(2), Letter from Anne Watson to W.I. Watson, 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry, 6 June 1950.

¹⁹ Second Lieutenant Tony Thorne, stationed in Brunswick, *cited in*: Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p. 137.

²⁰ Trevor Royle, *The Best Years of Their Lives, The National Service Experience 1945-1963*, London, 2002, p. 145.

²¹ Jeremy Bastin, *The King's Royal Hussars*, p.52.

for a casual visit. Particularly in the early post-war period the lack of available transport discouraged soldiers from traveling, as 'one moves about by the rule of thumb method'. Not all soldiers had 'sufficient courage to face a refusal' and walk quite long distances at times.²² The increasingly unfavourable exchange rate between the Pound and the Deutschmark also made it 'almost impossible for a British soldier to go to a German restaurant or attend German entertainment'.²³ Social life for these soldiers therefore centred on the camp NAAFI and the squadron clubs which held the occasional dance.²⁴

These conditions did not necessarily make Germany a popular posting for young Britons. An article in one regimental magazine lamented the lack of the friendly and homely atmosphere of the local public house back in Britain. The pub was not the only institution absent in Germany:

Possibly most of all the soldier out here misses the fish and chips after a cinema show or what have you. Open fish and chips shops in Germany and many more, I'm sure, would soldier on.²⁵

Nevertheless, in many cases young British men did visit the local German towns during off-duty hours. Many found that, from the early 1950s onwards, conditions in Germany seemed better than back at home:

The streets and buildings in Germany [...] were clean and in good repair, the people were well-dressed and confident and the food seemed

²² *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1949, p. 117.

²³ NA, DEFE 11/64 163A 412/42, Letter E. Shinwell to John Strachey M.P., 2 May 1951.

²⁴ Jeremy Bastin, *The King's Royal Hussars*, p.59.

²⁵ Sgt. S. H. Harcourt, *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1949, p. 117.

plentiful and of high quality. The first thing that struck me after only three weeks away was the drabness of austerity Britain.²⁶

The nature of British Service accommodation remained a regular obstacle in the way of utilising the BAOR as a tool for improving Anglo-German relations. This was due to the physical separation of many bases from their local surroundings as well as the self-contained nature of at least the larger barracks. It was therefore often easier for Service personnel to spend their time completely separated from their host country. It was in many cases only the routine and boredom associated with army life, which led to young Britons exploring the surrounding areas. There were nonetheless opportunities for young Britons to discover Germany, and many found that life outside the camp was rather more interesting. Groups of young British soldiers explored the country by train, tram and Rhine river cruises on weekend leaves.²⁷ Some, like the National Serviceman Malcolm Barker, even travelled by themselves, as 'strangely enough, I cannot find anyone else with the same lust for travel'.²⁸

Despite the limitations described above, contacts between German civilians and British soldiers were, depending on the location, size and amenities on offer within the garrisons, a frequent occurrence. When it comes to overcoming language barriers, a considerable number of young Britons did make an effort to at least get by. The keen National Serviceman Malcolm Barker asked his mother to send a German language book as he was picking up the language in bits and pieces and wanted to know how to put those pieces

²⁶ David McNeill, RAF Coastal Command, *cited in*: Trevor Royle, *The Best Years*, p. 146.

²⁷ As described for example by Private J.E. Booth, 4th Infantry Workshop REME, stationed in Duisburg between 1950 and 1951, cited in: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 48.

²⁸ NAM 2006-12-77-82, National Serviceman Corporal Malcolm Barker, Queen's Royal Regiment in a letter to his mother, 26 May 1953.

together. 'With the book and the help from the Germans on the staff here I should be able to pick up the language before we go home'.²⁹

Those soldiers who did overcome the language barrier frequently encountered and reported on the many cultural differences between the British and Germans on those occasions when contacts did take place. British attitudes and behaviour frequently upset the feelings of local Germans. One young Briton commented on the apparent German lack of humour at a Christmas party, which the German staff had been invited to. At one point the party nearly broke up:

when someone suggested they sang the old German hate song (the song the Nazis sang during the war and going something like this: Today we rule the world, tomorrow we rule England). They all rose in disgust that an English soldier should even suggest it and became rather offended.³⁰

The German guests vowed to never fight against England again and the young soldier thought 'they were very sincere. At least I hope so'. The party was not helped by a drunken corporal shouting 'Vive Stalin', which apparently led to more German guests walking out. 'It proved one thing – that the Germans have a very little (sic), if any, sense of humour.' Furthermore the incident proved to the young Briton that the Germans were rather despondent and helpless, fully expecting another war very soon.³¹

²⁹ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker, in a letter to his mother, 15 September 1952.

³⁰ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker in a letter to his mother, 26 December 1952.

³¹ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker, 26 December 1952.

Differences in Attitudes of British Officers and other Ranks

From a British perspective, personal relations between soldiers and Germans varied significantly, depending on a number of factors: pre-conceived ideas of Germans; the impact of Nazism on the view of individual troops as well as garrison commanders; and personal attitudes of Service personnel. During the immediate post-war period, attitudes of at least some British troops towards Germans were quite clearly negative. As one Serviceman recalled in 1948:

We did our “Army of Occupation” duties. It was called “showing the German population who won the war”. Former SS soldiers were scrubbing the billet floor and the German workers in the camp were usually badly treated.³²

It is useful to distinguish between officers and other ranks when considering personal relations between British soldiers and German civilians, as a difference in behaviour was often apparent. The more distant and reserved behaviour of officers is made evident for example by the recollections of a young serviceman, who noted after six months in Germany when one officer left his regiment:

He came round and said goodbye to us all [...] He even said goodbye and shook hands with the German staff – a thing I have never seen any officer doing before.³³

³² K.O. Airey, Royal Artillery, stationed at Bielefeld in 1947-8, *cited in*: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 67.

³³ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker, 22 November 1952.

The diary of another British officer in Germany revealed a curious mix of sympathy, humour and disdain, which shaped the attitudes of some Britons during this period:

Dinner in Tyrol: Not too bad. Two star. Sat with two Krauts and their child. Made child aeroplanes out of table napkins. Child pleased. Obviously a future Messerschmidt.³⁴

The same officer's impression of Hamburg in 1951 was dominated by the 'drab' Hotel Four Seasons, the 'vaguely dreary' Country Club and the 'frightful' people which rendered the place 'like any other European city'.³⁵ He nevertheless cut short a holiday into Luxemburg and France to spend time in the 'clean, well-run Germany'.³⁶ Frequent visits to a German friend in Cologne demonstrated the *Wirtschaftswunder* to him, when he saw 'the huge place he has built since we knocked it down in the last war – and the country house and so on'.³⁷

Asked how he got on with the Germans during his time there, one former staff officer replied that, although he had had the most interesting time there, it was 'quite close, six years after the war'. He thought it unfortunate that there 'was still a barrier between fraternising with the Germans (sic.). You were not supposed to do too much of this and it was a pity because I could have improved my German a bit'.³⁸ Another officer was most impressed with the way the German people worked and their efficiency. 'I'd come through Germany from

³⁴ NAM 2002-02-901-18, LtCol. Anthony Gervase Ryshworth-Hill, MC, Diary entry, 20 July 1954.

³⁵ NAM 2002-02-901-15, Ryshworth-Hill, Diary entry, 11 July 1951.

³⁶ NAM 2002-02-901-18, Ryshworth-Hill, Diary entry, July 1954.

³⁷ NAM 2002-02-901-18, Ryshworth-Hill, Diary entry, 5 December 1955.

³⁸ [Imperial] War Museum, Southwark, IWM Interview, file no. 26546, 01/2003, Martyn Highfield, GSO2 Staff Officer to CRA, HQ, BAOR, 1950-1, served with 77 HAA Regt. 1952-55.

Italy when it was all blitzed – every city was flat and when I went back and saw the way they'd built these towns – you had to take your hat off to them.³⁹ A British unit commander commented on the good relations with his German civil labour teams and his admiration of 'the way they stuck into clearing the bomb damage and rebuilding everywhere.'⁴⁰

David Findlay Clark, a RAF officer on his way to Germany in 1953, encountered other British soldiers on their way back to Germany after leave. 'It was encouraging that most of them seemed to have enjoyed their postings in Germany.'⁴¹ The soldiers he met had little to remark on the present social or political conditions in the land of the former enemy. Some had learned a little German but few mixed to any significant extent with local German people.⁴² The same young NCO 'still felt strangely exposed in this land of our former enemies', when, in full uniform, less than a decade after the war, he crossed the border into Germany.⁴³ This initial response was however gradually replaced by the 'attitudes of a member of an Occupying Force', after witnessing the bomb damage to German cities and wondering 'how the indigenous population might react to RAF personnel, especially in uniform.'⁴⁴ When spending some free time in beer gardens in Münster, Clark felt keenly aware that 'our Luftwaffe predecessors' must have lounged at the same tables some years before. He was told by the pub landlord that 'we were disarmingly like our former Teuton equivalents both in style and habits'.⁴⁵ The majority of the inhabitants of

³⁹ IWM interview, file no. 19898, 10 November 1998, Frederick Hunn, NCO, served with 4th Hussars, 1953-5 and 12th Lancers, 1955-8 in Germany.

⁴⁰ RSM, File No. 936.1, Peter Baldwin: My Life.

⁴¹ David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds!, A Wry Look at National Service*, Glasgow, 2006, p.157.

⁴² David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 157.

⁴³ David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 159.

⁴⁵ David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 165.

Münster, heavily bombed during the war, apparently were polite and helpful towards British airmen, although 'there were several people of both sexes who would turn away very deliberately and spit as I passed'.⁴⁶ This kind of experience of being sworn or spat at was shared by other British officers, but as one aptly summarised: 'In general, we were accepted, and after all, we weren't the Russians.'⁴⁷

The experiences of other ranks in Germany often differed from those of officers. Asked how British soldiers regarded serving in Germany, one regular soldier hesitated before replying:

I was a little against Germans in general and I think that the whole, -at least the majority of squaddies were with me, - had this sort of thing about Germans because of what they did during the war (sic). I don't think it would be a long, long time before they were really forgiven for this. Nevertheless, we had a job to do and we done it (sic) to the best of our abilities I think.⁴⁸

Despite this he claimed he 'got on alright' with the Germans. Nonetheless:

I still think that, looking back on my time in Germany there that, although the British had this thing about the Germans, I still think there was a lot of conflict there you know.

⁴⁶ David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 166.

⁴⁷ Sergeant Hugh Martin, Army Education Service, stationed at Finkenwerder between 1950 and 1952, cited in: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ IWM interview, file no. 18477, 28 July 1998, Francis Leon Collett, served with 1st Bn Royal Tank Regt. Detmold, 1950-2 as regular soldier.

It apparently did not take long then for an argument to develop, 'if you were that way inclined'. But having learned his lessons on 'what happens when you're in the wrong I decided very much to turn the other cheek you might say'.⁴⁹

Once the Korean War was over and the death of Stalin temporarily relaxed the tense East-West relations, being posted to Germany constituted a considerable change from other postings for many soldiers:

In Northern Ireland we had been on semi-active service dealing with urban guerrillas. In Germany we were part of an Army of Occupation in peacetime conditions: the heat was off.⁵⁰

Although this was a welcome change, it brought problems as 'sex (the absence of) and boredom' soon began to preoccupy the minds of all ranks and alcohol consumption rose enormously. Soldiers were:

herded together in barbaric conditions, surrounded by wire fences and guards in a foreign country whose language they know nothing of, and with the bromide of fear removed, then the only reasonable thing to expect is drunkenness, inefficiency, and absence without leave.⁵¹

This 'pronounced sense of apathy and boredom' was also remembered by some of the National Servicemen in units 'directly on the front line', i.e. on the border to the Soviet zone of Occupation.⁵² Although the forces attempted to keep morale high with military and sporting competitions as well as a full timetable of training exercises, there were lengthy periods of inactivity and boredom.⁵³ Such

⁴⁹ IWM interview, file no. 18477, 28 July 1998, Francis Leon Collett.

⁵⁰ National Serviceman Ian Carr, *cited in*: B.S. Johnson (ed.), *All Bull*, p. 112.

⁵¹ B.S. Johnson (ed.), *All Bull*, p. 112.

⁵² Tony Thorne, *Brasso, Blanco and Bull*, London, 1998, p. 149.

⁵³ Trevor Royle, *The Best Years*, p. 146.

boredom often led to incidents. According to one National Serviceman who served in Brunswick in 1957, there was a favourite recreation for the soldiers, 'at which they could pass many hours'. They would simply go down to the railway station and start 'a tremendous brawl with the locals'. These street battles were referred to as 'Goodwill Missions' and would frequently involve hundreds at a time and sometimes last all night.⁵⁴ Recollections of this kind of event occur repeatedly among British soldiers, often with the justification that 'these same Germans had caused us all a great deal of inconvenience' in the last war. These stories of 'anonymous' mass attacks and German 'counter-attacks' are however often accompanied by positive memories of encounters with individual Germans.⁵⁵

The experience of first entering Germany left a lasting impression with many Servicemen. One noticed the change once he crossed the German border on a train to his unit, as 'all along the railway line there were the remains of warehouses and other buildings bombed by the RAF during the war. And what a pitiful sight it was, too!'⁵⁶ Troops were nonetheless often received warmly by Germans, who often waved and cheered at passing army trucks and, in some cases, even provided British soldiers on exercise with bottles of ice cold beer.⁵⁷ One National Serviceman recalled how, after having fallen off his motorcycle, local Germans took him into their home, washed his cuts and made him a cup of tea. 'I recall trying to get a date with their daughter.'⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Tony Thorne, *Brasso, Blanco and Bull*, p. 151.

⁵⁵ See for example Tony Thorne's recollection of a formal reception with the German mayor of Brunswick and his wife, Tony Thorne, *Brasso, Blanco and Bull*, p. 204.

⁵⁶ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker, in a letter to his mother, 6 July 1952.

⁵⁷ NAM 2006-12-77-82, Malcolm Barker, 14 July 1952.

⁵⁸ National Serviceman J.G. Booth, 8th Armoured Brigade, stationed in Verden between 1955 and 1957, *cited in*: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 44.

British Wives in Germany

For many of the BAOR officers and regular soldiers, life in Germany was made more enjoyable by having their wives and children living with them. Despite initial German resentment, the presence of British wives and children arguably had a positive effect on Anglo-German relations due to the growing contacts between women and children. 'Operation Union', the accommodation of British married families in married quarters in Germany, had received Cabinet approval in 1946 and the first families arrived in Germany in August of that year.⁵⁹ As established in chapter three, the necessary requisitioning of houses to house British families was not popular with the German population and also caused controversy in Britain. Immediately after the war the attitudes of some BAOR wives, who considered that 'requisitioning a few houses from the German people' was necessary to make up for the injustice of having been separated by war, did not help to alleviate tensions.⁶⁰ There were however also wives who were 'examples of all that an ambassador should be'.⁶¹ According to a report by British women's organisations the strain on the German housing situation caused by British requirements for married families was so great that the living space for each German after British requirements had been met would be four square meters – the floor space of two ordinary beds.⁶² Operation Union was subsequently adjusted to take into account the housing situation in Germany.

The arrival of British mothers and children quickly brought down barriers between occupiers and occupied. Children on both sides only saw new playmates and as a result mothers began to develop contacts. Many British

⁵⁹ Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 135.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 15 October 1946, Letters to the Editor, Ruth Elford, 'British Wives in Germany'.

⁶¹ *The Times*, 17 October 1946, Letters to the Editor, BAOR wife, 'British Wives in Germany'.

⁶² Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 140.

families established friendly relations with their German maids, nannies and even the owners of the houses they occupied. Those British families who found themselves 'in the lap of luxury after a tour in the UK' or abroad were provided with plenty of information on how to spend their time and at the same time explore German customs and meet the local population.⁶³ Regimental magazines painted increasingly inviting pictures of German fairgrounds, festivities and travel opportunities for British families. Some wives of Servicemen in Germany wrote letters to regimental magazines, highlighting the positive aspects of British family life in Germany:

If all the holiday centres in this country are the same – so well run, with civility and no worry for the wife with a baby, however young – then I am staying until my husband has to leave this country through no fault of his own.⁶⁴

In a similar vein, as early as 1949, the *Royal Signals Magazine* described the pleasant life in the town of Bueckeburg, where 'in the morning the German nursemaids can be seen wheeling their English charges about, and in the evening the park becomes the playground of all the local children.'⁶⁵

However, British and German children did not always get on well. One local German government report highlighted one case of a German child of primary school age being set upon by a group of English children aged ten to fourteen. 'The children stole his purse, tied his hands and feet together and threw him into a pond where he was saved from drowning by a passer-by'.⁶⁶ It

⁶³ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. II, No. 9, February 1956, p. 204.

⁶⁴ *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1949, Mrs. E. M. Pitt, 'Life in the BAOR: Wives' Viewpoints', p. 117.

⁶⁵ *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1949, p. 37.

⁶⁶ NI, Nds. 100 Acc. 2000/034 Nr. 8 Report Oberstadtdirektor Hameln, 13 June 1956.

was now the task of local Resident Officers to cope with spontaneous and sometimes potentially dangerous incidents like this. Nonetheless, although initially controversial, the arrival of British families to Germany undoubtedly had a positive effect on relations at least between married Servicemen and the German population encountered by their families.

British Soldiers and German Women

For those young Britons without families in Germany life was somewhat different. Fraternisation with German girls occurred very early after the end of hostilities and by January 1946 was considered so normal that it was frequently mentioned in regimental magazines:

‘Ladies’ night is held once a week, one man may accompany one ‘lady’ to an evening in the club. Up to the present it has proved successful. The ‘Non-Fratters’ generally occupy their time in one corner playing darts, whilst the others are quite content dancing with the frauleins.⁶⁷

The same magazine later commented that ‘we do not take too seriously the Sapper, who in a recent essay on ‘Life in BAOR’ alleged ‘there is plenty of sport here besides frauleins’.⁶⁸ One soldier commented on how much was written in Britain about the low moral standards in Germany and that ‘little more than a low standard can be expected amongst the poverty and the ruin of Germany at the moment’. Official attitudes towards relations with ‘the better type of German girls’ had clearly relaxed at least in some regiments, as an article in the Royal Signals magazine in 1949 revealed. The author wished those soldiers married to German girls ‘the best of luck’ and urged to accept this as ‘a normal outcome of

⁶⁷ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. LI., No. 605, January 1946, p. 91.

⁶⁸ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. LIV., No. 644, April 1949, p. 162.

close contact by occupation'.⁶⁹ Figures collated by the War Office in 1950 showed 717 marriages by BAOR soldiers to German women, twelve of those by British officers. In 1951 seven officers married Germans and so did 390 other ranks.⁷⁰ Some RAF officers were nonetheless warned as late as 1953 to be cautious with fraternising with German women, due to anxiety of classified information being passed on to Soviet spies. This attitude did however not exist in all units, as the Royal Signals magazine published a photo of one of its officers and his new German bride as early as 1949.⁷¹ Whereas some Servicemen stationed in Germany for a longer term formed firm relationships with German girls, others seemed to enjoy a colourful sex life instead. However, as many of the National Servicemen had girlfriends at home, often nothing more than 'pleasant little episodes' developed, which were 'simply part and parcel of the adventure of being abroad in the comfortable warmth of a Westphalian summer'.⁷²

Those British soldiers willing to pay for sex were served by numerous brothels in Germany. In Hannover the whorehouses were in a street running parallel to the five platforms of the station and were known as 'Platform Six'. Hamburg, with its red-light district turnstiled at either end, was described as the biggest brothel in the world. At the time of the Korean War, sex in Germany only cost a tin of Nescafe, a bar of chocolate or perfumed soap and sometimes as little as two cigarettes. By the mid-fifties this had risen to twenty cigarettes and by the mid-sixties it was strictly cash only.⁷³ Throughout the period in question, the changing status of the BAOR, combined with the growing purchasing power of the German population, caused significant inflation for the squaddie who paid for sex.

⁶⁹ *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1949, p. 117.

⁷⁰ NA, WO 216/484, General Harding to War Office, 1952.

⁷¹ *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 8, August 1949, p. 468.

⁷² David Findlay Clark, *Stand By Your Beds*, p. 167.

⁷³ Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p. 197.

It appears that contacts with German girls among British officers were less common than among other ranks. British women in Germany appeared to be rather more popular. Some officers of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers stationed in Münster managed to achieve 'pleasant relationships' with teachers at a local British school, whose parties were 'famed for the kind of satisfaction' they afforded. 'But on the whole, Germany, for an unmarried officer, was fairly barren sexually.'⁷⁴ The other ranks in Münster appeared rather more willing to engage with German girls. As one signalman recalled, 'troops always seem to respond to a nation's ladies as opposed to its men' and some of the more enterprising simply cut holes into the perimeter fence of the base and smuggled in the women they had met in the town.⁷⁵ The patrolling officer often 'had to make short detours to avoid the writhing bodies'.⁷⁶

Efforts by Army Units to improve Relations

This chapter has outlined some of the conditions encountered by British troops in Germany. Having explained some of the factors preventing closer Anglo-German relations on the more individual level as well as pointing towards a slow improvement, it is now necessary to analyse the efforts made on the level of Army units and garrisons. Records show that the efforts of British Army generally lacked both the scope as well as the long-term commitment to produce significant results. In fact as late as 1955 the British civilian administration in Germany commented on the still widespread suspicions in Service circles, 'that something like Hitler will emerge more or less inevitably in the Federal Republic

⁷⁴ Ian Carr, cited in: B.S. Johnson, *All Bull*, p. 113.

⁷⁵ Signalman Dennis Pell, 11th Air Formation Signals Regiment, stationed at Fassberg in 1948, *cited in*: Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 65.

⁷⁶ Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol*, p. 65.

in the course of time'.⁷⁷ But a general change of attitude was nonetheless increasingly apparent. The satisfaction expressed by the British ambassador in 1956 at the Services' efforts, demonstrated the willingness of at least all senior BAOR officers to improve relations. A brief for the ambassador concluded that negative German press reports had fallen from 112 in July and August 1956 to only fifteen in October of the same year and that the number of positive reports had risen from nineteen to twenty-three. This was largely due to the work of Army Public Relations Officers and much of the remaining criticism of troops had come from remote areas, which did not have either Army Public Relations Officers or a British Consular Officer.⁷⁸ The Commander-In-Chief of BAOR, General Richard Gale, commented that 'the Germans were noticeably more friendly to the Forces since the end of the Occupation'.⁷⁹

Some Army units did actively work on relations with the German population from an early stage of the British Occupation. Attempts to engage with the local German population were made by inviting German children to Christmas parties at British camps.⁸⁰ A particular effort was made by the Services to improve Anglo-German relations by hosting or participating in sports events. As Tony Mason points out, sport was of high importance to the British military and many unit commanders in the BAOR displayed a 'ferocious

⁷⁷ NA, FO 371/118158, Letter C.H. Johnston, UK High Commission, Bonn, to P.F. Hancock, Western Department, FO, February 4, 1954.

⁷⁸ NA, FO 1042/8, Ambassador's Military Committee: Brief for the Ambassador for his Meeting with the Commanders-In-Chief on November 22, 1956.

⁷⁹ NA, FO 1042/8, Ambassador's Military Committee: Minutes of a Meeting held at the British Embassy, Bonn, 1 February 1956.

⁸⁰ See for example: *The Wire*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1949, p. 91: 'It was in this atmosphere of goodwill and good humour that 3 Air Support Signals Unit [...] organised parties for German children.'

commitment to sport of every kind'.⁸¹ Soon after 1945, British troops began to play sport, particularly football, against German sides and, after initial reluctance by the Foreign Office, the CCG soon decided that 'the playing of matches between British and German teams can contribute to the democratic re-education of the Germans'.⁸² Particularly National Servicemen proved keen participants in BAOR sport events such as the BAOR football cup. Sports had proven a valuable factor in encouraging the mixing of regiments and civilians in Britain itself, as well as increasing 'the pleasure and prestige to be had when service sportsmen reached the highest levels of a particular sport'.⁸³ This tactic was also to be applied in Germany. Despite being involved in a large number of Service sports events, several units increasingly tried to improve local relations with Germans by organising Anglo-German fixtures. Attempts to promote good relations through sports were often met with an immediate positive response, for example the entry of an RAF team into the Geilenkirchen *Kreis* football league or the participation of troops in local town anniversary celebrations.⁸⁴ Football matches were organised in large capacity stadiums in Münster⁸⁵ and despite the danger of emotions running high, a most successful international boxing match took place in Münster between 23rd Armoured Brigade and the local boxing club.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Tony Mason, Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military, The British Armed Forces, 1880-1960*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 220.

⁸² 'Foreign Office Correspondence over Army football in occupied zones, 1946', NA, FO 371/55626, cited in Tony Mason, *Sport and the Military*, p. 207.

⁸³ Tony Mason, *Sport and the Military*, p. 176.

⁸⁴ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Report Mönchen Gladbach, December 1954.

⁸⁵ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Münster, Quarterly Report, June 1954.

⁸⁶ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Münster, Quarterly Report, December 1954.

However, occasionally the BAOR strategy to use sports to build bridges failed without the Forces themselves being to blame. According to the local Resident officer a football match held in the town of Wuppertal between the Wuppertal and Manchester City teams did a very great deal to destroy the reputation for sportsmanship and fair play which had been established and consistently maintained by Service units. The incident in question involved an English forward, who:

was sent off the field for foul play, refused to go for a little while, and finally left giving the crowd a short, sharp series of gestures which may conceivably have been mistaken by the shorter sighted for the 'V' sign.⁸⁷

It is evident that occasionally the efforts made by the Forces were undermined by British civilians, who were under no instructions to improve relations with the Germans. Nonetheless, the strategy to participate in sports, lend the Services' band to towns and to generally maintain a high standard of discipline generally paid off, as pointed out by the Recklinghausen Resident, who claimed the withdrawal of British troops from Wuppertal was genuinely regretted by the German population.⁸⁸

Drag hunt meets provide another particularly well-documented example when it comes to using sports as a means to foster Anglo-German understanding. Arguably the motivation for the British units in question was not necessarily to improve Anglo-German relations when approaching German land owners for permission to use their land for hunting. It was simply the need for facilities which brought this about. Nonetheless, the results were noteworthy and a contrast to the frictions over fox hunting highlighted in chapter four. In typical

⁸⁷ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Recklinghausen, Quarterly Report, June 1954.

⁸⁸ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Recklinghausen, Quarterly Report, March 1954.

military fashion some units drew up detailed lists of various hunting lines, including comments on the German owners, their willingness to cooperate with the Services as well as their willingness to allow further hunts. Comments ranged from 'Herr Heidmann is useless and there is little support' to others demonstrating genuinely friendly relations between British and German hunting enthusiasts.⁸⁹ In the case of the Royal Engineers this led to several Anglo-German drag hunts being favourably reported on by the local German press.⁹⁰ It is worth mentioning at this point that the case of Army reports on drag hunting is a typical example of BAOR documentation of records. Regimental records dealing with German issues are rare and those which do often focus on somewhat obscure details. For example the minutes of the 2nd Battalion Durham Light Infantry's Officers' Mess discuss in great detail the planned purchase of German coffee cups for the Officers' Mess. This plan included the establishment of a mess committee to examine various German cups and make recommendations at a subsequent meeting. However, very little material on dealings with the German population that supplied the cups has been preserved.⁹¹

Nonetheless, records that demonstrate changes in attitudes exist also outside the field of sports. Regimental publications for Service personnel revealed slowly changing attitudes in Army regiments towards the Germans. Increasingly throughout the period in question, regimental magazines developed from being entirely focused on the regiments themselves to sources providing information about German culture and customs. Whereas the Royal Engineers *Sapper Magazine* only ever mentioned German *Frauleins* or children very briefly in the 1940s, the magazine began to take more interest in the host country from

⁸⁹ R[oyal] E[ngineers] M[useum], Royal Engineers Drag Hunt BAOR Meets 1957-1958.

⁹⁰ REM, Royal Engineers Drag Hunt BAOR Meets 1957-1958.

⁹¹ DRO, D/DLI 2/2/107, Minutes of Mess Meetings of 2nd BN Durham Light Infantry, 5 May 1954.

around August 1949 onwards.⁹² By 1952 the magazine reported signs that 'barriers are collapsing', as quite a number of Sappers were enjoying attractive invitations by the local Germans. 'One Sapper was seen being driven away in a motor car which was strangely reminiscent of a Rolls Royce.'⁹³ By 1956 the magazine printed full-length feature articles on 'Life in the BAOR – you may be posted here', to inform soldiers stationed abroad and overseas. One feature, split over two separate issues, stressed the excellent travel and sports facilities as well as luxurious accommodation for troops in Germany. Although somewhat factual rather than entertaining, a detailed overview was provided of German festivities and traditions.⁹⁴ Even German language classes were highlighted for soldiers as well as for their wives. A later edition featured an organised visit to the Volkswagen factory, essentially completing the transformation from an inward-looking regimental magazine to a tourist-style guide to Germany.⁹⁵ The change in focus and content in this particular magazine constituted a significant change towards a normalisation of relations between the British and Germans and was evident in a number of other Army publications.

Efforts by RAF Units to improve Relations

Despite manpower shortages, parts of the British Forces went to surprising lengths to improve relations with the German population. However, it appears these organised, long-term efforts were largely confined to the Royal Air Force (RAF) and not the British Army. Due to the need to practice low-level flying for

⁹² An article in the August 1949 issue describes the German tradition of *Richtfest*, a 'festival to mark the completion of the skeleton of a building'; *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. LV, No. 648, August 1949, p. 6.

⁹³ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. LVII, No. 678, February 1952, p. 10.

⁹⁴ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 9, February 1956, p. 229.

⁹⁵ *Sapper Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 6, November 1956, p. 151.

training purposes, the RAF had to contend with the additional problem of aircraft noise in terms of relations with local populations compared to the Army. As RAF records at the National Archives reveal, the results of initiatives to address German grievances were impressive. For example, a 'Review of Press Liaison Officer Organisation' produced by the Command Information Office Headquarters 2nd Tactical Air Force (TAF) for the period July to December 1956, outlined the great lengths to which the RAF in Germany went to improve 'community relations' as well as the considerable success achieved.⁹⁶

Station Commanders in 2nd TAF had appointed Press Liaison Officers (PLO's) at twenty-nine units within Western Germany, at two units in Holland and one in Belgium by December 1956. Under authority of the Air Ministry, the Commander-in-Chief laid down for all units in 2nd TAF a programme of public relations work, the main tasks of which were community relations, news supply, press visits and inquiries. The aim was to stimulate 'community relations' activity between the RAF and the local population under the guidance of the Station Commander and to see that such activity received the maximum possible publicity by obtaining coverage on a national level and by keeping the local press informed by providing them with facilities to report the activity.

The review of these initiatives showed 'most encouraging' results. It showed that many station commanders devoted serious study to the problem of maintaining good relations with the local population and introduced positive policies that had helped improve existing relations. According to the paper the RAF in Europe had several tasks apart from its operational role and therefore had to ensure collaboration and support of the local population in order to safeguard its ability to carry out its operational role. This task was:

⁹⁶ NA, FO 953/1791, 'Review of Press Liaison Officer Organisation' produced by the Command Information Office HQ 2nd Tactical Air Force for the period July – December 1956, 12 February 1957.

particularly onerous in Germany where the military foreigner is bound to be a major target in the Election battle. We would, of course, have no justification whatever for interfering in internal affairs. But we have a perfect right to watch that we are not drawn into German politics to our own, or NATO's, disadvantage.⁹⁷

The review indicated that most progress was made in the field of community relations and least advancement in press activity. This was problematic as 'doing the good deed is only half-completing the job. It must be seen to be done, in other words publicised.'⁹⁸

The RAF scheme to improve relations continued for a year and was reviewed twice. The first half-year review of the Press Liaison Officer organisation, circulated in July 1956, had indicated that for a scheme which had never before been operated in Germany, the results had been encouraging. Where units had taken positive action there had been a worthwhile gain. However, only thirteen out of twenty-two units had attempted any community relations activity and only six of those had seriously tried to achieve publicity for their efforts. Only seven out of twenty-two units had made any effort to inform Command Information Office regularly of their activities. Seventeen units had established a drill for handling press visits and local inquiries and nine of them had earned the praise of the press for these arrangements. Overall the efficiency of the scheme could not be assessed at higher than forty per cent. The first review drew attention to the fact that a unit's efficiency in public relations depended on the personal interest taken by the station commander as well as the quality of his PLO. It had become clear that energy and enthusiasm were the most important qualities of a PLO and that some were not properly representing their stations:

⁹⁷ NA, FO 953/1791, 'Review of Press Liaison Officer Organisation'.

⁹⁸ NA, FO 953/1791, 'Review of Press Liaison Officer Organisation'.

The review concluded that if the aim was to be improvement the units would clearly have to appraise their own performances, where necessary re-orientate their views and change their PLO's.⁹⁹

The twenty-nine units in Western Germany were then assessed again for the second period of six months on the same basis. Now twenty-eight units conducted some form of community relations activity and sixteen of them informed Command Information Office of special events so that publicity on a national scale could be achieved. In the first period of review there had been no 'outstanding' performances. During the second period there were nine 'outstanding' performances. Twenty units had now established a drill for handling press visits. The scheme was now working at sixty per cent efficiency. One of the lessons drawn from the initiative was that although the first need for units was to get on well with the German population in their immediate neighbourhood, there was a much wider market for news of local activity than units realised. Furthermore the Command Information Office and the British Embassy's Information Service could utilise local news of unit activity on the national level to help bolster up the general picture of Anglo-German relations.

The report contained revealing comments from unit commanders giving reasons for lack of contacts with the Germans. Sometimes this was simply due to the distance of the camp from the nearest large town, where in fact the distance accounted for the absence of friction over the noise problem. Others noted signs of improvement due to 'a modest beginning in press work'. Some responses in fact pointed out the German population's unwillingness to improve relations. The station commander at Bückebug commented that:

⁹⁹ NA, FO 953/1791, 'Review of Press Liaison Officer Organisation' produced by the Command Information Office HQ 2nd Tactical Air Force for the period July – December 1956, 12 February 1957.

individually, at officer and airman level, there are good local relationships. But the unit effort as a whole to get response from the population has had an apathetic reception.¹⁰⁰

At times the RAF unit commanders' main problem was indeed the British Army due to the 'tendency of population to include RAF personnel among those responsible for isolated incidents of misbehaviour by Soldiers or Americans'. There were also reports of failed efforts regarding press activity 'after experience of distortion of material' in regards to a bombing range used as a political issue in local elections. The majority of comments did however report an improvement of relations due to personal social contacts as well as sporting fixtures. Comments ranged from there being 'no real problems other than the difference of language' to 'hitherto official contacts have been on a formal if not frigid basis. There are now encouraging signs that certain institutions [...] are showing an increased interest in the station'. One unit commented, that:

relations, which are now very good, have improved materially during the last twelve months, principally because RAF authorities have made every endeavour to understand local difficulties over land requisitioning and to ease them.¹⁰¹

Comments by the station commandant of the coastal town of Jever, consistently the best-performing throughout the initiative, were also very encouraging. Apparently relations with the local press were very good as they had been invited to cover some of the main happenings on the station and were also supplied with material. This resulted in considerable publicity. There also had been a marked improvement between unit and local population over the twelve month period in question:

¹⁰⁰ NA, FO 953/1791, p.4.

¹⁰¹ NA, FO 953/1791, p. 5.

One has the comfortable feeling that for peacetime routine one can rely on the co-operation of local inhabitants to the same degree as one can in the UK. There is no doubt that station activity in regards to publicity and good community relations has paid a handsome dividend. The station has aroused some feeling of local pride in their local NATO base.¹⁰²

According to the station commander it was the NATO angle which should be pressed as very many locals appeared to get immense satisfaction from learning that the base was a NATO rather than a British one. The example of Jever demonstrated that a concerted and persistent effort on the part of the British could lead to a significant improvement of relations with the local population, even if the Germans had to contend with aircraft noise.

The initiative also pointed out areas for further improvement. The task of developing good relations 'should have more official recognition'. The task of preparing translations from local papers, dealing with reports, handling press visitors and answering numerous queries could not be accomplished as a part-time job. The PLO commitment was rising and it should not be viewed in isolation from the many secondary duties existing for officers. The job of the PLO was indeed a secondary one on top of a normal routine job. Sometimes it was not the only secondary job and in some cases the PLO was also the unit commander. One PLO was acting at the time as CO, Adjutant and Accountant Officer. Another was Education Officer, Official Interpreter, Station Translator and had several other secondary duties to perform.¹⁰³ According to the Laarbruch RAF unit commander, more encouragement was also needed for personnel to learn German. Of course the language barrier played an important part. The report outlined that, out of twenty-eight PLO's, thirteen had 'a smattering of German', three others spoke the language well, another two were

¹⁰² NA, FO 953/1791, p. 5.

¹⁰³ NA, FO 953/1791, p. 8.

of interpreter standard, one deputy PLO was a qualified interpreter and nine had no knowledge of the language at all. Considering all officers and airmen in Western Germany at the time, roughly twelve per cent of officers and five per cent of airmen spoke some German. Improving on these figures proved difficult as Officers and airmen were reluctant to learn the language without an incentive. Small units were in a better position here, as the men were 'forced on to the German market for their entertainment'. The percentage of German speakers in small RAF units was significantly higher than on large stations.¹⁰⁴

In order to further improve relations, ease the workload of PLOs as well as overcome the language barrier, unit PLO's were encouraged to make as much use as possible of their nearest Joint Services Liaison Officer (JSLO). The JSLO were to be used for establishing contacts for community activities and for press activity. Headquarters, JSLO in Bonn had agreed that its twenty five officers in the field should assist RAF public relations in every way possible. The JSLO had much experience of the local scene and excellent contacts. They furthermore spoke German and had a direct liaison with British Information Services representatives in the field. The report however pointed out the enormous variations between units when it came to the frequency of contacts with JSLO's. One unit said their contact was 'daily', two said it was 'weekly', five replied 'fortnightly', ten said 'monthly', four 'quarterly', one 'annually' and two units said they had never met their JSLO.¹⁰⁵ The main reason for the lack of contact was the great distance of the JSLO from the unit.¹⁰⁶

The comments of unit commanders provide an insight into the very large variety of attempts and activities undertaken by at least some local RAF units. These ranged from football matches between English and German teams, the joining of local sports clubs by service personnel, to the activities of 'the Wives Club' in Schleswigland. The club organised the adoption of orphans and collections for local elderly and needy people. All units concentrated on the

¹⁰⁴ NA, FO 953/1791, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ NA, FO 953/1791, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ NA, FO 953/1791, p. 7

smaller community relations activities, such as sports, religious services, Anglo-German club meetings, school visits and organised tours. Experience had shown that these events could take place regularly and thus keep the relationship going. Units were encouraged to invite the local press to cover functions which might be of interest. It was quickly found out that routine activity such as inter-section sport held no interest and units concentrated on sending out invitations to main events.

In the field of RAF relations with the press the initiative also resulted in improvements. In the six months period observed by the report German local newspapers printed a total of 157 articles and news stories, many of them illustrated, as a result of the facilities and information material offered by the PLO's. In addition, Command Information Office used all of the material collected by PLO's in their publicity services and was able to obtain sixty mentions in the larger German papers as a result. A questionnaire asked PLO's and station commanders to report frankly on the success or otherwise of their activity since the PLO scheme had been launched a year earlier. Ten PLO's said they had noticed an improvement in relations with the local press. Out of twelve who reported that relations were 'good', six said that regular contact was being maintained in both directions. Six assured relations as 'fair', eleven confessed they were 'indifferent'. Thirteen station commanders had noticed an improvement in relations with the local population in the last year. Of fourteen who assessed relations as 'good', ten reported that contact with the locals was regular. Six station commanders rated relations as 'fair' and six as 'indifferent'.¹⁰⁷

In regards to future challenges for the relations between Services and Germans, the report highlighted the fact that 'certain political groups' would endeavour, in the months leading up to the 1957 General Election in Germany, to make the Forces as unpopular as possible. The NATO programme in general, and the task which 2nd TAF was seeking to carry out, could not be effective

¹⁰⁷ FO 953/1791, p. 10

unless it had the support and acceptance of the local population. Therefore it was essential to continue to strive for the best relationship with the population and counter every attempt to undermine it. According to the report the community relations aspect of the PLO scheme was gathering momentum. What was needed now was a concerted effort to counter adverse press reports. The British Embassy had already concerned itself about adverse press reports, and a drill had been agreed under which British Information Services and the JSLO would co-operate in countering such reports. This was, however, not something they could often do on their own as they required access to the facts. Inevitably this entailed more effective and swifter liaison with units, as it was often ineffective trying to correct something which had been printed days or weeks before. The report provided a positive example of press liaison: on the night of 11 January 1957, the German press agency (*Deutsche Presse Agentur*) broadcast a report which said that a British single-engined, swept-wing jet aircraft from the airfield at Weeze-Laarbruch had flown into high tension cables near a farm at Wesel at 1541 hours with the result that the towns of Emmerich, Kleve, Bocholt and Rees-Geldern had been completely blacked out. This report was picked up at 2nd TAF within an hour of its broadcast and two hours later, after a check round the command, it was possible to issue a denial that the aircraft was British or from Laarbruch or in fact any other unit in Germany. The *Deutsche Presse Agentur* then amended their report and referred to an unidentified aircraft from outside Germany. The newspapers on 12 January carried the correct story. As a result the politicians of four towns were not able to say their night of discomfort was the penalty of harbouring 2nd TAF.¹⁰⁸

In a case of this type requiring immediate action, the burden fell entirely on the Services, which had the great advantage of being able to guarantee action at all times of the day and night. According to the report the clue to the whole situation was to spot the adverse criticism at birth or even to anticipate it. British Information Services and the JSLO took between them a certain number

¹⁰⁸ FO 953/1791, p. 12

of German newspapers and had been charged with the duty of hunting out adverse comment and notifying those concerned. However, there were many small papers which they did not read, hence the advisability of units themselves seeing that this gap in press coverage was closed. In addition, there was also the advantage of maintaining regular contact with the staff of local papers. The review had shown that in places good press relations had been developed to the point where the unit was consulted in advance to ensure accuracy of facts.

Cooperation of all British Services was essential for an improvement of relations. In order to extend the effectiveness of community relations, it was essential that PLO's were informed about activities by all branches of a unit. All of this information could then be used in the publicity services of Command Information Office, which transferred material over the German national networks and through British Information Services, and via agencies to Holland and Belgium and if the story was good enough via Air Ministry to the press all over the UK. All of this information could be telephoned to Command Information Office day or night as the office functioned twenty four hours including weekends and holidays. The only material a PLO had to write up was what was acceptable locally. Visits of local schools and any routine activity which would probably not bring a pressman up to the unit were to be written up briefly, translated into German, and delivered speedily to the local press. It was almost certain of inclusion and told the whole population what otherwise only those in the visiting party experienced.¹⁰⁹ This RAF initiative proved that a systematic and long-term effort provided tangible results. It furthermore underlined the importance of the issue of Anglo-German relations despite or rather because of Cold War tensions.

At times British officers expressed the view to German authorities that their efforts at improving Anglo-German relations were rather one-sided. The British Information Services in Bonn pointed out to the Federal Press Agency in Bonn that unit commanders had given a great deal of thought to the question of

¹⁰⁹ FO 953/1791, p. 13

Anglo-German relations as well as the formation of Anglo-German committees between military authorities and prominent personalities. At least in the Iserlohn area it appeared that it was now up to the local German authorities to 'help a bit more from their side' and provide a lead.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the conditions encountered by the British Services in Germany that influenced Anglo-German relations in the towns and cities with British garrisons. The total management of the everyday social activities and social relations of the British serviceman with the locals was impossible, and every so often, tensions came to the fore. For many Servicemen Anglo-German relations were not a high priority. Isolated and self-contained garrisons, the language barrier and reluctance to interact with the former enemy were some of the reasons for this. The tension of the Cold War, boredom and alcohol also often prevented more cordial relations. However, this reluctance to explore Germany and meet its inhabitants was not universal and throughout the period in question at least a small change in attitude among some troops was apparent. This was however not enough in the eyes of the British Foreign Office as the next chapter will show.

Whereas chapter four has established that, by the end of the period under observation here, the German authorities were not unduly concerned about the impact of troop behaviour on Anglo-German relations, this chapter demonstrated that, at least from the perspective of the British administration, there was ample reason for concern. It is evident that the British Services made some efforts to improve relations with the Germans. Particularly the RAF

¹¹⁰ BK, B145/610 250E IV 13 639/56, Letter British Information Services, British Embassy Bonn J.M. Fisher to Dr. Krause-Brewer, Bundespresseamt Bonn, 15 December 1956.

demonstrated that organised, long-term initiatives could have a significant impact on community relations, once the Federal Republic had regained its sovereignty. A combination of frequent contacts with the local communities and press relations led to the desired outcome in a number of cases. Several of the RAF units examined managed to strengthen Anglo-German relations and foster the sentiment in local communities that Germany was a part of the NATO defence against communism. However, there were also rather more negative examples and, as this chapter has shown, a number of constraints meant that Army units generally did not make the necessary efforts to improve relations prior to 1955. Naturally this lack of initiative did not escape the Foreign Office in London, where the strengthening of Anglo-German ties was considered vital. The BAOR was to play a part in this, particularly after 1955. The following chapter will therefore turn to the British administration's view of the problems involved, beginning with the view of the British Foreign Office of the BAOR and its relations with the Germans.

Chapter Six: The British Administration in Germany and the BAOR

The basic fact [is] that most British officers and soldiers just do not like Germans.¹

Introduction

This statement by a British official employed in the Information Services Department of the British Foreign Office in Bonn, made as late as March 1956, is in many respects exemplary for the views on the British Army by members of the civilian British administrative staff in Germany as well as London. The assumption made here does however also raise further questions in regards to the relationship between the British Foreign Office and the BAOR.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on the obstacles in the way of better relations from the perspective of the BAOR, this chapter will evaluate the efforts of the BAOR as seen from Whitehall. This issue lies at the heart of this thesis, as the Foreign Office was the driving force behind the attempts to change BAOR attitudes. As established in chapter two, the potential opportunities for re-education of the Germans, as well as better Anglo-German relations offered by the stationing of British troops in Germany, had been realised in London very early on after the war and certainly in the run-up to the establishment of the Federal Republic. The potential threat that the BAOR posed to a better understanding with an increasingly independent Federal Republic became evident by the time the Paris Agreements regarding German sovereignty were

¹ NA, FO 953/1662, J. M. Fisher (Information Services Department, Bonn) to Mr. Chaput de Sointange (German Information Department Foreign Office, London), 16 March 1956.

signed in 1952. Hence, it is important to analyse how the Foreign Office attempted to influence both the BAOR as well as the Germans during this period.

The near-complete restoration of German sovereignty, and the acceptance of Germany as a full NATO member in 1955, again had a substantial impact on Anglo-German affairs on all levels. It was arguably this transformation which the Foreign Office was most concerned about when considering the Services. Relations between the civilian and military sides of the British presence also require scrutiny, as these were not always without frictions. This chapter will consequently examine the view of the BAOR as seen from the various levels of the British administration in the run-up to and immediately after the restoration of German sovereignty. This involves the Foreign Office in London, the Military Government and High Commission in Germany, the staff at *Land* Commissioners offices as well as the judgment of the BAOR by British Resident Officers in local German communities. Due to its liaising role between the BAOR and the German authorities, a close inspection of the relationship between the civilian British administration and its German counterpart is also essential. Similar to its German equivalent, the Foreign Office initiated a wide range of measures designed to aid the transformation of the BAOR from an occupation to an allied force and made large-scale efforts on all levels to improve the standing of the Services with the German population. This chapter will assess these measures and address the essential question of whether by the end of the period in question, the Foreign Office deemed the BAOR able to effectively adapt its rationale to serve its new policy purposes.

The Information Services Division and the BAOR

The various Foreign Office departments involved in liaising between the BAOR and the Germans rigorously monitored developments in Germany due to fear of negative incidents and publicity causing a widespread anti-British mood in

Germany. The Services in Germany were even provided with what could be described as their own 'public relations department' – the Information Services Division of the Foreign Office (ISD). The Information Services Division of the British High Commission for Germany had developed from the former Public Relations and Information Services Branch of the British Control Commission. Among other tasks this department was increasingly responsible for monitoring and improving the standing of the Services in Germany and influencing the German media in order to avoid negative publicity. As one Information Services memorandum of 1952 stated, Her Majesty's Government:

maintained in Western Germany the cream of the British Army as well as a large contingent of Royal Air Force and some naval forces. The security of these forces, as well as their effectiveness in the discharge of their duties, depended upon a friendly and co-operative German population.²

Information Services were very much aware that, whatever the label placed on these forces, their very presence in strength and the problems caused thereby inevitably provided plenty of opportunities for friction with the local population. One of the main tasks of the Information Services Division was to monitor and influence the attitude of the German press due to its impact on the opinion of German citizens:

Hardly a day passed but some local newspaper printed a story of damage to crops, motor accidents, requisitioning and the like, mostly unimportant affairs which nevertheless contribute to a growing feeling of asperity on the part of the local Germans.³

² NA, FO 953/1285 PC1013/15, Report on the Role of Information Services in Germany, 15 May 1952.

³ NA, FO 953/1285 PC1013/15 Report on the Role of Information Services in Germany, 15 May 1952.

The importance of the ISD increased throughout the period in question as the reputation of the BAOR in Germany became ever more important after the conclusion of contractual relations and the end of the Occupation in 1955. The Federal Republic regained most of the rights of sovereign states and direct British influence was therefore significantly reduced at the very moment when communist propaganda in Germany intensified and concentrated on the presence of foreign troops on German soil. The ISD effectively anticipated a deterioration of Anglo-German relations after 1955 due to the presence of the BAOR in a Federal Republic with renewed confidence.

As established in chapter three, there were a number of German grievances against the BAOR potentially souring Anglo-German relations. However, the ISD predicted further trouble as British troops themselves posed a potential threat to relations if economic measures were to:

affect seriously the amenities of the British troops, as the attitude of the latter to the Germans may well deteriorate and the situation become even more serious.⁴

In the eyes of the Information Services, the economic recovery of the Federal Republic, while aiding the incorporation of West Germany into the Western alliance system, posed a significant risk to relations on the ground. While the public relations officers dealt with local matters affecting the fighting services, the Information Services were thus left with the important task of explaining the general policy requiring the presence of troops, maintaining German morale and preventing local friction from turning into widespread hostility.⁵ The Foreign

⁴ NA, FO 953/1285 PC1013/15 Report on the Role of Information Services in Germany, 15 May 1952.

⁵ NA, FO 953/1286, Despatch No. 187, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick to Anthony Eden, 22 July 1952.

Office in London, as well as the staff on the ground in Germany, had clearly identified a significant number of potential threats to contain in order to avoid conflict between Germans and British Servicemen and the potentially disastrous consequences for Anglo-German relations and European defence. The Information Services Division was to play a significant role here.

Although the tasks of the Information Services Division in Germany were largely the same as those of other British Information Offices in other overseas missions, in many respects the situation in Germany differed from that in other countries with a British diplomatic presence. Once again, pessimistic British predictions of future attitudes of a sovereign German state permeated views on all levels of the Foreign Office. This led to increasing demands to change the attitude of the BAOR. This interpretation was held to be of relevance at the highest levels as demonstrated by a despatch from the British High Commissioner Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick to the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, dated 9 June 1952. This paper pointed out the special conditions the Information Services had to deal with in regards to the BAOR and the Germans. Relations between the UK and Western Germany in the political and commercial spheres, and in the sphere of defence-co-operation, had obviously been 'of a special character', and were likely to remain so for some time to come. In the view of the High Commissioner there were furthermore a number of distinct factors, of which the most important was 'the presence in Western Germany of very large British Forces'.⁶ Moreover, the increased sovereignty of Germany resulting from the Paris Agreements brought with it a decrease in British administrative staff in the British zone. The large staffs previously headed by *Land* Commissioners had been considerably reduced, and would be further reduced when the latter no longer existed as such. Whereas the number of Resident Officers was also being reduced, the numbers and duties of the British officials remaining in Germany were likely to remain respectively greater and more specialised (especially in the sense that they entailed more involvement in internal German

⁶ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

matters) than those of the Consular staffs subordinate to the normal diplomatic mission. The Information Services were therefore a crucial element in the British strategy to improve Anglo-German relations. The value of Information Services was furthermore highlighted as the German Education and Information Department was a more flexible and specialised source of material than was available to the equivalent staff at other missions.⁷

A significant problem for the Information Services Division's attempt for better relationships with Germans was the necessity to adopt a tripartite position on most important questions affecting German public opinion which brought obvious disadvantages. It remained necessary to follow a common line with the Americans, whose efforts in the information and cultural fields were 'greater in Germany than in any other country'.⁸ Furthermore the lack of anything resembling a centralised national press in Germany with some 1,000 newspapers of varying size and importance as well as the presence of a large number of foreign, especially of British journalists, permanently assigned to Western Germany had to be taken into account. These special conditions had led to the adoption of organisations and methods different in scope and in scale from those found in other countries to carry out the common objective of extending the range of diplomatic action 'by direct stimulation of the responsible public opinion of the country concerned'.⁹

The Foreign Office considered the ISD valuable due to its effective contribution to the diminution of criticism of British policy, and the creation of greater understanding and acceptance of the aims of British policy. The potentialities of personal contacts were not limited to Information, Cultural or Educational Officers, but extended to all British personnel in Germany, including especially many Resident Officers and Army Officers, who had dealings with

⁷ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

⁸ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

⁹ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

Germans. Information Services division was to make as much use as possible of this indirect means of approach.¹⁰

The ISD itself considered its goals in Germany to be both short-term as well as long-term. In the short run, the department concentrated on discovering the points of tension in the relationships between Great Britain and Germany and, 'by judicious projection and influence on important people, aimed to decrease that tension'.¹¹ In the long run, the ISD task was to build up the prestige of British policy so as to create for Britain a position of respect which would be useful when negotiating on any particular issue. The means to achieve this were increasingly limited. As early as 1952 the ISD lamented that in dealing with the newly established democratic Germany:

the use of armaments was precluded by the general line of British policy as well as international obligations. Economic or financial pressure was also no longer possible due to the weakened economic position of Britain.¹²

The success of British diplomacy in dealing with Germany therefore now increasingly depended to a very large extent upon the sympathy and understanding for British policy which could be built up in Germany and the general prestige in which Britain and British institutions were held. This would be particularly important after the entry into force of the Contractual Agreements, when the Occupying Powers would have abandoned their privileged positions

¹⁰ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

¹¹ NA, FO 953/1285, Report on ISD role in Germany, R. Chaput de Saintonge, 16 May 1952.

¹² NA, FO 953/1285, Report on ISD role in Germany, R. Chaput de Saintonge, 16 May 1952.

and power.¹³ Once German rearmament was under way, the BAOR was to be used to maintain the essential controls on German militarism:

The more we can influence the German Army the more likely we shall be to succeed. In Rhine Army we have the perfect instrument to hand. [...] Perhaps the most important peace-time task of Rhine Army is the cultivation of close relations with the new German forces.¹⁴

There was an acute awareness in the Foreign Office that British powers to influence German opinion were waning at the same time as the largest British presence in Germany was that of the BAOR, whose attitudes were considered ambivalent at best. British administrative staff and the ISD were useful in furthering unofficial contacts and influencing the German press but, particularly after 1955, it undoubtedly appeared easier to at least certain sections of the Foreign Office to influence the BAOR rather than the Germans.

Foreign Office Initiatives to improve Relations

Just as its German counterpart, the Foreign Office regularly aimed print publications at British Service personnel in order to further the understanding of British soldiers of German culture and customs. In common with so many other efforts, this practice began when it became increasingly clear that the western zones of Germany would soon merge into a semi-sovereign state. The CCG *Background Letter*, initially only aimed at CCG officials was the first of this kind. To keep members of the widely dispersed Control Commission in Germany abreast of current developments in the country and in order to enable them to

¹³ NA, FO 953/1285, Report on ISD role in Germany, 16 May 1952.

¹⁴ NA, FO 371/130777, WG 1196/30, Memorandum on the German Army, 7 November 1957.

speak with one voice in their contacts with Germans, the *Background Letter* was produced by the Information Services Division. Appearing approximately three times a week, it aimed at providing a comprehensive picture of British and Allied policy in Germany against the background of the changing political scene. Although originally published for members of the Control Commission only, the *Background Letter* found its way to an increasing extent into the Army Education Service, and by 1952 half of the total circulation of 2,500 copies was taken by the BAOR. This aspect of the *Background Letter* was regarded as of continuing, even increasing, importance. In addition, it proved very popular with British and Allied correspondents and therefore provided a means to influence press comment on British policy.¹⁵

Rather than merely changing Army attitudes, the Foreign Office increasingly also aimed at eradicating the main German grievances, if necessary, against the will of the BAOR. As highlighted in chapter four, the issue of requisitioning of housing was hugely unpopular among the German population. The changing nature of the status of the FRG had a considerable impact on this issue and due to the extensive use of German housing and land the Services were increasingly required to go to astonishing lengths in order to minimise German ill-will. For example, a project in the town of Herford in 1951 forced a British garrison to share its requisitioned houses with German families – a measure unthinkable in 1945, and certainly one not popular with all Officers in 1951.

In terms of housing shortages, Herford was a typical example of a German town. From November 1944 onwards Herford had suffered heavy air raid damage. Herford had a shunting yard and a bridge and garrisoned two thousand German soldiers to defend the nearby *Autobahn*, making it a ‘defended city’ according to Nazi propaganda.¹⁶ The marshalling yards at

¹⁵ NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Kirkpatrick to Eden, 9 June 1952.

¹⁶ Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*, New York, 2006, p. 180.

Herford were targeted by the US Eighth Air Force in November 1944 during a raid involving over 1,800 bombers.¹⁷ Despite the heavy bomb damage there was a considerable number of refugees. This did however not stop the CCG from requisitioning a substantial number of properties in order to establish its own administration. Due to the disbandment of the local CCG administration in 1951, the Army took over 257 requisitioned houses in Herford to accommodate an armoured car division. However, due to German pressure, as well as the consent of the British *Land* Commissioner in Düsseldorf, 'the great moment had arrived for the carrying out of the Herford Plan'.¹⁸

Sixty properties in Herford were being used as shared accommodation between German civilians and British officers with their families. The German conservative daily newspaper *Die Welt* reported on the mixed results of the Anglo-German project designed to alleviate some of the housing shortages. Each party had one storey, only the front door and garden were shared. According to the report, 'they get on wonderfully together. They say 'good morning' and 'good evening' to each other'.¹⁹ However, there were another thirty houses which had been lived in by their former German inhabitants for several months, while the storey reserved for the officer's family stood empty. This, according to one German originator of the Herford Plan, was due to the unwillingness of the officers to live under the same roof with Germans: 'The act of goodwill is in danger'.²⁰ The scheme itself was proof of the intense efforts undertaken by the High Commission to improve housing conditions for the Germans and therefore improve Anglo-German relations, whereas the refusal of officers on the ground pointed towards the difficulties of implementing these

¹⁷ Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire*, p. 182.

¹⁸ NA, FO 1013/2427, *Die Welt*, 28 February 1952.

¹⁹ NA, FO 1013/2427, Extract from *Die Welt*, 29 February 1952.

²⁰ NA, FO 1013/2427, *Die Welt*, 28 February 1952.

measures. The fact that about thirty officers simply refused to move in arguably also suggests a class issue rather than only a nationalistic one.²¹

The Army unit involved refused to take the blame for the partial failure of the scheme and negative press comments. The cooperation between the British and local German officials on the Herford Plan was, according to a British Colonel in charge, rather difficult and frustrating for the British side:

The trouble with these Germans is that they never give any credit for concessions we have made. The word 'compromise' does not exist in the German language. They expect that we should give way to every request they make on compassionate grounds quite regardless of our own needs, and, whenever we do settle any compassionate cases, a couple more come out of the bag as a matter of routine.²²

According to the report, the Services, as a result of the Herford Plan, were also now in control of only three quarters of the living quarters required for other ranks. The Herford Plan, envisaged as an opportunity for the BAOR to demonstrate its willingness to improve Anglo-German relations, instead highlighted the anti-German attitudes of at least a significant minority of British officers. Despite a partial success in eradicating some of the worst housing problems in the town the anti-British elements of the German press evidently made use of this issue.

Requisitioned property remained a difficult issue for the British authorities: many Army officers were accused not only by the Germans but also by the British civilian administration of not caring about property rights, or ever remembering that the accommodation they occupied belonged to someone. The apparent remedy for all these problems as proclaimed by the British High

²¹ FO 1013/2427, Memorandum by Colonel Darley 'General Comments on Herford Plan', February 1952.

²² FO 1013/2427, Memorandum by Colonel Darley.

Commissioner appeared simple – behave in Germany as you would behave anywhere else:

If this could be drummed into the Service mind, and they would develop a common standard of behaving here exactly as they would behave in their own country, ninety-nine per cent of the frictions that are constantly breaking out would be done away with.²³

It is evident that as negotiators between the Services and the German population at least some of the Residents and Commissioners were exasperated about British rather than German attitudes. In the eyes of the Deputy Commissioner the satisfaction of the Services' demands was going to become increasingly difficult, and the atmosphere in which those demands would be negotiated was 'capable of being greatly improved', if the Services, once they had lost the support of the Control Commission, had adjusted themselves to the new conditions.²⁴

Due to the unsatisfactory Army attitude towards the Germans, the Office of the Services Relations Adviser in Bonn produced a 'basic brief' on the object and role of the British Armed Forces in Germany in February 1954.²⁵ Once more the main reason provided for this was the concern of the British High Commissioner and the British Commander-in-Chief in Germany to make known to Commanders of Service Units:

²³ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate to *Land* Commissioner on 'Military Accommodation Programme and Allied/German Relations generally', 19 March 1952.

²⁴ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate.

²⁵ NA, FO 1013/2449, Letter from Services Relations Advisor Major-General Dalton to Office of *Land* Commissioner North Rhine/Westphalia, 3 February 1954.

the gradual change that is taking place in the political situation in Germany and in the relationship of the Occupying Forces with the Germans.²⁶

This again referred to the almost complete emancipation of the FRG from Allied control due to the Bonn Treaty. In March 1954 a pamphlet was printed and copies were distributed to all British Unit Commanders and British Residents as well as Canadian troops as it was to be of use for the 'process of indoctrination' of newly arrived Unit Commanders.²⁷ The pamphlet, simply named *Anglo-German Relations*, briefly explained the political developments in Germany since 1945. It went on to highlight the fundamental change of role and status of the Forces in Germany. The Services' role had gradually moved away from that of an occupation army and instrument of Military Government towards that of an army stationed by agreement with the government of an ally. According to the pamphlet the:

Germans are well aware of the benefits which the new situation [...] will bring them [and] they are eager to enjoy these benefits, and there is at the present time, therefore, a special need for both sides to exercise patience and forbearance in order to avoid prejudicing future relationships.²⁸

The document also pointed out the increasing importance of relations between the Services and the German population at the time of the rapidly

²⁶ NA, FO 1013/2449, Letter from Services Relations Advisor Major-General Dalton to Commander-in-Chief of Belgian Forces, 12 May 1954.

²⁷ NA, FO 1013/2449, Letter from British Resident in Düsseldorf, H.G. Bird, to Land Commissioner's Office North Rhine/Westphalia, 28 May 1954.

²⁸ NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, February 1954 Edition, publ. 23 March 1954, p. 2.

growing independence of the FRG. Being welcomed by the German people was an important factor for the morale of the troops as well as allowing effective fulfilment of the Services' role in an emergency. According to *Anglo-German Relations* the preservation of good relations depended largely on the avoidance of incidents which could lead to misunderstanding or resentment on either side. Although no specific cases were mentioned, most of these incidents apparently occurred due to a lack of appreciation of the true conditions in Germany. The pamphlet described British and Germans as:

two different people who have different viewpoints, especially with regard to the war and the Occupation, and who not think or act on precisely the same lines.²⁹

This allowed for the creation of conditions in which comparatively small happenings could be magnified beyond reason and cause repercussions out of all proportion to their real importance. Much therefore depended on the proper instruction of the individual officer, soldier and airman in regards to the occurring changes as well as underlying politics and principles involved in order to avoid incidents³⁰. Furthermore soldiers should be instructed not only on how to avoid incidents but also about the repercussion they potentially cause, as the fact remained that the Services stationed in Germany 'have to live and work side by side with the German people'.³¹

The Services, armed with advice from the High Commission, were therefore increasingly bearing the sole responsibility for ensuring good relations with the Germans throughout the British zone. According to the pamphlet all Commanders, regardless of the size of their unit, had a duty in this matter and

²⁹ NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, p. 4.

³⁰ NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, p. 4.

³¹ NA, FO 1013/2449, 'Anglo-German Relations' Pamphlet, p. 4.

were required to seek advice either from Residents or Land Commissioners before making any decision affecting either German authorities or people. Moreover all Unit Commanders had to obtain real knowledge of factors involved rather than simply carrying out military duties in a prescribed manner. The responsibility of ensuring the smooth transformation of the Occupation regime to a non-occupation status was firmly being placed with the Unit Commanders of the Services. The question remained how willing and well-suited they were to carry out this duty. The pamphlet made it very clear that as late as 1954 the Foreign Office considered relations between BAOR and the Germans to be unsatisfactory and in need of improvement. With less than a year until German sovereignty further measures were needed to prevent BAOR from turning into a major liability.

The Foreign Office was acutely aware of the German dissatisfaction over manoeuvre damage as highlighted in chapter four. Once again, the BAOR had to readjust to the change in diplomatic relations between London and Bonn. Once the FRG was established, the issue of damage to German roads and property caused by BAOR manoeuvres led to far more concern in London than one might expect. The resulting changes required of British troops when training in Germany were drastic and undoubtedly unpopular with Service personnel. Servicemen now had to behave in a courteous manner and avoid any unnecessary damage when driving their armoured vehicles through German towns. The damage compensation procedure for victims of manoeuvre damage was continuously improved to prevent anger. *Kreis* Residents and Land Commissioners in Germany constantly dealt with claims made by German civilians, ranging from illegal hunting by British troops in private forests to entire houses being burnt down by British verey flares.³²

As was noted in chapter four, there was a distinct fear among 'responsible and reasonable' Germans, as well as British Residents, that

³² NA, FO 1010/171, British Resident Lüneburg to Deputy Land Commissioner, 4 June 1952.

extremism in political feeling was engendered by manoeuvre damage. Evidence of wilful damage being caused by the Services threatened to exacerbate the situation.³³ It is important to note, however, that this fear was certainly shared in much higher political circles in London. This was demonstrated by a lengthy correspondence between the Office of the British High Commissioner, the War Office and the Foreign Office in regards to manoeuvre damage caused in Lower Saxony in August 1953. As this had occurred during harvest time, the result had been an outcry by farmers and the German press. Mr W.M.F. Vane, a Conservative Member of Parliament and member of the Anglo-German Association, had become aware of the Lower Saxony *Land* Government's concern over unnecessary damage by Allied troops and the fear that representations about this through normal channels would take too long. He therefore decided to take up the matter with the Foreign Office directly. This caused a considerable stir and led to a flurry of activity. Not only had manoeuvre damage increased compared to previous years due to additional numbers of troops to be trained as well as a larger scope of training:

To this natural factor for increased agitation must also be added the political factor of the forthcoming Federal Elections.³⁴

There was an underlying fear that the BAOR could severely damage the prospects of the pro-western Adenauer government to stay in power and strengthen both the KPD as well as right-wing splinter parties in the FRG. The British Cabinet grew increasingly concerned over the instability of the German government due to CDU losses in local elections and by the emergence of the Refugee Party, 'a focus for unhealthy nationalist and irredentist tendencies'.

³³ NA, FO 1010/171, Report on Damage caused by Training in the Reinsehlen Area, May 1951.

³⁴ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter from Chancery of High Commissioner to Foreign Office, 29 August 1953.

There was furthermore the brief but unsettling rise of the 'semi-Nazi Socialist Reich Party'.³⁵ These found very fertile ground for anti-British agitation, as the compensation for damage was not paid by the British government, but came out of Occupation costs, in other words was paid for by the German taxpayer. The total amount of compensation paid for training damages on only one major training area for the financial year ending in March 1953 amounted to around 3.7 million Deutschmark.³⁶

Unsurprisingly therefore, the fear of causing any unnecessary antagonism prior to the elections led to a concerned letter from the War Office to British troops in Germany, photographic evidence being examined by the Ministry of Defence³⁷ as well as an explanatory letter from the High Commissioner's Office to the Foreign Office in order to provide adequate material 'with which to reply to [...] any other Members of Parliament who may make similar enquiries'.³⁸ Furthermore, other strategies to minimise or at least localise discontent were taken:

By using one general (training) area, the agitation, though intensive in that area, is localised, whereas otherwise it would be widespread and therefore more embarrassing.³⁹

³⁵ NA, CAB 129/49, C. (52) 23 Cabinet Memorandum on the Political Situation in the German Federal Republic, 7 February 1952.

³⁶ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter from Chancery of High Commissioner to Foreign Office, 29 August 1953.

³⁷ NA, FO 371/104044, Foreign Office Minute, 14 August 1953.

³⁸ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter from Chancery of High Commissioner to Foreign Office, 29 August 1953.

³⁹ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter from Chancery of High Commissioner to Foreign Office, 29 August 1953.

A number of strategies were now employed in order to minimise German resentment of the Services. Tensions over manoeuvre damage between the Services and the local German inhabitants in some areas ran so high that press conferences were now held before the beginning of manoeuvres in order to assure the population. A memorandum of 1952 in regards to a press conference concerning the Reinsehlen area of Niedersachsen stated that if the 'assurances are carried out by all formations':

it is possible that there may be considerable easing of the tension which has prevailed in the past in this area as a result of training damage; if not, there will be adverse comments and accusations of bad faith.⁴⁰

Emotions ran high and the issue was frequently dealt with by the highest political circles in Bonn and London. By 1953 the Foreign Office considered that:

the damage caused in Lower Saxony has been, as in previous years, exaggerated and made the subject of political propaganda by the irresponsible local press and by agitators of the extreme left and right. It has also been the occasion for electioneering statements by Federal Ministers and a personal approach by the Chancellor to the High Commissioner.⁴¹

Nonetheless, in the view of the High Commission every possible measure to minimise damage by the Army had to be undertaken. A quick system of repayment had been introduced and even positive measures like the employment of special mobile repair teams equipped with road mending

⁴⁰ NA, FO 371/104044, Brigadier Gibson to Brigadier Mitchell, HQ 1 Corps BAOR, 15 May 1952.

⁴¹ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter Chancery of U.K. High Commissioner to Central Department FO, 15 August 1953.

machinery had been taken. The point had been reached at which any further restrictions imposed on the troops would largely destroy the training value of the exercises they were required to carry out.⁴² The High Commission kept a close watch on this question and with the approach of the 1953 elections the German outcry was expected to become louder, 'but we do not think that too much importance should be attached to it'.⁴³

Despite this dismissive view of German protests, measures to prevent German anger were increased even further in some areas of Lower Saxony. Apart from the complete avoidance of fire and the protection of trees and fences, the forces were now also barred from driving across fields and from dropping litter which might endanger livestock. They were required to refill any trenches and only allowed to use private residences with the owner's permission. Areas of natural beauty were declared out of bounds, pipelines were marked with warning signs and six hundred signs were placed on monuments and historical places to protect them from damage. In addition, German Resident Officers were now appointed to assist the British Resident Officers when assessing damage claims and damage prevention. The German Resident Officer was to play an important psychological role, as troops had to constantly expect the German Resident to pursue avoidable or wilful cases of damage. Germans who suffered damage were also to be calmed by the presence of a German representative when dealing with foreign troops. The British authorities also considered the German Resident vital in preventing anger from spreading as was demonstrated in the case of the Oldenburg Resident, who persuaded the local German press not to report on a British tank damaging a war memorial.

These drastic measures increasingly bore fruit. Apart from Lower Saxony, where the subject of damage caused by troops on manoeuvres or training was brought into prominence by the protest lodged by the Deputy Minister-President, publicity given to British troops in the non-communist press was mainly

⁴² NA, FO 371/104044, Letter Chancery of U.K. High Commissioner.

⁴³ NA, FO 371/104044, Letter Chancery of U.K. High Commissioner.

favourable. One local paper commented prominently on the 'democratic behaviour' of the British Officer Class, who, on one occasion, entertained the German children and served them food.⁴⁴ The monthly Information Services report for August 1953 also highlighted the positive impact on Army initiatives on the German press and public opinion. The *Lüneburger Landeszeitung* issued a tribute to British Army Officers for their interest in reducing manoeuvre damage despite previously having led the attack on British troops for damage on training and manoeuvres. In an article covering a column and a half, the writer commended British Officers for the interest which they were now taking in the farmlands contained within the manoeuvre areas. Several communities had reported the presence of British officers who had made detailed inspections and had asked owners of land to explain to them how they intended to use their fields this autumn. Coming just before the manoeuvres, these discussions, 'which were held in a polite and understanding atmosphere', were much appreciated. They gave cause for hope that the troops involved in the manoeuvres would show similar understanding.⁴⁵

Foreign Office attempts to minimise German protests over manoeuvre damage turned into a regular feature. As September 1954 saw the first full-scale NATO manoeuvres to include atomic weapons - exercise 'Battle Royal' -, manoeuvre damage once more became an issue. Again, some of the British reports highlighted that neither adverse reports nor complaints were received either from the German officials or from the farmers and 'the services relations with the German population were excellent'.⁴⁶ Often dealing with local German officials took place in a 'friendly spirit of cooperation and give and take' regardless of the rapidly changing status and independence of the FRG:

⁴⁴ NA, FO 953/1424, Information Services Quarterly Report, 30 July 1953.

⁴⁵ NA, FO 953/1424, Information Services Monthly Report for August 1953.

⁴⁶ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Herford, Quarterly Report, 23 June 1954.

Whilst they drive as hard a bargain as they know how, they continue to show every understanding for our needs, and I have so far observed no change in their attitude to us or to any sign of 'marching time' pending the anticipated change in our mutual status.⁴⁷

It appears therefore that cooperation between the Services, aided by the Residents, and the local German officials was increasingly successful in minimising manoeuvre damage throughout this particular period. The overall impression which the British Resident reports of 1954 convey, is that in no small part due to the various efforts of both units as well as German local officials and civilians, relations between the Services and the local population were better than 'they have [been] for a very considerable while'.⁴⁸ It was evident that, while for example the British were taking considerable efforts to minimise manoeuvre damage, the German press, partly due to the appreciation of the British presence after the failure of the EDC, went to great lengths to explain to the population the reason and necessity for certain manoeuvres. According to the British *Kreis* Residents the situation at the end of 1954 was looking rather positive.

Foreign Office initiatives and changes to BAOR behaviour and practices initiated in London and Bonn clearly produced at least some local successes. The main problem was the fact that the issues at hand required constant and continued attention, and improvements did not necessarily prove long-lasting. This again highlighted the necessity to continue efforts to change BAOR behaviour in the light of changing Anglo-German relations.

⁴⁷ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Düsseldorf Report, 30 September 1954.

⁴⁸ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Recklinghausen, Quarterly Report, September 1954.

The ISD View of the Germans

Information Services Officers frequently voiced concern that they had to continually go over the same ground in order to keep the friendly Germans from being led into defection. Whereas British Information Services in America were dealing with individualistic people who liked to form their opinion independently:

in Germany you have a people who are not concerned with the right or wrong of a situation but are seeking alibis which will enable them always to remain on the right side of the fence.⁴⁹

It was for this reason that Germans always aimed at being popular with the British:

They will agree with you when you talk with them and will curse your guts behind your back when they are talking in suitable company.⁵⁰

The problem according to the ISD was that there was seldom a German who was openly Anglophile in German company. It was this characteristic which justified the continuing presence of British Information Officers. Although tasks performed were largely similar to those performed in other British overseas missions, complications arose in Germany from the absence of anything resembling a centralised national press.⁵¹ Furthermore the special characteristics of Germany itself had to be considered, notably that:

⁴⁹ NA, FO 953/782, Minute from R.A. Chaput de Saintonge to C.F.A. Warner, 4 May 1950.

⁵⁰ NA, FO 953/782, Minute R.A. Chaput de Saintonge.

⁵¹ NA, FO 953/1286, PC1013/37, Memorandum by Mr Chaput de Saintonge, 6 December 1952.

despite some success in creating personal relationships from which we derive advantage, the general attitude has been one of distrust of the Allies.⁵²

This attitude was however often mutual as was shown by a remark by the British High Commissioner Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. His view was that it was neither possible nor desirable for British policy to satisfy German demands on every point 'and we must accept disappointments and vexation when dealing with a people so immature and unstable'.⁵³

The view of one ISD officer was shared by many among the British civilian staff in Germany tasked with the improvement of Anglo-German relations:

God knows none of us like the Germans much, but it is necessary at this juncture to try and avoid some of the mistakes we made in the time of the Weimar Republic.⁵⁴

There was considerable doubt over the future of Anglo-German relations as well as the BAOR's role in these. It was the perceived dangers of the German character, combined with Federal Germany's independence, which made the 1955 change in relations so important in the eyes of the Foreign Office and High Commission. However, this view needs to be considered in conjunction with the experiences made by the British administrative staff on the local levels.

⁵² NA, FO 953/1285, Despatch Ivone Kirkpatrick to Anthony Eden, 9 June 1952.

⁵³ NA, FO 953/1286, PC1013/26, Comments on Memorandum about the Role of British Information Services in Germany, Despatch No. 187, 22 July 1952.

⁵⁴ NA, FO 371/118207, C.B. Ormerod, British Information Services, New York, to P. Mennell, ISD, London, 5 April 1955.

The Relations of the British and German Administrations in the *Länder*

As established in chapter two, the higher echelons of the British administration not only viewed the BAOR as problematic, but also had considerable doubts about the Germans with whom they were tasked to co-operate in an Anglo-German as well as Western alliance context. British policy towards Germany was positive because it was 'fatal to be negative about Germany. We are all aware of the risks entailed in the present policy, but those in any other would be much greater'.⁵⁵ It has become evident throughout, that British expectations of the future of Germany and Anglo-German relations were not necessarily positive in 1955. It is however also important to consider the views of those members of the British administration working on the *Land* level with the Germans and the BAOR.

In North Rhine-Westphalia the Services Liaison Section and Information Services Division were tasked with bringing British troops and Germans together. The suspicion that co-operation between the British and German administrations in the British zone was going to be increasingly difficult after 1955, was confirmed in a Services Liaison Section report of March 1954. This paper claimed that, although generally the cooperation between the *Land* government of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Services was good, the Germans were deliberately 'dragging their feet' in regards to important Service requirements such as accommodation and training grounds despite prolonged negotiations. Although this could partly be attributed to the upcoming *Landtag* elections in June 1954, a far more important reason was to be found in the fact that:

⁵⁵ NA, FO 371/118207, Western Department of FO Minute by P. Wright, 23 April 1955.

they do not want to make decisions now which they might be able to avoid making after the Occupation Statute has been repealed.⁵⁶

The head of Services Liaison Section in North Rhine-Westphalia concluded that it was time for a 'showdown' to achieve at least some of the most urgent Service requirements. This was best done at a time when the Services possessed some residual authority rather than later, when British power would be drastically reduced.

By 1955 one of the main problems for the British administration, when liaising between the Services and German authorities, was that the Services had used the terms 'priority' and 'urgent' so often that they ceased to mean very much to the German authorities. The Germans also could no longer be 'blinded with science' and frequently called up technical experts to challenge decisions made on the advice of Service technicians.⁵⁷ On a more positive note, from a Services Liaison perspective demands for training facilities and manoeuvres had been met without any unreasonable protests from the responsible German authorities and in day-to-day negotiations between the Services Liaison Section staff and the German officials there was the fullest cooperation and good will. 'It is however possible that the Services would not consider that they can endorse this opinion.'⁵⁸ The Services were faced with a large number of urgent problems and could not be expected to appreciate all the multitudinous causes of delay in the satisfaction of their bids. If the improvement of relations was to be led by British officers and the same officers were continuously frustrated in their efforts

⁵⁶ NA, FO 1013/2452, Quarterly Report Services Liaison Section to *Land* Commissioner, 31 March 1954, p.1.

⁵⁷ NA, FO 1013/2452, Field Sections' Quarterly Report to *Land* Commissioner NRW, December 31, 1953, p. 2.

⁵⁸ NA, FO 1013/2452, Quarterly Report, Services Liaison Section, September 1954, p. 1.

to fulfil Army requirements by German bureaucracy and reluctance this was counter-productive.

Finally, the decentralisation of power in Germany, for which the Allies had been responsible, had effectively hamstrung the Federal Government in its attempts to impose its will (and therefore indirectly that of the British) on the *Länder*. German self-government above local levels in the British zone had begun with the *Land* governments in 1946.⁵⁹ The principle of federalism had been enshrined in the Basic Law of the FRG in 1949 as a safeguard against excessive central power.⁶⁰ As a result extensive powers, for example in the fields of police and local government, were vested in the states rather than the Federal level.⁶¹ This factor also applied to the relationship between the *Länder* and the local authorities. The moral therefore was that the British had to continue to maintain the best possible relationships with the Federal, the *Land* and the local authorities and get the best they could from all of them.⁶² The head of Services Liaison Section in North Rhine-Westphalia nonetheless concluded that, in spite of many difficulties and differences in viewpoint, the Services and the Germans had:

⁵⁹ Donald C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, p. 76. In July 1946 the British zone was reshaped by the combining of the two provinces of North Rhine and Westphalia into a single *Land*. The states of Hannover, Oldenburg, Brunswick and Schaumburg-Lippe formed the *Land* of Lower Saxony. The two Hanseatic cities of Hamburg and Bremen were also turned into *Länder*. Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People*, p. 260.

⁶⁰ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe*, p. 38.

⁶¹ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 216.

⁶² NA, FO 1013/2452, Quarterly Report Services Liaison Section to *Land* Commissioner, September 1954, p 2.

worked well together. I do not believe that in this land we shall notice an immediate change of heart or policy when sovereignty becomes a fact.⁶³

It is noteworthy that, when considering attitudes of British administrative staff towards the German people and authorities, rather more positive views were prevalent on local levels compared to those on *Land* and national levels.

The Assessment of BAOR Attitudes by British Resident Officers

Despite the often critical view of the behaviour of the Services, there was also some praise, particularly on the 'ground level'. The British *Kreis* Residents regularly provided detailed quarterly reports to the *Land* Commissioners outlining political, economic and social events in their *Kreise* as well as Anglo-German relations in general and relations between the Services and Germans in particular. These reports provide a useful insight into local views on British actions and politics as well as Anglo-German relations. The year of 1954 is particularly well-documented and provides a different view of the crucial period preceding German sovereignty. The main concerns to Anglo-German relations on the local level in Germany during this period were in particular the failure of the EDC and widespread German admiration for the British foreign secretary Sir Anthony Eden and his successful efforts to reconstruct Western European defence thereafter.⁶⁴ This effort was mentioned in a large number of reports as a particular boost to Anglo-German relations on a local level, which consequently led to a number of British units to go out of their way to cultivate the improved

⁶³ NA, FO 1013/2452, Quarterly Report Services Liaison Section to *Land* Commissioner, September 1954, p.1.

⁶⁴ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Arnsberg, Quarterly Report, 14 December 1954.

relations. The Mönchen Gladbach Resident even worried that the trend of growing friendship continued:

with quickening tempo, bringing with it the possible danger that over-enthusiasts, on both sides, may force too quickly a plant which will ultimately have to face the cold winds which blow prosaically from the Bonn Agreement on Tax treatment of the Forces and their members.⁶⁵

The overall picture provided by Resident reports certainly did not suggest a lack of initiative on both sides - the Services and the civilian population - on local levels. The reports also highlighted - at least in some cases - the 'very satisfactory' nature of contacts between British and German officials due to 'the maintenance of good personal relations'.⁶⁶ The impression which the Resident reports of 1954 conveyed was that, partly due to the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's determination, but also due to unit efforts, relations between the Services and the local population were better than they had been for a considerable while.⁶⁷ This assessment, in many respects similar to that of the German authorities highlighted in chapter three, was clearly more positive than the Foreign Office view from London.

⁶⁵ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Report Mönchen Gladbach, December 1954.

⁶⁶ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Arnsberg, Quarterly Report, 3 June 1954.

⁶⁷ NA, FO 1013/2451, British Resident Recklinghausen, Quarterly Report, September 1954.

Foreign Office Assessment of BAOR Attitudes towards Germans after 1955

Relations were nonetheless still fragile and the gains made could quickly be lost again. Particularly in the context of increasing German sovereignty the behaviour of the British Services was under continuous scrutiny. A 1956 account by the British Embassy highlighted renewed incidents of manoeuvre damage and their negative consequences. Troops of the Sixth Armoured division, taking part in a night exercise, had passed through a stretch of thirty year old forest and destroyed some two thousand trees in the Soltau area. As the trail of destruction was only a few yards from completely open ground, the local population found it hard to believe that the tank crews were unaware of what they were doing and that the damage was not malicious or, to say the least of it, carefree. This incident sparked the resentment of the local farmers, which was further inflamed by another exercise during the next forty-eight hours. An irate deputation of farmers visited the Services Liaison Officer in Soltau on 14 July and threatened to lie down in front of the tanks unless the damage was restricted.

Although individual complaints had been common, this was the first organised protest from farmers in the area. The press, 'which has of late been on the look-out for incidents involving Allied forces', naturally took the farmers' part and demanded that the exercise should be stopped. Taken as a whole, the damage was not regarded by the Embassy as remarkably heavy, 'though in some places it is said to be rather spectacular'. The *Land* Government found itself releasing statements and 'objective articles' to the press in order to aid British efforts to prevent the escalation of the problem.⁶⁸

In March 1957 a group of fifty Scottish soldiers rampaged through the town of Lüneburg, overturning vehicles, smashing windows and beating

⁶⁸ NA, FO 371/124637, WG12010/1, British Embassy Bonn to FO, 24 July 1956.

civilians. The Military Police were unable to prevent this, as they simply were 'powerless'.⁶⁹ 'The trouble at Lüneburg' caused an outcry by the German press. The developments in Lüneburg were also reported in *The Times* on 8 August 1957. According to the article, there had been fifty-three recorded incidents of misbehaviour since the beginning of April, as well as an increase in more serious offences. The incidents involved a German apprentice hit over the head with a brandy bottle, an attack on two German policemen as well as a young girl and a woman being molested in a park. 'A catalogue of these incidents can be made to look unpleasant'.⁷⁰ The inhabitants of the beautiful and quiet town did not want visitors frightened away by 'lurid mental pictures of marauding bands of wild British soldiers'. Locals apparently were able to see things in perspective:

but when an aged woman visitor here for the cure is molested by a drunken British soldier as happened recently she leaves and tells all her friends and the Press and the place begins to get a bad name.⁷¹

Despite this local opinion was judged 'remarkably objective' and 'soldiers will be soldiers' was the normal reaction to 'normal' misbehaviour – a few windows broken, singing in the streets at night and the occasional fight over a girl. Of the 3,500 troops in Lüneburg most were from the Welch Regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, the 8th Hussars and some Royal Artillery. About ninety per cent of all incidents were attributed to alcohol. It was also viewed that 'the existence of a few more or less criminal types who lead others on' as well as the rivalry between Scottish and Welsh regiments were to blame.

The British Embassy's report of the Lüneburg disturbances was rather gloomy:

⁶⁹ NI, Nds. 100, Acc. 2000/034, Nr. 8, p. 26.

⁷⁰ NI, Nds. 100, Acc. 2000/034, Nr. 8, p. 26.

⁷¹ *The Times*, 8 August 1957.

On March 1 the Welch Regiment celebrated St. David's Day by breaking a lot of windows in the town, and on the following day the Highlands Light Infantry were involved in widespread disturbances and clashes with the Military Police.

There had been nearly eighty incidents (which was more than the German press had claimed) and 'there were far too many trouble-makers in the Lüneburg area'. The German press on this occasion was regarded as 'very reasonable', praising the discipline of British troops in general and their role in the defence of Germany. According to the report, there was no doubt that the Lüneburg troubles caused damage throughout the entire area occupied by British troops. A recent tour through North Rhine-Westphalia had revealed that 'reasonable people, who are more than satisfied with the conduct of British troops in their area, are perpetually talking about the Lüneburg affair'. Strong disciplinary measures as well as good public relations work would now be required to restore confidence in the relations between troops and civilians in Lüneburg.⁷²

In stark contrast to the aforementioned RAF initiative, as well as previous Army efforts, the behaviour of some BAOR Army units appeared to deteriorate rather than improve, as by 1957 the British administration increasingly found itself having to minimise political damage over incidents involving the Services. A telegram from the Charge d'Affaires to the Commander-in-Chief from August 1957 expressed concern at the increasing criticism, directed against the British Forces in Germany as well as in the whole German press on account of the incidents in Lüneburg. These incidents formed one of the main topics of discussion in North Germany at the time. There was a widespread feeling that the forces had taken inadequate steps to maintain discipline in the Lüneburg area since the New Year, that punishment of the guilty had been too light and

⁷² NA, FO 371/130776, WG1195/16 Minute British Embassy, Bonn to FO, London, 12 August 1957.

that adequate apologies had been lacking. Although much of this criticism was 'no doubt unfair and based on inadequate information', it was liable to affect relations between the forces and the local population, 'and even Anglo-German relations in a wider field'.⁷³ The incident did indeed cause severe problems. The Niedersachsen *Land* Government press office reported on two cases of English soldiers robbing and assaulting German youths in the town of Lüneburg in 1957. As the number of incidents in the area had increased significantly, the local Liberal Democratic Party even demanded a complete break of relations between the town and the British troops. Particularly the perceived lack of an apology by the British officers caused anger.⁷⁴

Fear of more widespread misbehaviour was created by further serious incidents in a base one hundred miles away from Lüneburg and the Chief of Staff at Northern Army Group was concerned 'that the indiscipline might prove catching and had decided to take decisive action to discourage unruly elements'.⁷⁵ The incidents were regarded so seriously that they caused discussions between the British Embassy and the Federal Foreign Office as well as the involvement of the War Office. The root of the trouble 'was the rather injudicious decision of the War Office to put the H.L.I. alongside the Welch regiment', neither of which were 'notable for punctilious behaviour'.⁷⁶ According to a FO minute, the Chief of Staff Rhine Army was to send a report on the troubles to the Secretary of State for War, the offending Regiment was to be withdrawn in a month's time and the whole future of the Lüneburg Garrison itself

⁷³ NA, FO 371/130776, WG1195/14, Telegram to Headquarters Northag, 8 August 1957.

⁷⁴ NI, Nds. 50, Acc. 96/88, Nr. 165/2, Pressebericht Pressestelle Hannover, 6 August 1957.

⁷⁵ NA, FO 371/130776 WG1195/16 Minute British Embassy, Bonn to FO, London, 12 August 1957.

⁷⁶ NA, FO 371/130776 WG1195/16 Minute British Embassy, Bonn to FO, London, 12 August 1957.

was under consideration. Ironically, Rhine Army was most anxious that 'no hints should reach the Germans that we are considering clearing out of Lüneburg'.⁷⁷ The measures taken to suppress any further trouble clearly indicated the severity of the threat the Lüneburg incident and the BAOR caused to Anglo-German relations.

Conclusions

As established throughout this chapter, the Foreign Office assessment of the behaviour of the Services was, in contrast to that of the British Residents, at times quite negative and a significant effort was considered necessary to prevent the Army from destroying those improvements in relations already achieved once Germany had regained its status as a sovereign state. Despite an overall improvement in Anglo-German relations, when it came to attitudes towards Germans in North Rhine-Westphalia in particular, there was apparently ample evidence that some members of the Services 'have got their ideas all wrong about being in Germany'.⁷⁸ Even British Residents frequently mentioned instances of this character, in which a British soldier or a British family behaved differently from the manner in which they would behave anywhere else. This apparently gave Germans ample opportunity to accuse the British of preaching democracy and equality without adhering to their own principles. The root of this problem, according to the Deputy *Land* Commissioner of North Rhine Westphalia, was that from top to bottom in the Services' structure one

⁷⁷ NA, FO 371/130776, WG1195/15, FO Minute P.F. Hancock to Sir F. Hoyer-Millar, 8 August 1957.

⁷⁸ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate to *Land* Commissioner on 'Military Accommodation Programme and Allied/German Relations generally', 19 March 1952.

continually came up against the feeling that in dealing with Germany and the Germans ordinary considerations did not apply.⁷⁹

A Foreign Office minute dated 16 December 1954 still judged the 'attitude of the forces in general and the Army in particular towards the Germans' as unsatisfactory. Apparently there had been remarkably little social contact between the forces and the German civilians; and little interest shown in the importance of the relationship. Although several attempts had been made to improve this situation there had only been local successes. The trouble seemed to lie mainly with the Unit Commanders and the senior officers in the smaller formations:

and more particularly with their wives who either will not or cannot give the necessary lead. Where a lead has been given, however, good results have been obtained.⁸⁰

The minute continued to argue that this situation had been bad enough during Military Occupation and had continued to cause difficulties during the last four years. Good and constructive relations between the forces and the Germans now was of very great importance as very soon the forces would be stationed in Germany by agreement with a Sovereign Government, and not by virtue of their victories in war.

Furthermore the Germans themselves were shortly to build up an army of their own and should be given the best possible demonstration of how the army of a democratic nation should behave. It was therefore desirable to make one more effort to try to get the Army to co-operate fully in establishing better and more constructive relations with the German population. The 'fresh situation' created by the imminent end of Occupation was to be a benefit when approaching the Army. For example Officers of the information and cultural

⁷⁹ NA, FO 1013/2439, Letter Deputy *Land* Commissioner W. J. Bate.

⁸⁰ NA, FO 371/109733, FO Minute Wright to Hancock, 16 December 1954.

relations divisions in Germany who were stationed near military installations and barracks were to be used to help Unit Commanders. The British ambassador Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar had discussed this issue recently with the BAOR's Commander-in-Chief General Gale, who apparently was very keen on doing what he could to encourage contacts. However, Hoyer-Millar himself apparently was 'not too unhappy about the present situation; there are quite a lot of contacts, he says'.⁸¹

Since 1945 relations between the Services and the (Foreign Office-led) Control Commission in Germany had generally been poor and it may be that the widespread criticism of Army officers in Germany by Foreign Office staff partly has to be seen in this light. It is evident that the Foreign Office considered that all major efforts undertaken by the civilian administration to bring British soldiers and German civilians closer together stood and fell with the attitude of local Unit Commanders. There were frequent complaints by local liaison officers that Service personnel behaved in an utterly unacceptable manner towards Germans. According to the Information Services Department this situation did not improve after 1955 and it appears that the Foreign Office increasingly grew tired of attempting to improve the situation. An Information Services Division memorandum from 1956 drew the rather frustrated conclusion that 'our men simply do not like Germans'.⁸² The paper furthermore considered it best if the host country itself, for instance through mayors, took more initiative. Frustration with the German attitudes was equally still as strong as it had been prior to 1955. Also if the Germans were to make more efforts it would be better to do so:

⁸¹ NA, FO 371/109733, FO Minute Wright to Hancock, 16 December 1954.

⁸² NA, FO 953/1662, Public Relations Problems Of British Services in Germany and Co-Operation with the German Services, J.M. Fisher to R.A. Chaput de Saintonge, 16 March 1956.

in a manner less ponderously formal than Germans usually employ, so much the better from the point of view of ready response.⁸³

A resigned and frustrated ISD therefore put the blame on a continued lack of improvement on both sides. The memorandum claimed that a good many Germans did not like the British either and that it was doubtful whether a completely satisfactory solution could ever be achieved within the foreseeable future. Despite this resignation Foreign Office fears of a deterioration of Anglo-German relations due to German independence and rearmament did not materialise. Regardless of some 'disquieting signs of a resurgence of Nazism'⁸⁴ in 1953, the Neo-Nazis fared disastrously at the 1953 elections, 'a reverse from which they have never since recovered'.⁸⁵

In the meantime the Foreign Office often found itself attempting to prevent a spread of potentially negative publicity not only in Germany but also abroad. One example of this was the case of four young Commonwealth journalists who had toured the British Service installations and troops in Germany. Apparently in a conversation with the British Ambassador the journalists had become very critical of the apparent relationship between the Services and the local German population. There were of course many arguments which the Services would be quick to bring out, like the intensity of their training, the fact they had little spare time, they were often far away from centres of population, had little incentive to learn German, little or no money for activities of this kind, to name only a few.⁸⁶ But the Services in Germany were in a very special position:

⁸³ NA, FO 953/1662, J.M. Fisher to R.A. Chaput de Saintonge.

⁸⁴ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 252.

⁸⁵ Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p. 253.

⁸⁶ NA, FO 953/1662, J. M. Fisher (Information Services Bonn) to Chaput de Sointange (German Information Department Foreign Office, London), 16 March 1956.

They are the only British troops stationed in any numbers in an Allied country and I wonder whether any special thought has ever been given to the problem this presents.⁸⁷

The Information Service Division's reply to this statement remarked that the problem of fostering contacts between the British Forces in Germany and the German population was an old one and that various measures had been tried in the past, including edicts sent out to the BAOR from the War Office. These apparently had very little effect since the whole question depended upon the frame of mind and degree of energy on the part of the British local commanders concerned. In the circumstances it was difficult to make any really constructive suggestions and perhaps the main hope lay in the formation of German military units, who may then find it easier to get on with their British counterparts:

In short, we have no particularly bright ideas. But I do agree with you that it is a problem which should continually be borne in mind, and I should be grateful if you would report from time to time how things are progressing.⁸⁸

By 1956 it was therefore evident that the ISD had run out of ideas and motivation to deal with a problem that was essentially considered unsolvable. After eight years of efforts to change BAOR attitudes and some local successes, the main problem still appeared to be the attitudes of unit commanders and high-ranking officers in small units. The British civilian administration had introduced drastic changes to the ways in which the Army behaved in Germany when considering accommodation and training, but the behaviour and attitude of individual officers and soldiers was more difficult to influence and, although there was no widespread anti-British unrest caused by the BAOR in Germany, from a

⁸⁷ NA, FO 953/1662, J. M. Fisher to Chaput de Sointange, 16 March 1956.

⁸⁸ NA, FO 953/1662, Chaput de Saintonge to Fisher, 6 July 1956.

Foreign Office perspective the idea of using the BAOR as an asset for Anglo-German relations appeared increasingly remote.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Relations between the Services in Germany and the German population have always been a problem. I believe that from time to time the Service Ministries issue special instructions encouraging the forces to take more notice of the Germans in their areas, and senior officers stationed in Germany do their best. But it is at the ordinary level that relations still remain almost non-existent.¹

This comment by a British Information Services official from 1956 aptly summarised some of the existing problems in relations between the Services and the Germans as well as pointing towards some of the continuous efforts made in London and Bonn to foster contacts between Britons and Germans. However, this thesis has uncovered evidence showing that 'non-existent' was not always the correct term for relations between the Services and Germans. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, some very real problems caused by the presence of British troops in Germany at times posed a threat to Anglo-German relations, which were dominated both by the German defeat in World War Two and the heightened Cold War tensions. As highlighted in chapter two of this thesis the growing Cold War threat led to a continuous increase in the size of the British troop commitment during the period in question. This provided further opportunities for contacts with the German population but also created the potential for greater friction at a time when London regarded the German integration into the Western system of defence as crucial.

Many of the British decision makers in London and Bonn had first-hand experience of two conflicts caused by German aggression. It was the

¹ NA, FO 953/1662, Public Relations Problems of British Services in Germany, Minute, 16 March 1956.

combination of the Soviet threat and the fear of a revival of German nationalism which fuelled the London administration's desire to transform the BAOR. Despite both the Labour and Conservative administration's reluctance to take part in the process of European integration, the BAOR and its relations with the German population constituted a significant element in Britain's post-war defence strategy.

The Impact of British Public Opinion on BAOR Relations with the Germans

Whereas official British policy aimed at integrating Germany into the Western defence system and rearming the Federal Republic in the context of NATO, British public opinion was somewhat reluctant to adapt to this situation. As has been established in chapter three, much of British opinion as expressed in the popular press and, to an extent, non-fictional literature still very much associated Germany with the threat of a revival of nationalism throughout the period in question. In particular, the conservative popular press ceaselessly produced vitriolic anti-German views and, rather than addressing the changing relationship between Britain and Germany in the Cold War context, popular entertainment mainly focused on British victories in the Second World War. The swift economic revival of Germany also added to the resentment of the former enemy.

Despite these fears and resentments there was nonetheless a slow but important change in attitudes. This thesis has shown that non-fictional literature on the subject of Germany was far from unanimously anti-German, even if partly due to interference from the Foreign Office. In addition, a closer inspection of press articles of even the most hostile papers such as the *Daily Express* reveals at least a degree of normalisation in relations through factual reporting. The image of Germany portrayed outside the popular press was often surprisingly positive. Although war films and novels generally celebrated British courage in the Second World War, they either did not portray Germans at all, or

characterised them not as goose-stepping Nazis, but increasingly as ordinary and even decent people who were fighting on the wrong side of the war.

In post-war Britain, many individual views of Germany were also shaped by personal experiences unrelated to the recent conflict. Contacts on individual levels between Britons and Germans were fostered through non-governmental organisations and, for example, the twinning of towns. To argue that these changes affected large parts of the British population would of course be wrong. For the most part these efforts were initiated by the politicised sections of the population. But to simply assume that all British Servicemen despatched to Germany would have held anti-German views because of the recent conflict and a negative portrayal of Germany in Britain would also be too simplistic. Although some of the testimony of Servicemen pointed towards a general antipathy towards all things German, evidence has also shown that a number of young conscripts were in fact rather keen on meeting Germans and exploring the country in which they were stationed. As shown in chapter three, the impact of British public opinion of the Germans was therefore not an entirely negative factor when considering relations between the BAOR and the Germans. The slow changes in the public perception of Germany established in this thesis arguably strengthened Foreign Office plans to use the BAOR as a tool to improve relations between the Services and the German population.

‘Out with the English’? German Perceptions of the BAOR

As chapter four has demonstrated, the German people living under the Occupation had just as diverse views of the British as the British had of them. In the immediate post-war period economic reasons compelled many Germans to ingratiate themselves with their occupiers. However, during the period in question this slowly changed with the advent of the ‘economic miracle’. There is nonetheless much evidence to support the idea that significant parts of the German population were genuinely willing to establish good relations with the

Services, despite the recent conflict and a widespread antipathy towards the military in general. This was partly due to the Cold War threat but also due to an admiration of British values and way of life. The behaviour of the BAOR did not lead to widespread protest against the stationing of British troops in Germany in the context of the European defence system or against the financial support of the Services. As polls revealed, the British were generally considered to be the best-behaved of all the Occupation troops. Units on manoeuvre were often greeted with friendly curiosity. Despite the considerable economic strain caused by the presence of the BAOR on a country in the process of rebuilding itself, the majority of German protests aimed at changing the conditions of Occupation, not at abolishing it.

This should not however distract from the fact that there was also hostility. German wartime experiences often gave rise to resentment of militarism in general, particularly among the younger generations. The human losses of the war frequently led to individual Servicemen experiencing negative German attitudes. Furthermore, throughout the period under observation in this thesis, German demands in regards to Allied rights and troop behaviour rose with the degree of independence of the Federal Republic. This was arguably reflected by a decrease in the popularity of the Services in opinion polls during the period in question.

The Germans placed the BAOR in a very difficult position. On the one hand, the German population demanded adequate protection from a potential Soviet attack rather than an orderly retreat beyond the Rhine. Despite the hopelessness which the potential conflict with Russia caused in many ordinary Germans encountered by the Services, any suggestion of troop reductions or a partial withdrawal was met with outrage. On the other hand, there were increasing complaints about the consequences of the British troop presence, be it the requisitioning of housing, manoeuvre damage or incidents caused by individual soldiers. The German press was generally keen to report negative incidents involving British troops and these quickly spread from local to national levels. Particularly the communist press used every opportunity to discredit the

Allied military presence at a time when the KPD was a concern for both the Federal Government and the British Foreign Office. It was arguably only drastic changes in the behaviour and attitudes of troops, as well as co-operation of the BAOR with German authorities, which prevented widespread hostility among the German population. These fundamental changes in BAOR attitudes and behaviour were, however, not always initiated by the Army itself.

The idea of strengthening cultural ties by intensifying relations with British troops was also taken up by the German government, if somewhat less enthusiastically and, as the case of the guidebook for Allied soldiers printed in German in 1956 demonstrated, also less successfully. As shown in chapter four the much lower levels of crime in the British zone partly explain the lack of interest apparent among the Federal administration to fund measures designed to improve relations with the British. Statistics produced by the German administrations on Federal and *Land* levels continuously highlighted the difference in behaviour between the BAOR and its French and American counterparts. The German *Land* administrations in the British zone also often found that British behaviour compared favourably to that of Canadian troops. As has been demonstrated, in several cases Federal requests for crime statistics were ignored by *Land* authorities as the situation was regarded as satisfactory. In the context of an increasing political focus on the EEC, the economic revival and political stability of the FRG as well as the combined experiences with all Allied occupying armies, the perception of the BAOR as a threat to Anglo-German relations arguably ceased to be a major factor for the Bonn administration by the mid-1950s. Nonetheless, the British Foreign Office continued to make efforts on all administrative levels to further improve relations between troops and civilians.

The Foreign Office and the BAOR

Due to the British fears of a German flirtation with the Soviet Union in order to achieve German unification and the aim of integrating the Federal Republic into the Western family, the Foreign Office went to great lengths in order to utilise the BAOR as a tool for Anglo-German rapprochement.² Germany had allied itself with the Soviet Union both in 1922 and 1939 and the German integration into the anti-communist defence of Europe was crucial for the preservation of British influence in Western Europe.³ British diplomats carefully watched out for any anti-Western tendencies and the view of the prospects of democracy in Germany held by Foreign Office staff was often dim. The British placed their faith increasingly in the person of Konrad Adenauer and it was partly this support and the question of German politics in a post-Adenauer era which necessitated the exploration of all avenues to improve Anglo-German relations: 'The struggle for Germany will not only be with the Russians; it will be with the Germans themselves.'⁴ Throughout the period examined, a wide range of efforts was initiated by the Foreign Office in order to strengthen what the British High Commissioner Hoyer-Millar in 1956 referred to as the 'easy and cordial' relations with the Federal Republic.⁵ The BAOR was to be used as a tool to develop a 'sense of community' between the Western Allies and remind the Germans 'that there are other problems in the world besides German reunification'.⁶

The Foreign Office in London and the High Commission in Bonn went to great lengths to achieve an improvement by initiating numerous programmes aimed at eradicating German grievances. Shared housing schemes for troops

² NA, FO 371/103666, C1071/67, Memorandum 'The Problem of Germany'.

³ Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage*, p. 39.

⁴ NA, FO 371/118217, WG 1071/681, Minute, 23 June 1955.

⁵ NA, FO 371/124488, Hoyer-Millar to Lloyd, 31 January 1956.

⁶ NA, PREM 11/1334, *cited in*: Yvonne Kipp, *Eden, Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage*, p. 241.

and civilians in times of great shortages were signs of good-will introduced by the British administration and, more or less reluctantly, carried out by the BAOR. The minimisation of manoeuvre damage, establishment of friendly press relations, organisation of cultural and sports events and the severe curtailment of customs such as hunting by British troops were enforced.

There is much evidence that at least some British units (albeit RAF rather than Army units) successfully planned and executed sophisticated initiatives to improve relations with local communities. However, despite the efforts of the Information Services Division, which essentially acted as a public relations agency for the BAOR, the Foreign Office had, by the end of 1957, essentially given up on the idea of the BAOR as a goodwill ambassador of Great Britain:

I doubt whether we shall ever arrive at a completely satisfactory solution – at any rate, within the foreseeable future.⁷

In fact, rather than hoping for better relations between soldiers and civilians, by 1957 the best chance was that ‘things may improve when there are German forces alongside our own’.⁸ It was continued pessimism in regards to the future of Germany and resignation as to the value of the BAOR which characterised the Foreign Office attitude in 1957. Both German as well as British policy makers were therefore inclined to give up on the idea of utilising the BAOR, albeit for different reasons.

It would however be wrong to deem the efforts of the Foreign Office to improve relations between troops and Germans a failure. In fact they most likely prevented a significant deterioration of Anglo-German relations by forcing a

⁷ NA, FO 953/1662, PC 1181/16, German Information Department Minute, 9 April 1956.

⁸ NA, FO 953/1662, PC 1181/16, German Information Department Minute, 9 April 1956.

change of attitude and preventing the spread of some of the worst behaviour of British troops in the Federal Republic. Overall, the close study of German reactions to the continued British Occupation has demonstrated that, although by and large the majority of Germans were willing to accept foreign troops as a necessary evil, the behaviour of soldiers was heavily scrutinised by the German press and frequently used as tools for anti-Western propaganda. As noted, however, levels of crime committed by the British Services were far lower than those of the other occupying powers and only few incidents, such as the Lüneburg case of 1957, gained notoriety on a national level. Despite German press criticism of Army attitudes when handling the crisis, the British civilian administration successfully prevented further escalation. It is also important to note that, although the view from the Foreign Office in London of the future of German nationalism and the value of the BAOR as a tool for improving relations may have been pessimistic, the co-operation between the British and German administrations on the *Land* and *Kreis* levels was rather more promising. Chapter six has demonstrated that dealing with local German officials often took place in a spirit of give and take regardless of the rapidly changing status and independence of the FRG.

The BAOR and the Germans – From Enemies to Partners?

When considering the suitability of the BAOR as a tool for a rapprochement between Britons and Germans, there were several obstacles which were difficult to overcome. Arguably it was not necessarily British attitudes which stood in the way of relations but the nature of 'visiting forces' in itself. As demonstrated in chapter five, British garrisons were 'by nature self-contained, geographically separated and an unnatural intrusion'.⁹ Units often had very busy training

⁹ NA, FO 953/1662, Public Relations Problems of British Services in Germany, Minute, 16 March 1956.

schedules and also suffered from staff shortages. Consequently the focus on relations with locals was often not a high priority when running an army lacking both in equipment and manpower as a first-line defence against communism. Whereas those officers in charge of organizing community relations with Germans were often far too busy, ordinary ranks were often somewhat reluctant to establish contacts themselves. The language barrier was a major problem and records show that Britons were not particularly keen to learn German. As a consequence often the only contacts between Britons and Germans were between large groups of young British Servicemen and Germans in local bars. This repeatedly led to mass-brawls and hostility.

Army records on relations with Germans are scarce but Regimental Magazines clearly show a slow change in attitudes away from an occupation power towards an army of protection. Marriages to German women were less frowned upon and holiday visits to Germany were advertised frequently. Also German customs increasingly featured in magazines. Despite the apathy of many Britons, successful attempts were made by troops to improve relations. In the beginning these generally involved entertaining German children and sports events. Sports events in particular were a successful means of Anglo-German rapprochement as often the Services had to rely on German facilities and land to practice certain sports. This forced even the more reluctant units to develop contacts. Often these contacts were then picked up on by the local press featuring as positive examples for Anglo-German relations. The fact that in amateur and informal sports the recent history arguably did not matter very much and the effort of individuals on an equal playing field counted for more than national matters, made sports an ideal area for improving relations. Language barriers also counted for less here. Contacts were also often improved by the arrival of British wives and children, despite the increased pressure on the housing situation in Germany and despite FO concerns over the attitude of officers' wives.

Considering attitudes towards Germans by British officers, regular soldiers and National Servicemen, it appears that particularly junior officers were

often unwilling to approach Germans. As chapter five has demonstrated, regular soldiers also often proved reluctant, whereas National Servicemen often were more outgoing. Just as the view of the British public established in chapter three, the views of the British soldier, forged in the crucible of war and its aftermath, were nuanced. They were sometimes hostile, sometimes indifferent, generally reluctant, but by no means an immovable obstacle that stood between the FO and the German population.

The Impact of the BAOR on Anglo-German Relations

Throughout the period in question the British administration was concerned over the potential damage the presence of the BAOR could do to the West German integration into the Western alliance system. London was also hopeful the Services could be used to further Anglo-German relations. It is important to note that, despite all the problems caused by the Services, the presence of nearly 80,000 British troops in Germany shortly after the Second World War did not lead to a deterioration of relations. Despite a generally reluctant Army, the transformation from an army of occupation to a protecting force was surprisingly successful so soon after the war. The necessary measures for this transformation were not initiated by the Army but, by and large, were enforced by the Services. What is most remarkable is the extent to which the BAOR was required to change in order to facilitate Anglo-German understanding. As demonstrated in chapter six, it was the wide range of efforts taken, ranging from housing initiatives to avoidance of manoeuvre damage, which highlighted the extent of change. This in itself was remarkable only ten years after the war. The BAOR of 1957 was very different than that of 1948. Troops went to great lengths to avoid manoeuvre damage and in some cases shared their accommodation with Germans. Property was derequisitioned and the often luxurious conditions for British officers slowly changed. The Army leadership was clearly willing to co-

operate with the civilian administration in order to adapt to the changing Anglo-German relations.

However, the value of the BAOR as a tool for improving Anglo-German relations was limited. In spite of some successful efforts at unit levels progress was slow. In the more individual contexts anti-German sentiment still often prevented closer relations. Despite a change in the portrayal of Germany in Britain and concerted efforts at all levels of the British administration, it appears the average British 'squaddie' simply refused to fulfil the diplomatic hopes placed in the BAOR. The success of the efforts to utilise the BAOR therefore lay not within a marked improvement of relations during the period in question, but rather in preventing deterioration at a crucial time in both Anglo-German relations as well as the re-emergence of the Federal Republic as a sovereign state. If the BAOR's impact on Anglo-German relations was limited, the same is equally true for the European dimension of the subject of this thesis. The issues addressed here tended to take place in a localised and self-contained context rather than impact on the wider issues of Western defence against communism.

As is evident with hindsight, British fears of a resurgent German nationalism proved unfounded. Doubts were certainly understandable during the period in question here. However, despite the integration of the Federal Republic into NATO and the EEC, British demands for using the BAOR to influence Germany did not disappear. As late as 1968 British observers still drew attention to the need for the BAOR to improve relations with the German public in order to restrain German politics in case of a resurgence of nationalism. The defence correspondent of *The Times* remarked in April of that year that the BAOR's role was that of an 'intensely political army' which had to:

continue cultivating the best possible relations with German military, official and civilian circles alike in the hopes that its relationship deter or

at least defuse any rise in anti-British feeling which could readily occur under a more nationalist government.¹⁰

Although the success of using the BAOR as a tool for Anglo-German rapprochement during the 1940s and 1950s varied, with some successes and some shortcomings, the idea of using the BAOR as a political tool clearly retained its merit beyond the period under observation in this thesis.

¹⁰ Charles Douglas-Home, 'Rhine Army's relations with the German people', *The Times*, 3 April 1968, p. 11.

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