

Britain and the Occupation of Germany, 1945-49

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**This dissertation is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

June, 2018

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The Allied Occupation of Germany, 1945-49, was intended to transform the war-torn Third Reich into a peaceable nation through a series of far-reaching political, economic, and social reforms. But amid the growing tensions between East and West these radical plans would be significantly altered, culminating in the formation of two German states in 1949. Historians have tended to view the occupation as a backdrop to the nascent Cold War or a transitional period in the history of modern Germany. Yet this thesis suggests that British participation in the Allied occupation was, in fact, much more than simply an exercise in political pragmatism or a contribution to the rebuilding of war-torn Europe. Rather, this undertaking catalysed Britain's political and public confrontation with Nazism, laying some of the most significant and durable foundations of the postwar Anglo-German relationship.

This research utilises contemporary mass media sources and official records to explore British images and perceptions of Germany under occupation, scrutinising the interactions of decision-makers, the media, and the public. It begins with an examination of the pervasive culture war that emerged in wartime Britain over the precise interpretation and resolution of the so-called 'German problem'. The thesis then goes on to consider public portrayals of the occupation vis-à-vis the evolution of official policy, beginning in the summer of 1945 when British policymakers responded to popular demands for a 'hard peace' and approved a rigorous programme of denazification, re-education, and demilitarisation. In the coming years, scandals engulfed the public image of the British occupiers, threatening to

undermine Britain's claims on 'winning the peace' and even prompting an official public relations campaign. The mass market press led calls for an abrupt end to the occupation, fearing it was undermining the nation's prestige while failing to adequately address the threat still posed by Germany. At around the same time, Britain's political and military leaders reassessed their position in the face of the Cold War, turning towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of western Germany. By 1949, a clear dichotomy had emerged, with implications reaching far beyond the immediate postwar period: while anxieties over the 'German problem' remained largely intact amongst substantial sections of the British press and public, with many regarding the occupation as an abject failure, policymakers were firmly set on the path towards Anglo-German reconciliation and alliance.

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University of similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt to various sources of academic guidance, institutional support, intellectual inspiration, and light relief. First and foremost, I would like to thank Alexandra Reider, whose advice and support from near and far has never wavered. I could not have completed this work without your help, nor would I have had quite as much fun along the way.

I also wish to thank my supervisor, Henning Grunwald, for all his assistance over the last years and helpful comments on this thesis. Likewise, I am grateful for the support of Richard J. Evans, who has consistently offered valuable critiques of my work alongside professional guidance.

I also owe thanks to the various people and organisations who let me do this. The Arts and Humanities Research Council, German History Society, Cambridge University History Faculty, and Wolfson College, Cambridge have all provided me with sources of funding for which I am particularly appreciative. Likewise, the staff at the Imperial War Museum Archive, National Archives, Cambridge University Library, and British Library have all helped me with my research. I should also thank Edna Wearmouth and Mary Bouman, whom I will never meet but whose engaging stories of life in postwar Germany made this study all the more relatable. I also would never have even contemplated studying for a PhD without the teachers and staff at Parrs Wood High School, where I learnt history and much more besides.

Finally, I must acknowledge all my friends and family back in Manchester and across the world who have made the last few years pretty alright. A special mention goes to my mum and dad, who have remained supportive; my niece Izzy, who has always insisted on ‘helping’ with work; Jens Åklundh, whose particular brand of Scandinavian cynicism has been a source of strength; Joe, Michael and everyone else back home who remain sound; the Alma, which has helped me focus while writing-up; and Mark E. Smith, who is not appreciated but was always gonna make an appearance here.

List of Abbreviations

Allied Control Council (ACC)

British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO)

British Army of the Rhine (BAOR)

British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee (BIOS)

British Military Government (BMG)

British Zone Review (BZR)

Central Office of Information (COI)

Control Commission for Germany (British Element) (CCG (BE))

Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA)

Crown Film Unit (CFU)

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)

International Military Tribunal (IMT)

National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP)

Public Relations/Information Services Control Group (PR/ISC)

Save Europe Now (SEN)

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Introduction

Britain, emerging from the Second World War unburdened by the legacies of defeat or collaboration, was a co-architect of the European peace and had a particularly acute interest in Germany's future. The Allied Occupation of Germany, 1945-49 was intended to transform the war-torn Third Reich into a peaceable nation through a series of far-reaching political, economic, educational, and social reforms. In the face of growing tensions between East and West, these radical plans for 'winning the peace' would be drastically moderated, culminating in the formation of two sovereign German states in 1949. Yet as this thesis will demonstrate, British participation in the Allied occupation was much more than a contribution to the rebuilding of war-torn Europe or an exercise in Cold War pragmatism. Rather, this undertaking catalysed Britain's political and public confrontation with Nazism, laying some of the most significant and durable foundations of the postwar Anglo-German relationship.

The Allied Occupation of Germany

As the war in Europe came to a close, the victorious powers set about resolving the so-called 'German Problem', an ambiguous short-hand for all manner of diagnoses and prescriptions of Nazism and its antecedents. At the Potsdam Conference (17 July – 2 August 1945), they agreed to implement a programme of denazification, demilitarisation, disarmament, dismantling, democratisation, re-education, and decartelisation. These drastic reforms would be facilitated through a protracted period of Allied military rule, during which time the occupation authorities could attempt to come to terms with Nazism from bottom to top –

overseeing matters as diverse as finance, agriculture, communications, media, labour, transportation, and law. The British Military Government (BMG) stood as one constituent of a quadripartite military occupation, alongside its French, Soviet, and American counterparts – each occupying their own Zone, as well as a sector of the German capital. In Berlin, Germany's new rulers hosted the Allied Control Council (ACC), a central inter-Allied governing body which would oversee the laws and pronouncements of the occupying powers. It was an unprecedentedly expansive attempt to reconfigure a modern nation state and revise the established framework of European power. Germany, under the rule of the Allies, was to be rebuilt in the image of its conquerors.

In the British Zone, located in the North West of Germany, overall authority was vested in the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), alongside the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO), and its civilian counterpart, the Control Commission for Germany (British Element) (CCG (BE)). These organisations worked under the direct authority of the Military Governor¹, first Bernard Montgomery (1945-46), then William 'Sholto' Douglas (1946-47), and finally Brian Robertson (1947-49). The British authorities also had political chiefs back in London, with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, John Hynd (1945-47), Frank Pakenham (1947-48), and finally Hugh Dalton (1948-49), overseeing the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA). In 1947, this body became the Foreign Office (German Section).

At the end of the war, Britain's Zone of occupation, an arbitrary area including the industrial heartlands of the Ruhr, lay in a disorderly state. In the face of widespread destruction and dislocation, the British occupiers began work on the ambitious programme laid out at Potsdam. Yet in the first months of the occupation, crippling shortages of clothing, housing, and, above all, food threatened the outbreak

¹ The Military Governor stood as Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in Germany as well as head of the Control Commission for Germany (British Element).

of disease and a humanitarian catastrophe. These problems were augmented by inter-Allied disagreements over reparations policy, necessitating the importation of food from North America, and a postwar refugee crisis that saw the arrival of millions of Germans forcibly removed from eastern Europe. It was clear, at least to those on the ground, that the programme set out in the summer of 1945 was highly impractical. In London, senior government officials, now confronting Britain's growing financial limitations amid the perceived intransigence of the Soviet Union, were increasingly aware that a new strategy for Germany might be required. The costs of importing foodstuffs to Germany, alongside the expense of maintaining a force of occupation, had become unsustainable.

British policymakers, utilising their soft power but increasingly deferential to American leadership, gradually moved away from the restrictive programme laid out in 1945 and towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of western Germany. In the summer of 1946, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, anxious to lessen Britain's overseas obligations, embraced the opportunity to fuse the British and American Zones. The Bizone, which came into being in January 1947, was seemingly in contravention of the Potsdam Agreement and provoked much opposition from the Soviet Union. Later that year, the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan further demonstrated the anti-Soviet direction of American official thinking. Subsequent months and years would see communications between the wartime Allies break down, with the Allied Control Council failing to function effectively. In June 1948, inter-Allied tensions peaked when Soviet authorities restricted access to the divided city of Berlin. The ensuing airlift heralded the beginning of a new era of Cold War diplomacy, with various economic and political reforms in the eastern and western segments of Germany culminating in a two-state solution to the 'German Problem'. In 1949, the sovereign states of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic took over authority from the military government, bringing an end to the military occupation.

Yet this orthodox account of the occupation fails to address the significance of the immediate postwar period in the history of Britain and, more specifically, British relations with Germany since 1945. This thesis explores Britain's public and political responses to the Allied occupation of Germany, 1945-49. Through a detailed appraisal of the mass media and official public relations, British assessments of the 'German Problem' and its attempted resolution are incorporated into the history of postwar Britain and the Anglo-German relationship. My research illustrates the emergence of a discord in British relations with Germany, as Cold War-era political rapprochement diverged from the residual Germanophobia of popular and press portrayals. The study also makes significant empirical contributions, revealing the role of public relations in postwar Germany and further exploring the social history of the British Zone of occupation. Finally, this work complements our existing understanding of postwar British history, as domestic and global conflicts over Britain's place in the world played out in the public and political responses to the occupation of Germany.

Historiography

The occupation of Germany, and Britain's role within it, has most often been considered within the framework of international relations, and more specifically within the grand historiography concerning the origins of the Cold War. As of the late 1970s there was still a relative scarcity of scholarship on Britain's role in the Cold War, not least because much of the relevant archival material had, until then, remained inaccessible under the thirty-year rule.² As this changed in the following

² David Reynolds, 'Great Britain', in *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives*, ed. David Reynolds (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 77–95; Donald Cameron Watt, 'Rethinking the Cold War: A Letter to a British Historian', *The Political Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (October 1978): 446–56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1978.tb02257.x>.

decade, historians moved away from a bipolar vision of the Cold War dominated by the role of the two superpowers and incorporated the previously underexposed European dimension. British historians were keen to adjust the prevailing historiography, demonstrating the persistence of Britain as a world power in the immediate postwar era. In Alan Bullock's three-volume study of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, it was shown how British policymakers maintained a powerful influence upon policy in Germany, even if constrained by financial weakness.³ Subsequent studies, most notably the scholarship of Anne Deighton, suggested that Britain's role was even more significant, guiding American officials towards the policy of containment that emerged in 1947.⁴ David Reynolds has since placed this research on Britain's impact upon the early Cold War within the context of America's growing power in postwar European politics.⁵ It is now clear that while British policymakers were influential in prescribing modifications of western policy

³ Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 3, *Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983).

⁴ Anne Deighton, ed., *Britain and the First Cold War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1990); Anne Deighton, 'The "Frozen Front": The Labour Government, the Division of Germany and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945-7', *International Affairs* 63, no. 3 (July 1987): 449-65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2619245>; Anne Deighton, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany and the Origins of the Cold War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). Also see, Avi Shlaim, 'Britain, the Berlin Blockade and the Cold War', *International Affairs* 60, no. 1 (December 1983): 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2618926>; Josef Foscith, 'British Interest in the Division of Germany after the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 21, no. 3 (July 1986): 391-411, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948602100303>.

⁵ David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1991); David Reynolds, 'Introduction', in *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives*, ed. David Reynolds, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1-21; Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 77-95; David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Reynolds, 'Britain and the Cold War', *The Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (June 1992): 501-3, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00025917>. This synthesis is also acknowledged in Anne Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1, *Origins*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.

during the occupation of Germany, this often emerged from weakness rather than strength – something all too clear to their American counterparts.

The Allied occupation of Germany has also emerged as a topic of scholarly interest in its own right, even if a definitive history of the subject is yet to be written.⁶ The first attempts to historicise the occupation came in the 1940s and 1950s, although most of these studies had no access to relevant archival material and retained a dominant focus on the American Zone.⁷ It was not until the 1980s, with the exception of a small number of officially sanctioned histories in the interim, that more work on the occupation appeared. In much of this scholarship, the four years of inter-Allied rule were treated as a brief prelude to Germany's post-1945 revival.⁸ Yet there were more comprehensive studies, including Barbara Marshall's *The Origins of Post-War German Politics* which outlined some of the more enduring

⁶ Paul D. Miller, 'A Bibliographic Essay on the Allied Occupation and Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945–1955', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 4 (October 2013): 751–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.857935>. The only attempts have been three popular histories, Douglas Botting, *In the Ruins of the Reich* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985); Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich: From the Fall of Vienna to the Berlin Airlift* (London: John Murray, 2008); Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

⁷ Harold Zink, 'American Military Government Organization in Germany', *The Journal of Politics* 8, no. 3 (1946): 329–49, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2125334>; Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *American Experiences In Military Government In World War II* (New York: Rinehart, 1948); Arthur David Kahn, *Betrayal: Our Occupation of Germany* (New York: Beacon, 1950); Julian Sebastian Bach, *America's Germany: An Account of the Occupation* (New York: Random House, 1946); Hajo Holborn, *American Military Government, Its Organization and Policies* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947); Wolfgang Friedmann, *The Allied Military Government of Germany* (London: Stevens, 1947); Oliver J. Frederiksen, *The American military occupation of Germany, 1945-1953* (Darmstadt: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe, 1953); Edward Harold Litchfield, *Governing Postwar Germany* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1953).

⁸ For example, Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ulrich Herbert, 'Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze', in *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland: Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 7-49; Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

influences of the postwar years upon the development of modern Germany.⁹ There is now a large body of research documenting the functioning of the Allied occupation, much of which has been focused on the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany and the legacy of attempts to root out Nazism.¹⁰ In recent years, scholars have turned their attention to the cultural and social history of the occupation.¹¹ This includes a substantial amount of work on America's involvement in Europe after the Second

⁹ Barbara Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1988).

¹⁰ Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Deutschland unter alliierter Besatzung 1945–1949/55: ein Handbuch* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1999); Josef Foscith & Rolf Steininger, eds., *Britische Deutschland und Besatzungspolitik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985); Anthony J. Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic: West Germany 1945–1990* (London: Longman, 1997), 1–92; Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany*, vol. 1, *From Shadow to Substance, 1945–1963* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 1–227; Hans-Peter Schwarz, 'The Division of Germany, 1945–1949', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1, *Origins*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 133–153. On the Allied Control Council, see Gunther Mai, *Der Alliierte Kontrollrat und Deutschland, 1945–1949: Alliierte Einheit, deutsche Teilung?* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995). On the Council of Foreign Ministers, see Hanns Jürgen Küsters, *Der Integrationsfriede: Viermächteverhandlungen über die Friedensregelung mit Deutschland, 1945–1990* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2000). France's role in postwar Germany is discussed in William I. Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). For Soviet policies in Germany, see Jochen P. Laufer and Georgij P. Kynin, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941–1948: Dokumente aus dem Archiv für Außenpolitik der Russischen Föderation*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004); Jan Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945–1949* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999).

¹¹ Reiner Pommerin, ed., *American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Providence, RI; Oxford: Berghahn, 1995); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945–1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Jarausch, *After Hitler*; James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Re-Education and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1982); John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines: Art in Germany 1945–1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007); Jaimey Fisher, *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeducation, and Reconstruction after the Second World War* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2007); Lara Feigel, *The Bitter Taste of Victory: In the Ruins of the Reich* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Jessica Reinisch, *The Perils of Peace: The Public Health Crisis in Occupied Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945–1955* (Providence, R.I. ; Oxford, UK: Berg, 1993).

World War, particularly the purported ‘Americanization’ of German society.¹² Jeffrey K. Olick’s *In the House of the Hangman* is notable for considering the occupation within the context of the history of memory, suggesting that this period was a vessel through which the Third Reich came to be understood in West Germany.¹³ Susan Carruthers’s 2016 work, *The Good Occupation – American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace*, utilises first-hand accounts and media reporting to explore the mythologizing of the German and Japanese occupations.¹⁴ The most recent work on the Allied occupation, *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany - Politics, Everyday Life and Social Interactions, 1945-55*, considers the occupation from a variety of perspectives, including legal, political, economic, social, cultural, and gender history.¹⁵

¹² Detlef Junker, ed., *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1990: A Handbook* (New York; Washington, D.C.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jeffry M. Diefendorf, Axel Frohn, and Hermann-Josef Rupieper, eds., *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955* (Cambridge; Washington, D.C: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Uta G. Poiger, ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll, Female Sexuality and the Cold War Battle over German Identities’, in *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed., Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 413-44; Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (London: Routledge, 1989); Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit, 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

¹³ Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); John Willoughby, *Remaking the Conquering Heroes: The Social and Geopolitical Impact of the Post-War American Occupation of Germany* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

¹⁴ Susan L. Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016); Susan L. Carruthers, “‘Produce More Joppolos’: John Hersey’s A Bell for Adano and the Making of the “Good Occupation””, *Journal of American History* 100, no. 4 (March 2014): 1086–1113, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jau006>.

¹⁵ Camilo Erlichman and Christopher Knowles, eds., *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany: Politics, Everyday Life and Social Interactions, 1945-55* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

In the more specific case of the British Zone, a similar historiographical trend can be discerned. That said, Britain's contribution to the occupation has received relatively limited attention, with no comprehensive single volume history unlike its American, French, and Soviet counterparts.¹⁶ Most of the earliest studies of the British occupation were likewise written without adequate source material by veterans of the CCG (BE) and BAOR in the form of memoirs.¹⁷ Writing in the midst of the Cold War, these authors generally lionised the endeavours of Britain's occupiers, pinpointing their work as a vital part of the struggle against the Soviet Union. The 1950s and 1960s saw the publication of the first academic study of the British occupation, Michael Balfour and John Mair's *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946*, as well as Frank Donnison's official history, *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe 1944-1946*.¹⁸ But it was not until the release of the official papers in the mid-to-late 1970s that more extensive and in-depth studies appeared, with substantial interest from both German and British historians.¹⁹ A majority of these studies focused on British foreign policy vis-à-vis

¹⁶ John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968); F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany: 1945-1949* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Brian Horrocks, *A Full Life* (London: LCooper, 1974); Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle: Memoirs*. (London, New York: Macmillan, 1959); Bernard Law Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* (London: Collins, 1958); Frank Pakenham, *Born to Believe: An Autobiography* (London: Cape, 1953); William Strang, *Home and Abroad* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956); Brian Robertson, Lord Robertson of Oakridge, 'A Miracle?: Potsdam 1945-Western Germany 1965', *International Affairs* 41, no. 3 (July 1965): 401-10, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2609802>; Raymond Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany: The British Contribution* (London: Stevens, 1960); Arthur Hearnden, *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945* (London: Hamilton, 1978).

¹⁸ Michael Balfour and John Mair, *Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); Frank Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government, North-West Europe 1944-1946* (London: HMSO, 1961). Michael Balfour had also served as part of the CCG (BE).

¹⁹ Foschepoth, 'British Interest in the Division of Germany'; Barbara Marshall, 'German attitudes to British Military Government 1945-1947', *Journal of Contemporary History* 15,

Germany and the Cold War, most importantly Scharf and Schröder's edited collection *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens und die Britische Zone*.²⁰ Ian D. Turner's 1988 edited collection, *Reconstruction in post-war Germany – British Occupation and the Western Zones 1945-55* is, to date, the most comprehensive study of the occupation, offering a reassessment of its importance and long-term impact upon postwar Germany.²¹ Scholars also began to question the broadly positive assessment of the British occupiers and presented a more critical interpretation, as discussed in John Farquharson's article 'The British Occupation of Germany 1945-6: A Badly Managed Disaster Area?'.²² There is now a burgeoning body of work on various aspects of the British occupation, including a number of micro-studies on particular themes or

no. 4 (October 1980): 655-684; Gisela Schwarze, *Eine Region im demokratischen Aufbau: Der Regierungsbezirk Münster 1945-6* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1984); Adolf Birke and Eva Mayring, eds., *Britische Besatzung in Deutschland: Aktenerschliessung und Forschungsfelder* (London: German Historical Institute, 1992); Alan Kramer, *The West German Economy, 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berg, 1991); Alec Cairncross, *The Price of War: British Policy on German Reparations 1941 – 49* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Jill Jones, 'Eradicating Nazism from the British Zone of Germany: early policy and practice', *German History* 8, No. 2 (April 1990): 145-162; Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson, eds., *The Political Re-education of Germany and her Allies after World War II* (London; Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985).

²⁰ Claus Scharf and Hans-Jürgen Schröder, eds., *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens Und Die Britische Zone 1945-1949*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979).

²¹ Ian D. Turner, ed., *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55* (Oxford, 1988).

²² John E. Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany 1945-6: A Badly Managed Disaster Area?' *German History* 11, no. 3 (July, 1993): 316-38.; Günter Tittel, 'Von der "Verwaltung des Mangels" zur "Verhinderung der Neuordnung". Ein Überblick über die Hauptprobleme der Wirtschaftspolitik in der Britischen Zone', in *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens Und Die Britische Zone 1945-1949*, eds. Claus Scharf and Hans-Jürgen Schröder (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), 129-49. Jochen Thies, "'What is going on in Germany?'" Britische Militärverwaltung in Deutschland 1945-6' in *Die Deutschlandpolitik Grossbritanniens Und Die Britische Zone 1945-1949*, eds. Claus Scharf and Hans-Jürgen Schröder (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), 29-50; Matthew Frank, 'The New Morality – Victor Gollancz, 'Save Europe Now' and the German Refugee Crisis, 1945-46', *Twentieth Century British History* 17, No. 2 (January 2006), 230-56.

locales.²³ Matthew Frank and Francis Graham-Dixon have looked at the occupation within the context of the refugee crisis, considering British and German responses to the humanitarian distress witnessed across postwar Europe.²⁴ Christopher Knowles's *Winning the Peace: The British in Occupied Germany, 1945-1948*, takes a biographical approach, examining the administration of the British Zone and considering the long-term repercussions of decisions made by twelve individuals.²⁵ There is also a substantial amount of scholarship on British wartime planning for the postwar occupation.²⁶

²³ Alan Bance, *The Cultural Legacy of the British Occupation in Germany: The London Symposium* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1997); Peter Speiser, *The British Army of the Rhine: Turning Nazi Enemies into Cold War Partners* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Michael Ahrens, *Die Briten in Hamburg: Besatzerleben 1945-1958* (München: Dölling und Galitz, 2011); Kurt Jürgensen, 'British Occupation Policy After 1945 and the Problem of "re-Educating Germany"', *History* 68, no. 223 (June 1983): 225-44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-229X.1983.tb01406.x>; Sean Longden, *T-Force: The Race for Nazi War Secrets, 1945* (London: Constable, 2009); Josef Foschepoth, 'German reaction to Defeat and Occupation' in *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed., Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 73-89; Roy Bainton, *The Long Patrol: The British in Germany since 1945* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2003); Patricia Meehan, *A Strange Enemy People: Germans under the British, 1945-1950* (London: Peter Owen, 2001); Riccarda Torriani, 'Nazis into Germans: re-education and democratisation in the British and French occupation zones, 1945-1949', (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2005).

²⁴ Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Francis Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany: The Refugee Crisis, Denazification and the Path to Reconstruction* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

²⁵ Christopher Knowles, *Winning the Peace: The British in Occupied Germany, 1945-1948* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

²⁶ Keith Sainsbury, 'British Policy and German Unity at the End of the Second World War', *The English Historical Review* 94, no. 373 (October 1979): 786-804; John Baylis, 'British Wartime Thinking about a Post-War European Security Group', *Review of International Studies* 9, no. 4 (October 1983): 265-81; John T. Grantham, 'Hugh Dalton and The International Post-War Settlement: Labour Party Foreign Policy Formulation, 1943-44', *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 4 (October 1979): 713-29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947901400408>; Nicolas Lewkowicz, *The German Question and the International Order, 1943-48* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Andrew Szanajda, *The Allies and the German Problem, 1941-1949: From Cooperation to Alternative Settlement* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Peter Alter, *The German Question and*

There is a burgeoning body of work incorporating the occupation period into broader studies of Britain and Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, including Tony Judt's *Postwar*.²⁷ Evgenios Michail has considered the importance of British perceptions of Germany for Britain's postwar national identity – most obviously amid German reunification, which invoked a spate of anti-German feeling across the mass media and political establishment.²⁸ But there remains much work to be done in this regard, as Richard Weight notes in his study of British national identity *Patriots*.²⁹ Weight argues that British post-imperial identity was sustained by the unifying power of the Second World War, when Germany had become firmly entrenched as the 'Other' against which Britishness could be defined. There is, he

Europe (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000); Michael Balfour, 'Another Look at "Unconditional Surrender"', *International Affairs* 46, no. 4 (October 1970): 719–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2614534>. For British public debate, see Jörg Später, *Vansittart: Britische Debatten über Deutsche Und Nazis 1902-1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Isabelle Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism": Labour and the German Question, 1941–5', *Twentieth Century British History* 7, no. 3 (January 1996): 287–309, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/7.3.287>; John E. Farquharson, "'Emotional but Influential": Victor Gollancz, Richard Stokes and the British Zone of Germany, 1945–9', *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (July 1987): 501–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948702200308>; Aaron Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis: The Controversy over "Vansittartism" in Britain during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 1 (January 1979): 155–91. For American side of wartime debate, see Michaela Hoenicke Moore, *Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Steven Casey, 'The Campaign to Sell a Harsh Peace for Germany to the American Public, 1944–1948', *History* 90, no. 297 (January 2005): 62–92.

²⁷ Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy (1944-198...)* (Paris: Seuil, 1987); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005); Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2000); Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991); Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992); Monica Riera and Gavin Schaffer, eds., *The Lasting War: Society and Identity in Britain, France and Germany after 1945* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁸ Evgenios Michail, 'After the War and after the Wall: British Perceptions of Germany Following 1945 and 1989,' *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (September, 2001).

²⁹ Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 15, 101, 116.

concludes, a need for historians to scrutinise ‘the Myth of Magnanimity’, suggesting that without ‘understanding how the British really felt about Germany in the 1940s’ it is impossible ‘to understand their national identity in the second half of the twentieth century.’³⁰

In fact, most work on the occupation period has failed to adequately interrogate the precise implications of Britain’s endeavours in postwar Germany, remaining primarily tied to the multipolar context of the Cold War. The history of the Allied occupation has seldom been integrated into the broader historiography of postwar Britain and, in particular, that relating to Anglo-German relations. This is despite the abundance of scholarship on the relationship between Britain and Germany in the last two centuries, centred upon the breakdown of relations in the early twentieth century and the two era-defining wars that subsequently arose. Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* ignited the touch paper of a field that has since gone on to consider the cultural, social, political, economic, diplomatic, and judicial history of Anglo-German relations from the mid-nineteenth century until the present day.³¹ If Kennedy’s synthesis was in danger of abridging the period before 1914 as a pre-history to two world wars, historians have since come to expose the complex, multifaceted character of this relationship. The work of Jan Rüger, Dominik Geppert, and Panikos Panayi amongst others has exposed the transnationality of Anglo-German interactions, the influence of mutual perceptions and press opinion upon political relations, and the breadth of this

³⁰ Weight, *Patriots*, 109.

³¹ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980). For a full overview of recent research, see Jan Rüger, ‘Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism’, *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 3 (September 2011): 579–617, <https://doi.org/10.1086/660841>.

relationship beyond the violence and antagonism witnessed between 1914-18 and 1939-45.³²

Anglo-German relations after 1945 have attracted markedly less scholarly attention, with most existing studies focused on the political and economic ties that developed between the two nations in the aftermath of the Second World War.³³ Kaiser and Morgans's *Britain and West Germany: Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy* outlined a narrative which has since emerged as the general consensus, namely an increasingly close, if intermittently volatile, alliance.³⁴ Sabine Lee's *Victory in Europe: Britain and Germany since 1945* considers the postwar political and economic relations between Britain and Germany, offering an insightful outline of this bilateral relationship within the context of superpower relations.³⁵

³² Jan Rüger, *Heligoland: Britain, Germany, and the Struggle for the North Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Frank Bösch and Dominik Geppert, eds., *Journalists as Political Actors: Transfers and Interactions between Britain and Germany since the Late 19th Century* (Augsburg: Wissner, 2008); Dominik Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit Und Diplomatie in Den Deutsch-Britischen Beziehungen (1896-1912)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2007); Panikos Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain during the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (Oxford: Berg, 1995).

³³ For an overview of recent scholarship, see R. Gerald Hughes, 'Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans: Britain and the German Affair in History', *Twentieth Century British History* 17, no. 2 (January 2006): 257-83.

³⁴ Karl Kaiser and Roger Morgan, eds., *Britain and West Germany: Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Hermann Proebst, 'German-British relations since the war: a German view' in *Britain and West Germany: Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy*, eds. Karl Kaiser and Roger Morgan (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 191-202; Donald Cameron Watt, 'Anglo-German Relations Today and Tomorrow' in *Britain and West Germany: Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy*, eds. Karl Kaiser and Roger Morgan (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 203-18; Anthony J. Nicholls, *Fifty Years of Anglo-German Relations* (London: German Historical Institute, 2001); Anthony J. Nicholls, *Always Good Neighbours - Never Good Friends?: Anglo-German Relations 1949-2001* (London: German Historical Institute, 2005). For an alternative point of view, see Terry Macintyre, *Anglo-German Relations during the Labour Governments, 1964-70: NATO Strategy, Détente and European Integration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 5-6.

³⁵ Sabine Lee, *Victory in Europe: Britain and Germany since 1945* (Harlow: Longman, 2001); Sabine Lee, *An Uneasy Partnership: British-German Relations between 1955 and 1961*, (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1996), 85-95; Sabine Lee, 'Perception and Reality: Anglo-German

Likewise, Noakes, Wende, and Wright's edited collection, *Britain and Germany in Europe 1949-1990* and Klaus Larres and Elizabeth Meehan's *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945* offer the most comprehensive overviews of Anglo-German relations vis-à-vis Europe.³⁶ In these studies, Britain's participation in the Allied occupation of Germany is broadly characterised as an important first-step in the evolution of a more proactive diplomatic relationship.

This historiography on postwar Anglo-German relations has also come to acknowledge the importance of incorporating public and media opinion alongside diplomatic relations.³⁷ It is widely accepted that popular sentiment and mutual perceptions can act as a constraint on policymakers. This is particularly germane in the case of British relations with Germany, which are felt to have been 'heavily overlaid with historical memories and associations'.³⁸ This is a point made strongly in Sabine Lee's study, which emphasises the cultural and psychological dimensions of diplomatic relations.³⁹ Ruth Wittlinger has also illustrated the negative influence of collective memory upon the postwar British-German relationship, with a particular

Relations during the Berlin Crisis 1958–1959', *German History* 13, no. 1 (January 1995): 47–69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gh/13.1.47>. Also see, Lothar Kettenacker, 'Implementing Peace: Britain and Germany 1945–55' in Manfred Görtemaker, *Britain and Germany in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 101–22.

³⁶ Jeremy Noakes, Peter Wende, and Jonathan Wright, eds., *Britain and Germany in Europe 1949–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Klaus Larres and Elizabeth M. Meehan, eds., *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Gossel, *Briten, Deutsche und Europa. Die Deutsche Frage in der britischen Außenpolitik 1945–1962* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999).

³⁷ Patrick Major, 'Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship?', *German History* 26, no. 4 (October 2008): 457–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghn045>; Magnus Brechtken, 'Personality, Image and perception: Patterns and Problems of Anglo-German relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries' in *An Anglo-German Dialogue*, eds. Adolf M. Birke, Magnus Brechtken & Alaric Searle (München: K. G. Saur, 2000), 17; Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich, *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997).

³⁸ William Wallace, *The Foreign Policy Process in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 225.

³⁹ Lee, *Victory in Europe*.

emphasis on the post-1989 period.⁴⁰ British public and media portrayals of Germany in the final decades of the twentieth century are shown to have remained entrenched to some extent in the antagonistic, backward-looking stereotypes of wartime.⁴¹ This is contrasted with the generally cooperative and friendly relations between the two nations in the fields of politics, diplomacy, and trade. As Germany Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, put it in 2004: 'People to people there is a problem'.⁴²

Yet scholars are yet to convincingly determine the precise origins and nature of the apparent discord between official and popular relations with Germany, nor fully explain why anti-German feeling has persisted for so long in Britain.⁴³ John Ramsden's *Don't Mention the War: the British and the Germans since 1890* offers one attempt through a wide-ranging survey of cultural interactions.⁴⁴ Ramsden concludes that the bridges between the two nations since 1945 were generally at an elite level, leaving predominantly working-class antagonisms to fester.⁴⁵ But it was, he continues, Britain's economic and imperial decline in the 1960s that truly hardened popular views, bringing about the widespread obsession with Nazism that has endured ever since. Yet the anecdotal character of this study diminishes its value as a piece of comprehensive scholarship. There has also been recognition from

⁴⁰ Ruth Wittlinger, 'Perceptions of Germany and the Germans in Post-War Britain,' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25, no. 5–6 (2004): 453–65; Ruth Wittlinger, 'British-German Relations and Collective Memory,' *German Politics & Society* 25, no. 3 (2007): 42.

⁴¹ British antagonism in the 1990s is generally believed to have arisen from a combination of anxieties over a German political resurgence, jealousy regarding the 'economic miracle', and disagreements about European integration, see Gerald Hughes, 'Don't Let's Be Beastly', 13.

⁴² 'Germany Rejects "Goosestep" Image', BBC News report, BBC, last modified 20 October 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3758982.stm>.

⁴³ Brechtken, 'Personality, Image and perception', 17.

⁴⁴ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and Germans since 1890* (London: Little Brown, 2006).

⁴⁵ Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, 364–5.

historians, as well as contemporaries, that the media has played a particularly important role in propagating British Germanophobia – Prime Minister Harold Macmillan remarked that nation's newspapers 'specialise in working-up anti-German feeling'.⁴⁶ This has led Patrick Major to suggest that scholars need to turn more closely to the media, popular culture, and oral history of the post-1945 period to understand why a 'love-hate' relationship has lasted for so long.⁴⁷

In light of this, it is notable that there has been, to date, very little research on British public and media perceptions of Germany in the first decade after 1945.⁴⁸ The occupation period saw the construction of a new framework for the Anglo-German relationship in the aftermath of two world wars. Yet D. C. Watt's work *Britain Looks to Germany* - written in conjunction with the Queen's state visit to Germany in 1965 - was the first and, until now, only study of the occupation along these lines.⁴⁹ His summation of the course of relations from 1945-55 shows a rush to sympathy in the face of Germany's total defeat, aided by a surge of admiration at the courage displayed by Germans during the Berlin Airlift. This, according to Watt, was followed

⁴⁶ Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-1961* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 98; Bösch and Geppert, *Journalists as Political Actors*; Jonathan Grix and Chantal Lacroix, 'Constructing Germany's Image in the British Press: An Empirical Analysis of Stereotypical Reporting on Germany,' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006), 373–92; Christoph Peters, *Deutschland Und Die Deutschen Im Spiegel Britischer Tageszeitungen: Die Berichterstattung Der Überregionalen Presse Grossbritanniens 1989-1994* (Münster: LIT, 1999). Mathias Haeussler, 'The Popular Press and Ideas of Europe: The Daily Mirror, the Daily Express, and Britain's First Application to Join the EEC, 1961–63,' *Twentieth Century British History* 25, no. 1 (2014), 108–31; Winfried Böttcher, *Deutschland Aus Britischer Sicht, 1960-1972* (Wiesbaden: Humanitas, 1972); Alexander Heinz, "Oh, German! I Thought There Was Something Wrong with You": *West Germany in British Perceptions, 1969-1975* (Augsburg: Wissner, 2013); Martin Schramm, *Das Deutschlandbild in Der Britischen Presse 1912-1919* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007); Thomas Wittek, *Auf Ewig Feind?: Das Deutschlandbild in Den Britischen Massenmedien Nach Dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005).

⁴⁷ Major, 'Britain and Germany', 468.

⁴⁸ Heinz, *West Germany in British Perceptions*, 14.

⁴⁹ Donald Cameron Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany: British Opinion and Policy towards Germany since 1945* (London: O. Wolff, 1965).

by a resurgence of antagonism as a result of rearmament proposals, after which pressures of the Cold War and a Neo-Nazi resurgence in Lower Saxony reinforced negative attitudes; twenty years after the Second World War, the British had 'learnt nothing and forgotten nothing'.⁵⁰ But Watt's study, while regularly cited in more recent scholarship, lacks systematic evidence regarding public or media opinion and offers only an informed personal interpretation of events, rather than an sustained historical analysis.

Britain Looks to Germany is complemented by a small number of additional studies of Anglo-German perceptions in the same period, most of which maintain the notion that the late 1940s saw a distinct warming of popular relations in line with Britain's Cold War *Realpolitik*.⁵¹ The two volumes of 'personal accounts of 30 years of Anglo-German relations' edited by Rolf Breitenstein, *Total War to Total Trust* and *Pillars of Partnership*, retain an analytic focus on cultural relations that occurred mainly at an elite level.⁵² This includes Lothar Kettenacker's introductory essay, which is a disjointed attempt to demonstrate, again without substantive evidence, the rapid improvement of popular relations in the aftermath of the Second World War.⁵³ Weber-Newth and Steinert's study of German migrants in postwar Britain utilises oral accounts and gender theory to suggest that Britons distinguished

⁵⁰ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 7.

⁵¹ Ulrike Jordan, ed., *Conditions of Surrender: Britons and Germans Witness the End of the War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997); Nicholas Pronay, 'Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45' in *Hitler's Fall: The Newsreel Witness*, eds. K. R. M. Short and Stephan Dolezel (London: Croon Helm, 1988), 28-49.

⁵² Rolf Breitenstein, ed., *Total War to Total Trust: Personal Accounts of 30 Years of Anglo-German Relations: The Vital Role of Non-Governmental Organisations* (London: O. Wolff, 1976); Rolf Breitenstein, ed., *Pillars of Partnership: After Total War to Total Trust: The Second Volume of Personal Accounts of 30 Years of Anglo-German Relations: The Vital Role of Non-Governmental Organisations* (London: O. Wolff, 1978).

⁵³ Lothar Kettenacker, 'Introduction: Britons and Germans', in *Total War to Total Trust: Personal Accounts of 30 Years of Anglo-German Relations: The Vital Role of Non-Governmental Organisations*, ed. Rolf Breitenstein (London: O. Wolff, 1976), 1-9.

between Germany, Germans *en masse*, and individual Germans in this period.⁵⁴ It too reiterates that the 1940s saw the British people develop more positive views towards Germany, before these were soured in the 1950s by economic competition, rearmament, the success of far-right parties in the Federal Republic, and the critical articles of Sefton Delmer. Yet none of these studies have incorporated the Allied occupation into their analyses of British perceptions of Germany.

In sum, the history of British perceptions of Germany during the immediate postwar years and, in particular, in the course of the Allied occupation remains far from clear. Indeed, as Patrick Major has noted, the implications of the British occupation for the Anglo-German relationship are 'still waiting for a historian'.⁵⁵

Methodology

This is a study of British responses to the occupation of Germany, placing them in the context of Anglo-German relations since 1945. Through a survey of media, public, and political discourses relating to the occupation between 1941-49, my study argues that popular perceptions of Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War diverged sharply from official policy. This approach allows for a close examination of the complex nexus of policymakers, public relations, popular opinion, mass media, opinion formers, collective memory, and national identity that has come to define British relations with Germany. My research suggests that Britain's participation in the occupation was a vital juncture in the history of the Anglo-German relationship and a foundational influence upon popular as well as political interactions with Germany since 1945.

⁵⁴ Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-War Britain: An Enemy Embrace*, (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁵⁵ Major, 'Britain and Germany', 467.

This work draws from a rich array of original source material, including an extensive range of media archives. As Jan Rüger has argued, studies of mutual perceptions and images have often struggled to reconcile themselves with the broader historiography of Anglo-German relations.⁵⁶ To achieve this, he suggests research in this area should move away from a singular focus on the upmarket press, in which views and opinions of foreign affairs are exchanged more or less rationally, and look more closely at the interaction of decision-makers and the mass media.⁵⁷ This is made possible by the advent of online databases, complete with increasingly sophisticated search functions, which allow for a wide-ranging and thorough assessment of contemporary media. My project utilises the records of a broad assortment of national newspapers and magazines, namely the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian and Observer*, *Times* and *Sunday Times*, *Daily Express*, *London Illustrated*, *Economist*, and *Picture Post*, while the British Newspaper Archive provides access to an exceptionally large collection of regional titles.

In addition, the study consults the three major online newsreel archives: British Pathé Archive (*Pathé News*), British Movietone Digital Archive (*British Movietone News*), and ITN Source Newsreels (*Gaumont-British News*). I have meticulously searched these media resources and compiled the first comprehensive archive of British media coverage relating to the occupation of Germany. This is supplemented with commercially-available feature films, including *It's Not Cricket* (1949) and *A Foreign Affair* (1948), as well as a large assortment of contemporary

⁵⁶ Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 209; Rüger, 'Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism', 589.

⁵⁷ Rüger, 'Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism', 594; Geppert, *Pressekriege*, 422.; Adrian Bingham, 'Ignoring the First Draft of History?', *Media History* 18, no. 3–4 (August 2012): 311–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2012.721644>; John Street, *Mass Media, Politics, and Democracy* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave, 2001), 15.

books and pamphlets relating to the occupation. The most significant of these are Lord Vansittart's *Black Record* (1941) and Victor Gollancz's *Shall Our Children Live or die? A Reply to Lord Vansittart on the German Problem* (1942).

This research also utilises material from a number of physical archives, including the National Archives sizable collection of the Control Commission for Germany (British Element)'s records. British occupiers, officious to the last, generated an extraordinarily large paper trail and, while a substantial proportion was destroyed, an estimated 240 tonnes of material survives.⁵⁸ This thesis presents the first comprehensive research into the Public Relations/Information Services Control Group (PR/ISC), a constituent branch of the CCG (BE).⁵⁹ Amongst other things, this body was tasked with mediating the occupation back to Britain and their records offer a unique insight into the relationship between policymakers, independent media, and the British public. These documents include an assortment of miscellaneous newspaper cuttings, official responses to media coverage, press conferences, and attempts at media regulation and censorship. In addition, they record the PR/ISC's efforts to produce in-house media, including a public exhibition entitled *Germany Under Control*, the magazine *British Zone Review* (BZR), and several documentary films. These films, produced in conjunction with the Central Office of Information (COI), are found in the British Film Institute archive. Finally, this study consults various data from the Mass-Observation archive, including public opinion surveys and reports, parliamentary debates relating to the occupation, and the personal memoirs, diaries, letters, and photographs of British occupiers found in the

⁵⁸ Ian D. Turner, 'Research on the British Occupation of Germany', in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 327-331.

⁵⁹ For American information control in postwar Germany, see Edward C. Breitenkamp, *The US Information Control Division and its Effect on German Publishing and Writers 1945-1949* (Grand Forks, N.D: University Station, 1953). For British influence upon German culture, see Gabriele Clemens, *Britische Kulturpolitik in Deutschland 1945-1949: Literatur, Film, Musik und Theater* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997).

Imperial War Museum Archive. In particular, the letters, photographs, and memoirs of Edna Wearmouth, a twenty-one-year-old clerk who served with the CCG (BE) from 1947-48, and Mary Bouman, a thirty-eight-year-old translator in the CCG (BE) from 1946-49, are used to provide an insight into the perspective of British occupiers. While their accounts cannot claim to be wholly representative, not least because of the gendered experience of occupation, these letters and photographs provide a vital context to broader trends in the social history of this period.⁶⁰

This range of source material cannot hope to offer an entirely comprehensive appraisal of popular opinion, a nebulous and challenging concept to any historian. Nor does this study proclaim to present a comprehensive history of the British occupation of Germany or propose any sustained appraisal of its various accomplishments and shortcomings. Yet it does attempt to outline the prevailing public image of Germany under occupation as it emerged in Britain from 1945-49. At the centre of this analysis is the British media, and, in particular, the mass-market press: as one British official in Germany remarked, for 'the man in the street' news about the occupation was a 'closed shop', emerging almost exclusively through the cinema screen, the radio, and the daily newspaper.⁶¹ In other words, the mass media held something of a monopoly over public appraisals of the occupation and postwar Germany, making it an exceptionally illustrative source in this instance.⁶²

⁶⁰ Their accounts and the experiences of British women in Germany are explored more fully in my chapter, Daniel Cowling 'Gosh... I Think I'm in a Dream!!!: Subjective Experiences and Daily Life in the British Zone', in *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany: Politics, Everyday Life and Social Interactions, 1945-55*, eds. Camilo Erlichman and Christopher Knowles (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 211-29.

⁶¹ Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

⁶² This was corroborated by a Gallup Poll of 27 September 1947, which asked Britons what they relied on most when forming their opinions on the issues of the day: 58% said

This is particularly true due to unprecedented popularity of the newspapers and newsreels. Newsreels were remarkably popular, attracting around 26,000,000 viewers per week with their entertaining pictorial insights into domestic life and the wider world.⁶³ If their reputation as ‘purveyors of a truth of a higher order than the popular press’ was slowly fading, the dictum that ‘the camera cannot lie’ undoubtedly still held great sway.⁶⁴ Likewise, total national circulation of newspapers was over 15,000,000 and an estimated 87% of the adult population read a daily newspaper in 1950.⁶⁵ This study pays particularly close attention to the popular press (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express*), who had a much more broader and more socially diverse readership (see Appendix One). In contrast, the upmarket press (the *Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Daily Telegraph*) which have dominated historical accounts to date only reached seven percent of total readers in 1950, representing a narrow and exclusive strand of society.⁶⁶

newspapers and 41% radio, see George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 675-6.

⁶³ Pronay, ‘Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45’, 28-49.

⁶⁴ Pronay, ‘Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45’, 28-9.

⁶⁵ Martin Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin: Democratic Government and the Media in Britain, 1945-51* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4. The ‘popular press’, *The Daily Mail* (circulation: 2,076,000) *The Daily Mirror* (3,702,000), and *The Daily Express* (3,855,000), represented the bulk of this circulation, whereas the ‘quality’ press had a much more limited output, *The Manchester Guardian* (126,000), *The Times* (268,000), and *The Financial Times* (71,000). In addition, it is estimated that the circulation of the regional press was over 6,500,000. These figures, which are for the end of 1947, were compiled by the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-49 and are found in Colin Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public: An Essay on the Role of the National Press in the British Political System*. (London: Methuen, 1968), 29 and Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 29, 28, 144. An assessment of the readership profiles of national newspapers (see Appendix 1) demonstrates that the mass-market and middle-market press attracted a markedly more diverse readership, inclusive of what we may broadly term the lower middle- and working-class sections of society.

⁶⁶ Seymour-Ure, *The British Press*, 28.

It is worth considering the ownership and political outlook of some of the main organs of the press. Lord Beaverbrook, a long-term ally of Churchill, was proprietor of the *Daily Express*, while the second Viscount Rothermere took ownership of the *Daily Mail*. More to the point, Beaverbrook was a strong supporter of the Empire and ferociously anti-German. These papers reflected the political leanings of their owners, both supporters of the Conservative Party and strongly opposed to the new Labour government.⁶⁷ Yet with both owners increasingly reluctant to intervene in the day-to-day running of their newspapers, their editors could take an ever more prominent role. Arthur Christiansen (*Daily Express*), shared Beaverbrook's brand of conservatism, while Frank Owen (*Daily Mail*, from 1947-50) was an arch opponent of Nazism and a noted anti-appeaser, having co-authored the famous *Guilty Men* pamphlet under the pseudonym Cato.⁶⁸ Both papers favoured a mix of news and entertainment, with a healthy dose of sensationalism and scandal alongside serious reporting.

The *Times*, under the non-interventionist ownership of Lord Astor, remained the paper of record and was noted for its links to the political establishment.⁶⁹ The *Manchester Guardian*, under the ownership of the Scott Trust, remained a regional publication, albeit with a national reputation, and presented a more liberal, left-orientated perspective.⁷⁰ It remained a strong supporter of the Attlee government throughout the 1940s. The *Daily Mirror* also supported the Labour administration and was aimed at a predominantly working-class readership, having been transformed into a left-wing daily in the late 1930s under the administration of Lord Rothermere's nephew, Cecil King.⁷¹ The *Mirror* saw a surge in popularity in the 1940s

⁶⁷ Seymour-Ure, *The British Press*, 35-8.

⁶⁸ Cato [Michael Foot, Frank Owen, and Peter Howard], *Guilty Men* (London: Gollancz, 1940).

⁶⁹ Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*, 108.

⁷⁰ Seymour-Ure, *The British Press*, 18.

⁷¹ Seymour-Ure, *The British Press*, 153.

and by 1949, it was Britain's biggest selling newspaper, selling over 4,500,000 copies and read by a staggering 25% of adults (compared to the mere 2% who read the *Times*).⁷²

Outline

Chapter one proposes a new assessment of the acrimonious public debate over the 'German Problem' that emerged in wartime Britain, placing it in the context of the postwar occupation and Anglo-German relations since 1945. Lord Vansittart suggested, to popular acclaim, that Germany's 'black record', stretching back centuries and culminating in the Third Reich, necessitated an uncompromising peace settlement. Yet his principal opponent, Victor Gollancz, argued that Nazism was a historical anomaly imposed upon the German people, advocating a more liberal peace centred upon rapprochement. A pervasive culture war ensued that would influence British relations with Germany through the 1940s and beyond.

The remainder of the study considers public portrayals of the occupation in the context of official policy, with chapter two beginning in the summer of 1945 when British policymakers responded to popular demands for a 'hard peace' amid Europe's burgeoning refugee crisis. The rigorous programme of denazification, re-education, demilitarisation, and strict economic controls agreed to at Potsdam was greeted with a great deal of optimism in Britain, although Gollancz and his supporters condemned these plans as totalitarian and imperialist. This positive reception was aided by the work of public relations officials, who utilised press regulation and wartime controls over the media to export a constructive image of the occupation. Yet leading British policymakers, unable to tolerate the spiralling costs associated with feeding the

⁷² Seymour-Ure, *The British Press*, 28; Tony Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', *History* 83, no. 269 (January 1998): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.00063>.

German people and maintaining the military government, soon sought to modify their commitments.

In the coming years, as chapter three charts, scandals over non-fraternisation, pervasive corruption, and rising costs engulfed the public image of the British Zone of occupied Germany, threatening to undermine Britain's claims on 'winning the peace'. This encouraged an official response, with the public relations arm of the Control Commission seeking to clean up the image of their staff, as documented in chapter four. Yet with official attempts to stem the tide of media criticism found wanting, the mass-market newspapers continued their attacks on the British occupiers. This culminated amid a balance of payments crisis in the summer of 1947, when the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign emerged in the mainstream press. The occupation, it was argued, had failed to tackle the 'German Problem', while encapsulating Britain's own failings as a nation in decline.

Meanwhile, the Cold War had intensified, with Britain's political and military leadership continuing to revise their position on Germany in line with their American allies. They now rapidly turned towards reconstruction and rehabilitation of the western Zones. The final chapter, focused on the events of 1948-49, builds upon my previously published journal article, 'Anglo-German Relations After 1945'.⁷³ It demonstrates the emergence of a clear dichotomy between public and political responses to Germany, with implications reaching far beyond the immediate postwar period. By now, policymakers were firmly set on the path towards Anglo-German reconciliation and alliance and publicly declared their new anti-Soviet outlook for the

⁷³ Daniel Cowling, 'Anglo-German Relations After 1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, published ahead of print, 14 July 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009417697808>.

first time. Yet concerns that the occupation had been an abject failure helped to maintain anxieties over the 'German Problem' across a substantial section of the British press and, we can infer, their mass readership. In 1949, the revival of West Germany's economic and political power saw the anti-German rhetoric of wartime reinvigorated once more.

Chapter One

Britain and the 'German Problem', 1941-45

Don't let's be beastly to the Germans
 When our victory is ultimately won,
 It was just those nasty Nazis
 Who persuaded them to fight,
 And their Beethoven and Bach
 Are really far worse than their bite!

Let's be meek to them
 And turn the other cheek to them,
 And try to bring out their latent sense of fun.
 Let's give them full air parity
 And treat the rats with charity
 But don't let's be beastly to the Hun!

*Noel Coward, Don't Let's Be Beastly to the
 Germans (His Master's Voice, 1943).*

After the turbulent summer of 1940, the British public and their government could begin to tentatively envisage the prospect of eventual victory – even if this remained anything but assured. And over the coming years, from village halls to Whitehall meeting rooms, people began to ponder the shape of the postwar world: in short, what could be done to safeguard peace and prosperity in Europe? It was, of course, the second time in a generation that such questions had been raised and, once again, the future of Germany stood at the forefront of deliberations. In the aftermath of the First World War, British policymakers, egged on by a vengeful public seemingly keen to 'Hang the Kaiser' and 'Make Germany Pay', had sought to revise

Germany's place within the European balance of power.¹ This included the first British Army of the Rhine's occupation of the Rhineland, which had lasted from 1919-30. Yet the harsh peace settlement agreed in 1919 now lay in tatters. This time there could be no mistake: the so-called 'German Problem', widely regarded as the root of two major wars, was to be resolved once-and-for-all. That said, there was no definitive answer as to what the 'German Problem' exactly was, let alone how it was to be dealt with. What followed was an impassioned and ubiquitous public debate over the past and future of Germany, spanning politics, public opinion, and popular culture.

A snapshot of the acrimonious wartime discussion of Germany was captured by Noel Coward's hit song *Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans*, released in the summer of 1943.² This was certainly no ordinary pop song, incorporating references to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, the German occupation of the Rhineland the following year, the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Netherlands, and, most strikingly, proposals for mass sterilization of the German people. Coward's sarcastic observations were regarded by some as an affront to decency and misunderstood by others as a sincere plea for clemency.³ The song was soon removed from the BBC's playlists, although it also found many fierce advocates, including Prime Minister Winston Churchill.⁴ *Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans* sympathised with the 'Vansittartists', a diverse grouping, loosely associated with the

¹ Michael S. Neiberg, *The Treaty of Versailles: A Concise History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 14.

² 'Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans', Noel Coward, Song, His Master's Voice, 1943.

³ Siân Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 161.

⁴ While this ban has been attributed to both complaints received about the song's provocative lyrics and misunderstandings of the song as a literal plea for clemency, it may have simply been due to the song's use of the term 'bloody', see Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 161.

diplomat Lord Robert Vansittart.⁵ They objected to the notion that it was ‘just the nasty Nazis’ who had brought about the war, opting instead to lay the blame upon the German people as a whole and, in turn, demanding a severe and uncompromising peace settlement. The song was intended, Coward would later recall, as ‘a satire directed against a small minority of excessive humanitarians, who, in my opinion, were taking a rather too tolerant view of our enemies.’⁶ These alleged soft-hearts, spearheaded by the publicist Victor Gollancz, favoured a more reconstructive approach to Germany after the war. Yet their conception of the peace was not born entirely out of sympathy, but rather an assortment of liberal and socialist ideals. They characterised the Third Reich as an authoritarian dictatorship and an extreme iteration of imperialism and capitalism, whose first victims had been the German people themselves. The peace, they argued, should be about reform and reconciliation, rather than vengeance.

That one of the nation’s most revered entertainers chose to pen a song lampooning the intricacies of British foreign policy illustrates just how pervasive, not to mention divisive, wartime anxieties over the prospective peace were. As historian R. W. Seton-Watson remarked at the end of the conflict, ‘never has the future of Europe been more obscure or presented greater obstacles to the would-be prophet [...] overshadowing all else is the absorbing question: what is to be done with Germany?’.⁷ This uncertainty, closely linked to both official government policy and public appraisals of Britain’s war aims, invoked responses from across the whole of British society, including its substantial German exile community. The result was a myriad of books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, newsreels, radio broadcasts, lobby

⁵ ‘What Our Readers Are Saying – “Vansittartism” Rhymed’, letter to the editor, *Yorkshire Post*, 21 July 1943.

⁶ Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 125.

⁷ R. W. Seton-Watson, ‘Preface’, in Karl Spiecker, *Germany: From Defeat to Defeat* (London: Macdonald, 1945), v.

groups, and public lectures devoted to the topic. As Donald F. Lach wrote in a review article from 1945, 'a veritable avalanche of materials on the German Problem' appeared in Britain and the United States in which 'people from many walks of life have analysed German backgrounds and ills and have proposed numerous and conflicting remedies'.⁸

This abundance of source material, coupled with the obvious significance of this debate as a framework for Allied postwar planning, has naturally attracted the attention of historians. To date, most work has been centred upon American wartime discussions regarding Germany and the postwar peace, including Stephen Casey's study of the 'state-private networks' that were actively lobbying Washington, seeking to ensure that a 'hard peace' would be meted out to Germany.⁹ Michaela Hoenicke Moore's *Know your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933-1945*, provides a more in-depth assessment of the 'cacophony of conflicting voices' on the 'German Problem', considering how they shaped both American warfare and postwar planning.¹⁰

In comparison, there has been a lack of scholarly interest in the British wartime debate over postwar Germany, with only a smattering of research on the subject. Lord Vansittart has been a focus of most of this attention, with acknowledgement of his unique role in wartime discussions of the Third Reich. Norman Rose's biography of Vansittart offers a brief but informative insight into his refusal to differentiate between Germans and Nazis, emerging as the leading British advocate of a 'hard peace'.¹¹ Aaron Goldman's interpretation of the wartime debate over Germany stresses the impassioned nature of the furore that 'Vansittartism'

⁸ Donald F. Lach, 'What They Would Do about Germany', *The Journal of Modern History* 17, No. 3 (September 1945), 227, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1898987>

⁹ Casey, 'The Campaign to Sell a Harsh Peace'.

¹⁰ Hoenicke Moore, *Know your Enemy*, 2.

¹¹ Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978).

generated, while downplaying Vansittart's actual significance as an influence upon public or political opinion.¹² On the other hand, Isabelle Tombs work on Vansittart highlights how his ideas shaped the Labour Party's wartime policy regarding the postwar peace.¹³ This suggestion is reaffirmed in John T. Grantham's appraisal of Hugh Dalton's proposals for dealing with the 'German Problem'.¹⁴ Jörg Später's study *Vansittart: Britische Debatten über Deutsche und Nazis, 1902–1945* provides a more differentiated picture of Vansittart, distinguishing him from the 'Vansittartist' tag which, it is shown, was primarily a construct of his opponents.¹⁵ Später offers an impressive examination of the entire debate, with a particular focus on the internecine friction that emerged amongst the German exile community of Britain.

This existing scholarship has, however, not satisfactorily addressed the enduring implications of Britain's wartime debate over the 'German Problem', often interpreted as simply a short-lived consequence of inflamed wartime passions.¹⁶ These pervasive public interactions with the German past were, in fact, a vital juncture in the longer history of the Anglo-German relationship. This is acknowledged in Später's study, which locates Vansittart's viewpoint within the history of this bilateral relationship since 1900. Yet he only cursorily considers the importance of Vansittart after the war, with an emphasis on his intellectual legacy amongst historians including A. J. P. Taylor and Lewis Namier.¹⁷ While, as Später concludes, the wartime debate was the climax of Anglo-German antagonism, it was evidently not the endpoint.¹⁸

¹² Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis'.

¹³ Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism"'.

¹⁴ Grantham, 'Hugh Dalton'.

¹⁵ Später, *Vansittart*.

¹⁶ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 186.

¹⁷ Später, *Vansittart*, 419-35; Chris Wrigley, *A. J. P. Taylor: Radical Historian of Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 157.

¹⁸ Später, *Vansittart*, 443.

The following chapter seeks to recontextualise Britain's wartime debate regarding the 'German Problem', examining these discussions in the context of public and political expectations of the postwar occupation. It considers the prevailing narratives about Germany which appeared in the Britain during the Second World War, presenting a more comprehensive survey of mass media and popular culture alongside elite discourses and official policy proclamations. This research demonstrates that while the debate was primarily historicist in nature, commentators constructed narratives of the German past as to vindicate their bespoke solutions for the future peace.¹⁹ These wartime assessments of the Third Reich, and the future peace, would set the foundations for British relations with Germany after 1945.

Germany's 'Black Record'

At the core of the debate over the 'German Problem' lay a figure firmly ensconced within the country's political establishment. Sir Robert Vansittart was a career diplomat who had risen to the role of Permanent-Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office by the late 1930s. During his tenure, he had maintained a characteristically steadfast opposition to the policy of appeasement and often warned of Germany's aggressive intentions. It was a contentious stance and one which would ultimately lead to his *de facto* demotion: in 1938 he was reassigned to the ambiguously-defined role of inaugural Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the British Government. The outbreak of war only a year later imbued Vansittart with a sense of righteousness and helped to craft his public reputation as a prescient anti-

¹⁹ Harold J. Laski, *The Germans – Are They Human? A Reply to Sir Robert Vansittart* (London: Gollancz, 1941), 8; Thomas H. Minshall, *Future Germany* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1943), 7; Robert Vansittart, *Black Record: Germans Past and Present*, 15th ed. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), 18; Louis Nizer, *What To Do With Germany* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1944), 153.

conformist.²⁰ In 1940, the publication of the hugely successful polemic *Guilty Men*, authored anonymously by Michael Foot, Frank Owen, and Peter Howard, underlined the ascendancy of anti-appeasement sentiments.²¹ In subsequent years, Vansittart came to be regarded by some as Britain's foremost expert on Germany, condemning the apparently age-old authoritarian and militaristic culture of Germany and its people. Yet for others, Vansittart was a dogmatic reactionary whose antagonistic posturing risked repeating the mistakes of the last peace.

In early 1941, the publication of Vansittart's *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* caused a major sensation. This short sixpenny pamphlet had originated as a set of radio broadcasts for the BBC Overseas Service in November 1940.²² It was a polemical work of brash rhetoric, taking aim at the German people and their 'black record' of historical misdeeds, which made the first major contribution to a debate about Germany's past that would endure through 1945 and beyond. *Black Record* stressed that an understanding of Germany's past was a necessary precursor to any attempted solution at the war's end:

The story of German aggression is a perfectly simple and consecutive one. If the world chooses to close its eyes again both to story and warning, Germany will succeed in reducing the world to slavery at her *third* attempt.²³

And this history was, it alleged, a foul succession of aggression and wrongdoing that stretched as far back as the first century AD. The German 'butcher-bird' had

²⁰ Rose, *Vansittart*, vii.

²¹ Cato, *Guilty Men*; R. Gerald Hughes, *The Postwar Legacy of Appeasement: British Foreign Policy since 1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); David Reynolds, 'Britain, the Two World Wars, and the Problem of Narrative', *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (March 2017): 214, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X16000509>.

²² Rose, *Vansittart*, 244-7; Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 162-64. The broadcasts received a considerable amount of attention in the press, see *Sunday Times*, 1 December 1940; *Sunday Times*, 8 December 1940; *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1940; *Daily Mail*, 6 December 1940; *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1940; *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1940; *Daily Telegraph*, 4 December 1940.

²³ Vansittart, *Black Record*, ix. Emphasis in the original.

embraced war and militarism with a unique zeal, leading to repeated pre-planned wars – five in the last seventy-five years alone. The Nazi regime was regarded as the natural heir to this distorted historical development, as George Glasgow surmised in his review of the pamphlet for the *Manchester Guardian*:

[Vansittart's] particular business in hand is to put on record the consistent role of Germans throughout history as the "butcher-bird" that preys mercilessly and cunningly upon its kind. Since Tacitus wrote of the Germans that 'they hate peace,' their whole history through Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa, the Great Elector, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, the Kaiser, Hitler – has been that of 'vandals'. The present 'gangsters' (Sir Robert's words) are not an aberration from type, but a continuing manifestation of a persistent type.²⁴

The ultimate explanation for this injurious record of war and pillage was, Vansittart insisted, the German people's exposure to an unashamedly anti-democratic, authoritarian, and militaristic society. The result was a populace which exhibited unswerving support and admiration for their rulers, no matter how callous or unreasonable:

I do not say that every German is bad; I do say that a majority of Germans in the plural has been made bad by centuries of misteaching, that it will follow any Fuehrer, cheerfully and ferociously, into any aggression.²⁵

It was the German people who were at the heart of the 'German Problem' and it was they who collectively shared the guilt for the latest chapter in this perpetual chain of hatred. There could, as such, be no hesitation in asserting that that the current war was being fought against the Germans, rather than simply their malicious leaders:

The battle still rages round the question: are we fighting the Germans or the Nazis? One day historians will rub their eyes, and wonder how such silly questions could be discussed at the end of 1941. No one was fool enough to pretend that we were fighting anything but the Germans in 1914. Indeed, all

²⁴ George Glasgow, 'Sir Robert in Action', review of *Black Record* by Robert Vansittart, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1941.

²⁵ Vansittart, *Black Record*, viii.

these fallacies about “Hitlerite Germany” calmly overlook the last war altogether.²⁶

Black Record was very popular: a first print run of 25,000 sold out within just two days and by August 1941, when it went into a thirteenth edition, an estimated 324,910 copies had been sold.²⁷ By the end of the year, it was estimated to have surpassed 500,000 sales.²⁸ Victor Gollancz estimated that ‘at least three million people have read the pamphlet [...], a very high percentage of the adult reading public of this country’.²⁹

The press was soon awash with appraisals of *Black Record*, penned by interested readers, politicians, intellectuals, newspaper columnists, and reviewers.³⁰ Vansittart’s work had invoked a great hullabaloo, not least because many believed it had controverted his professional commitment to political neutrality. This was, as its author acknowledged in the work’s preface, the work of a ‘diplomat with his coat off’ – and almost certainly inspired, in part, by a growing frustration at the limitations of his new official role. The publication of *Black Record* inspired members of both Houses of Parliament to protest Vansittart’s apparent violation of his avowed responsibilities, accusations repeated in the editorial column of the *Times*.³¹ A. H.

²⁶ Vansittart, *Black Record*, ix.

²⁷ Rose, *Vansittart*, 247. These figures are from Vansittart’s personal papers, Letter Vansittart to P. P. Howe, Hamish Hamilton, 27 January 1941, VNST II/1/10, Correspondence: January 1941–November 1941, Correspondence with publishers and The Sunday Times about Vansittart’s book “Black Record”, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; Printing Numbers (*Black Record*), 26 August 1941, VNST II/1/10, Correspondence: January 1941–November 1941, Correspondence with publishers and The Sunday Times about Vansittart’s book “Black Record”, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.

²⁸ See Robert Vansittart, *The Roots of the Trouble* (London: Hutchinson, 1941).

²⁹ Victor Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?: A Reply to Lord Vansittart on the German Problem* (London: Gollancz, 1942), 5, estimates at least 3 million had read it.

³⁰ Rose, *Vansittart*, 248.

³¹ Goldman, ‘Germans and Nazis’, 161; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 368 (1941), 28 January 1941, Col. 417–18; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 369 (1941), 13 February 1941, Col. 1516; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 369

Dodd, a distinguished academic, pointed out numerous flaws in Vansittart's narrative, concerned that 'foreign listeners should be left with the impression that the versions of history given in these reports are a sample of the historical scholarship of our leading public men'.³² Francis W. Hirst, journalist and former editor of the *Economist*, wrote to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, expressing his disgust at the impropriety of Vansittart's conduct:

To pervert history in order to present false pictures of the past is unpardonable in Ministers and high officials who contrast British veracity with the mendacity of Dr Goebbels.³³

Duff Cooper, as Minister of Information, had approved Vansittart's original radio broadcasts, deeming them to be a potentially powerful form of 'political warfare'. This decision was, in hindsight, a brazen rendering of Cooper's own anti-appeasement and anti-German sympathies. His endorsement ran contrary to official gesturing towards Germany at the start of the war, with government propaganda originally instilling the notion that the Nazi state had been imposed upon the German people.³⁴ In September 1939, as Wehrmacht forces invaded Poland, Neville Chamberlain spoke in the House of Commons of how 'we have no quarrel with the German people, except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi

(1941), 25 February 1941, Col. 383; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 370 (1941), 8 April 1941, Col. 1410-11; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 118 (1941), 18 February 1941, Col. 288-410; 'Civil Servant or Publicist?', editorial, *Times*, 20 February 1941; 'Civil Servant or Publicist?', letters to the editor, *Times*, 24 February 1941; 'Civil Servant or Publicist?', letter to the editor, *Times*, 25 February 1941; 'Civil Servant or Publicist?', letter to the editor, *Times*, 26 February 1941.

³² A. H. Dodd, 'Germany's Record – The Dangers of Distorting History', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1940.

³³ Francis W. Hirst, 'Germany's Past and Present – Blackening the Record', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1941.

³⁴ Tom Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 117; Jones, 'Eradicating Nazism'.

Government'.³⁵ Likewise, the higher echelons of the Labour Party were firmly united behind drawing a distinction between Nazis and Germans, defending the existence of an 'Other Germany' entitled to play a part in European affairs.³⁶ It has even been suggested that in 1940, when Britain opted to fight on alone, Churchill's goal was most likely a negotiated peace with a non-Nazi German government.³⁷

Vansittart's explosive rhetoric was hardly likely to encourage underground opposition to the Nazis and it is perhaps no surprise that Vansittart was castigated as a 'gift to Goebbels'.³⁸ Indeed, the Reich Minister of Propaganda would describe him in his diary as 'the Englishman who rendered the greatest service to the German cause during the war'.³⁹ To Vansittart, of course, the idea that the German people could be coaxed into supporting the regime was bunk – for him, their total devotion to Hitler had never been in doubt. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1941, with open disagreement amongst members of the cabinet over the desirability of *Black Record* as a means of propaganda, Vansittart announced his retirement from public service.⁴⁰

The arguments contained within *Black Record* were also subject to a great deal of public scrutiny over the coming months and years. Historian G. P. Gooch suggested that Vansittart 'writes as if he had never studied the history of other

³⁵ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 351 (1939), 1 September 1939, Col. 125-39; Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 161.

³⁶ Trevor Burridge, 'Great Britain and the Dismemberment of Germany at the End of the Second World War', *The International History Review* 3, no. 4 (October 1981): 574-5; Calder, *The People's War*, 490.

³⁷ Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 2.

³⁸ Heinrich Fraenkel, *Vansittart's Gift for Goebbels: A German Exile's Answer to Black Record* (London: Fabian Society, 1941); Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 46; William Barkley, 'Bishop and Peer Duel About 'Good' Germans', *Daily Express*, 11 March 1943; 'German People Not Guilty – TUC', *Daily Mirror*, 11 September 1943.

³⁹ Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diary*, trans. L. P. Lochner (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 93-4, 139, 226-7, 341-3.

⁴⁰ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 162.

countries [...]. Sir Robert evidently believes that the case of Germany is unique. Unfortunately, it is not.⁴¹ In March 1943, George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, spoke in the House of Lords to condemn Vansittart's allegations of the peculiarity, inherent wickedness, and collective guilt of the German people.⁴² Harold Laski, a noted socialist theorist and academic, argued that Vansittart, in his 'indictment against a whole people', had wrongly assumed 'that the national character of a people is a fixed and unchanging thing'.⁴³ For some, Vansittart's proclamations amounted to little more than a crude inversion of Nazi race theory.⁴⁴

Leading figures within socialist movement also voiced their concerns: John McNair, General Secretary of the Independent Labour Party, challenged Vansittart's notion that German history had taken a peculiar route by deliberating upon the history of Britain or other Allied nations.⁴⁵ Douglas Brown wrote a pamphlet under the auspices of the Labour Party entitled *Commonsense versus Vansittartism*, arguing that *Black Record* was 'historical distortion' and 'the ideological expression of the economic policy which the British ruling class will endeavour to pursue in the post-war years'.⁴⁶ Likewise, left-wing members of the German exile community rejected Vansittart's arguments, most notably Heinrich Fraenkel who claimed in a Fabian Society pamphlet, *Vansittart's Gift for Goebbels – a German Exile's Answer to Black Record*, that 'it would be quite as easy to write a "Black Record" of the British, the French, the Americans, or any nation for that matter'.⁴⁷

⁴¹ G. P. Gooch, 'Germany and Her Neighbours – Historian's Criticism of "Black Record"', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1941.

⁴² Rose, *Vansittart*, 273; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 126 (1943), 10 March 1943, Col. 536-45.

⁴³ Laski, *Are They Human?*, 3-4.

⁴⁴ A. H. Dodd, 'Germany's Record'.

⁴⁵ John McNair, 'Foreword', in Douglas Brown, *Commonsense versus Vansittartism* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1943), 3.

⁴⁶ Douglas Brown, *Commonsense versus Vansittartism* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1943), 4.

⁴⁷ Fraenkel, *Vansittart's Gift*, 3.

Yet *Black Record* also had a great many influential proponents, including William Temple, soon to be installed as the Archbishop of Canterbury. He offered his gratitude for Vansittart's intervention, which had exposed the 'tradition of Prussia and of Prussianised Germany'.⁴⁸ The *Manchester Guardian's* review of the pamphlet suggested that 'at this time there are few who will deny the large measure of unhappy truth in [*Black Record*]'.⁴⁹ In the *Daily Mail*, H. G. Wells thanked Vansittart for his 'great service' in 'reminding us of the power and persistence of [the German tradition]' which 'has made Germany a country of invincible uniforms'.⁵⁰ There were also numerous supportive responses in the letter pages of the press.⁵¹

Likewise, the rank-and-file of the Labour Party was at the forefront of the 'Vansittartist' movement, with a majority of the party's membership advocating an anti-German interpretation of the Third Reich.⁵² Left-wing support for Vansittart's ideas even extended to members of the German exile community, most notably the socialist membership of The Fight for Freedom (FFF) organization. This group vowed to 'publish the Truth about Germany', writing what they described as a 'rigorous investigation of the facts of history' in which Germany's political culture was admonished as distinctively nationalistic.⁵³ Moreover, it was the left-leaning *Daily Mirror* that offered Vansittart the warmest reception amongst the national newspapers. Columnist Bill Greig described him as 'perhaps the wisest and most far-

⁴⁸ Quoted in Andrew Chandler, 'The Patronage of resistance: George Bell and the 'Other Germany' during the Second World War' in *The Church and Humanity: The Life and Work of George Bell, 1883-1958*, ed. Andrew Chandler (Farnham; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2012), 97.

⁴⁹ George Glasgow, 'Sir Robert in Action', review of *Black Record* by Robert Vansittart, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1941.

⁵⁰ H. G. Wells, 'If We Do Not Strike Now We Deserve Disaster', *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1941.

⁵¹ For example, T. P. Conwell-Evans, letter to the editor, 'A Convert Against Germany', *Picture Post*, 21 June 1941.

⁵² Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism"', 301.

⁵³ Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism"', 288, 294-5. For best overview of the German exile community's contribution to the debate, see Später, *Vansittart*.

seeing of our diplomats', who 'sees not a race of Germans, but just the eternal Hun, the barbarian whose mentality time cannot change.'⁵⁴ In addition, the paper's editorial described *Black Record* as a 'true history' which recognised the 'German instinct for cruelty and destruction' and reminded readers 'that Germany is Hitler, and Hitler is Germany'.⁵⁵ William Connor's column in the *Mirror*, written under his pseudonym Cassandra, described the pamphlet as:

a formidable and able indictment that should get the widest possible audience. The author, with wit and skill, conducts the most terrifying prosecution against the murderous fabric of Hitlerism. Read it. Price sixpence. Worth double.⁵⁶

Baron Vansittart of Denham

Vansittart, freed from the constraints of life as a civil servant following his retirement, enthusiastically embraced his newfound status as an eminent public intellectual. In 1941, recognising his long career as a diplomat, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Vansittart of Denham. This presented him with an official channel through which he could voice his partisan opinions, leading to fiery clashes with several of his fellow members of the House of Lords.⁵⁷ In addition, he would continue

⁵⁴ Bill Greig, 'Bill Greig Says...', *Daily Mirror*, 30 November 1940.

⁵⁵ 'Vansittart's Best', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1940.

⁵⁶ William Connor, 'Cassandra', *Daily Mirror*, 4 February 1941. Also see, William Connor, 'Cassandra', *Daily Mirror*, 5 December 1940; William Connor, 'Cassandra', *Daily Mirror*, 6 August 1941; William Connor, 'Cassandra', *Daily Mirror*, 14 November 1941; Bill Greig, 'Bill Greig Says...', *Daily Mirror*, 14 December 1940.

⁵⁷ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 122 (1942), 18 March 1942, Col. 301-44; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 122 (1942), 19 May 1942, Col. 1066-76; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 122 (1942), 21 May 1942, Col. 1148-86; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 125 (1942-3), 11 February 1943, Col. 1057-91; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 126 (1943), 10 March 1943, Col. 535-82; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 133 (1944), 10 October 1944, Col. 409-34; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 137 (1945), 23 October 1945, Col. 412-40.

to publish books and pamphlets, further clarifying his position on Germany while scarcely wavering from the historical diagnosis that he had sketched in *Black Record*.⁵⁸

Yet it was his dynamic commitment to addressing a popular audience, primarily through the mass media and public oratory, that sustained the prominence of these ideas. Vansittart, an Eton-educated Baron with decidedly Edwardian sensibilities who resided in a grand seventeenth-century Buckinghamshire mansion, can hardly be described as a man of the people. Yet for all his vanity and grandiloquence, here was an able and willing communicator who regularly made speaking tours of the country. Vansittart was a tireless devotee of his own cause, never shy of an opportunity for self-promotion – he had, as biographer Norman Rose notes, ‘learned the stock-in-trade tricks of every politician’.⁵⁹ There was scarcely a major publication to which Vansittart didn’t at some point contribute an article, column, or letter, while he also took up invitations to appear on newsreels and the BBC – including a debate on the ‘German Problem’ hosted by A. J. P. Taylor, alongside *New Statesman* editor Kingsley Martin and journalist Barbara Ward.⁶⁰ His message remained consistent: ‘the soul of the German people has been militarised’ and it was ‘only appropriate’ to blame all of them for the crimes of Nazism.⁶¹

While Vansittart remained steadfast in his intention to elude party political affiliation, in 1943 he decided to take his message to the British people in an even more direct manner – setting up a political lobby group, the Win the Peace

⁵⁸ Vansittart, *The Roots of the Trouble*; Robert Vansittart, *Lessons of My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1943); Robert Vansittart, *The German Octopus – “Win the Peace” Pamphlet No.2* (London: Hutchinson, 1945); Robert Vansittart, *Bones of Contention* (London: Hutchinson, 1945).

⁵⁹ Rose, *Vansittart*, 260.

⁶⁰ See *The Listener*, 19 October 1944; *The Listener*, 26 October 1944; *The Listener*, 7 December 1944; Rose, *Vansittart*, 261.

⁶¹ ‘Should We Blame the Whole German People?’, *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943.

Movement.⁶² He installed himself as president and took to the country, hosting luncheons and meetings with all manner of audiences, putting forth his ideas about Germany and how to 'win the peace'.⁶³ Vansittart gave rousing speeches, on one occasion even inspiring a Cardiff audience to chant 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'.⁶⁴ These were, moreover, well attended events – *The Scotsman* estimated 3,000 people were at a talk in Edinburgh, *The Birmingham Post* spoke of a 'largely attended meeting', while there were claims that the Bristol branch of the association could muster over 10,000 supporters.⁶⁵ In his 1945 book *Bones of Contention*, Vansittart calculated that the Win The Peace had 'recruited and enlightened many scores of thousands of the men and women of this country in support of the aims, ideals and practical policies I have advanced'.⁶⁶

Vansittart also developed close affiliations with two more lobby groups: the British Prisoner of War Relatives Association, an organisation that shared his anti-German ethos and for whom he offered his services as a speaker, and the Never Again Association.⁶⁷ This latter movement, which had the stated aim of ensuring that 'never again must we allowed Germany to make war', began life in the summer of 1942 and became a wellspring of anti-German rhetoric, with branches springing-up

⁶² 'Lord Vansittart on the German Menace: The 'Win the Peace' Movement', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 September 1943; see Später, *Vansittart*, 183-5.

⁶³ 'How to Win the Peace – Lord Vansittart's Suggestions', *Birmingham Post*, 24 January 1944; 'Winning the Peace – "German Army Must Go"', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 May 1943; Robert Vansittart, 'Vansittartism Explained', *Daily Express*, 20 September 1943; Rose, *Vansittart*, 261.

⁶⁴ Rose, *Vansittart*, 261.

⁶⁵ 'Securing Europe From Germany – Danger of Using Ideological Spectacles – Lord Vansittart on Peace Aims', *The Scotsman*, 12 June 1943; 'How to Win the Peace – Lord Vansittart's Suggestions', *Birmingham Post*, 24 January 1944; Rose, *Vansittart*, 261.

⁶⁶ Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, 7.

⁶⁷ 'Whip Hand 1944 – Lord Vansittart on Nazi Collapse', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 January 1944; "'Never Again' – Lord Vansittart's Object', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 January 1944.

across Britain.⁶⁸ Vansittart, although never formally a member, gave numerous talks to members, including one recorded on vinyl, while his wife Sarita Enriqueta took up a place on the association's executive committee.⁶⁹

This ceaseless commitment to political lobbying and self-publicising allowed Vansittart to adapt his message as the events of the war unfolded, showing an impressive aptitude for reinvigorating the perceived relevance of his arguments. Moreover, these public events, often attended by various local luminaries, attracted a great deal of media interest, growing Vansittart's standing as *the* eminent theorist of the 'German Problem'.

Thus Spake Germany

Vansittart stood at the head of a broader anti-German lobby, whose ideas maintained an intellectual orbit around the basic precepts set out in *Black Record*.⁷⁰ In fact, almost anyone associated with a hard-line or hostile view towards Germany came to be regarded as an advocate of 'Vansittartism'.⁷¹ This catch-all description became a vibrant part of Britain's wartime lexicon, an oppositional shorthand for allegedly intolerant, xenophobic, or racist views about Germany. The term soon took on a meaning beyond anything specific to the writing and speeches of Vansittart,

⁶⁸ 'German Aggression – "Never Again" Movement – Aims and Policy', *The Scotsman*, 19 January 1943; Draft Memorandum and Articles of Association, 27 July 1942, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the "Never Again" Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; *Mr WJ Brown on the Things to Come*, Never Again Luncheon (Grosvenor House), 6 April 1942, *British Movietone*, newsreel, No. 42120, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

⁶⁹ Letter Vansittart to Mrs. Unwin, 2 July 1943, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the "Never Again" Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; 'Vansittartism', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 February 1942.

⁷⁰ For a comprehensive survey of Vansittartist ideas in wartime Britain, see Später, *Vansittart*.

⁷¹ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 156.

becoming as Jeffrey Olick notes, a 'convenient mythic emblem, often as much for historians as for political actors at the time'.⁷² It is no surprise, then, that Vansittart himself rejected the moniker and on occasion even repudiated the 'wilder elements' of his following.⁷³ Nevertheless, the ideas put forth by these allies and fellow travellers also had a profound influence upon British considerations of Germany and the future peace.

Thus Spake Germany was published in the same year as *Black Record* and included an admiring foreword from Vansittart himself.⁷⁴ The book was an extensive anthology of decontextualized quotations attributed to Germans over the centuries, from Professor Adolf von Harnack lambasting the Englishman as a 'traitor of civilisation' in 1914 to Julius Langbehn's 1890 assertion that 'Aryan blood' will 'revolt victoriously against all other blood'.⁷⁵ This attempt to attest to the continuities of 'Pan-German nationalism' was written under the pseudonyms W. W. Coole and M. F. Potter, but can almost certainly be attributed to leading Polish diplomat Władysław Wszębór Kulski. The *Daily Telegraph* described the book as an illuminating 'collection of expressions of complete cynicism towards the rights of others, amazing racial arrogance and presumption, envy of those who are in possession of what Germany covets, contempt of virtue and decency, and bitter hatred of all who stand in her way'.⁷⁶ Cassandra's column in the *Daily Mirror* regarded it as 'a mournful and

⁷² Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 30, 44; Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 169; Rose, *Vansittart*, 258; Später, *Vansittart*.

⁷³ Robert Vansittart, 'The Problem of Germany: A Discussion', *International Affairs* 21, No. 3 (July, 1945): 313; Vansittart, *The Roots of the Trouble*, 10.

⁷⁴ W. W. Coole and M. F. Potter [Władysław Wszębór Kulski] eds., *Thus Spake Germany* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1941).

⁷⁵ Coole and Potter, *Thus Spake Germany*, 166, 141.

⁷⁶ J. B. Firth, 'Germany's Menace Will Outlast Even Hitler's Fall – Plentiful Evidence from Spokesman of Pre-Nazi Days', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 August 1941.

terrifying anthology of what the Germans themselves have said about their aims and desires [...]. They write their own indictment in words of criminal slime'.⁷⁷

Ernest Baker's review of *Thus Spake Germany* in the *Observer* suggested that it was the perfect complement to Rohan Butler's *The Roots of National Socialism, 1793-1933*, which had appeared only a few weeks earlier.⁷⁸ Butler, a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, was one of a number of prominent historians eager to present a reproachful history of Germany's alleged wrongdoing. From A. L. Rowse's bluntly-titled article of 1940 'What is Wrong with the Germans?', through to the publication of A. J. P. Taylor's well-known *The Course of German History* in 1945, academia had its fair share of anti-German thinkers.⁷⁹ Butler's book is a particularly revealing example, locating the Nazi movement within the *longue durée* of German history and suggesting a continuity of thought and practice from the eighteenth century onwards.⁸⁰ Butler differentiated between individual Germans, 'respected as decent, warm-hearted men and women, lovers of family and the home, orderly, upright and industrious', and their 'national whole', which was 'distinguished for its aggressive ferocity and its ruthless disregard of the accepted principles of conduct in civilized society'.⁸¹

A particularly prominent strand of the debate took aim at Prussia and its Junker elites, who were repeatedly pinpointed as the root of German militarism and authoritarianism. Their influence was said to have stunted Germany's natural growth

⁷⁷ William Connor, 'Cassandra', *Daily Mirror*, 6 August 1941.

⁷⁸ Ernest Barker, 'Books of the Day – De Germania', review of *The Roots of National Socialism* by Rohan Butler et al, *Observer*, 17 August 1941; Rohan Butler, *The Roots of National Socialism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1941).

⁷⁹ A. L. Rowse, 'What Is Wrong with the Germans?', *The Political Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (January 1940): 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1940.tb00519.x>; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of Germany since 1815* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1946); Wrigley, A. J. P. Taylor, 155–7; Später, *Vansittart*, 217–31.

⁸⁰ Butler, *The Roots of National Socialism*, 276.

⁸¹ Butler, *The Roots of National Socialism*, 9.

into a liberal democracy, blighting Europe for centuries. J. B. Firth wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* arguing that 'it is absolutely and historically true to say that the virus of militarism – Prussian militarism – is in the German blood, and that it will take years to eradicate it'.⁸² This point was also made forcefully by Colonel Thomas H. Minshall in his 1941 book *What To Do With Germany*:

Belief in militarism, inherent and almost ineradicable in Prussia proper, has strongly infected the rest, and especially the youth, of Germany. Although other parts of Germany may evolve evil ideas, Prussia is the actual prime mover actuating aggression.⁸³

Prussia was, Vansittart later explained in a debate hosted at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 'the most unnatural state in the world'.⁸⁴ This anti-Prussian rhetoric gained ground amongst a number of influential figures, including Winston Churchill, who in 1943 argued that Prussia was 'the core of Germany' and 'the source of the recurring pestilence'.⁸⁵ It would remain prominent feature of political discussions of the 'German Problem', culminating in 1947 with the Allied Control Council's Law No.46. This formally abolished the Prussian State, said to be a long-standing 'bearer of militarism and reaction'.⁸⁶ This was all in spite of the democratic traditions which had seemingly emerged in Prussia during the interwar period, a realisation which prompted Rohan Butler to describe such ideas as little more than 'facile assumption'.⁸⁷

The notion of a schism between good and evil in Germany was another particularly common trope amongst the anti-German lobby, who often contrasted

⁸² J. B. Firth, 'Germany's Menace Will Outlast Even Hitler's Fall – Plentiful Evidence from Spokesman of Pre-Nazi Days', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 August 1941.

⁸³ Thomas H. Minshall, *What to Do with Germany* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1941), 128.

⁸⁴ Vansittart, 'The Problem of Germany', 317.

⁸⁵ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 392 (1943), 21 September 1943, Col. 69-170.

⁸⁶ For more on Allied attitudes to Prussia, see Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947* (London: Penguin, 2007), 670-80.

⁸⁷ Butler, *The Roots of National Socialism*, 273.

the celebrated successes of German culture and science with the country's alleged political immaturity and militaristic elites. Germany was regularly described as a 'Jekyll and Hyde nation', whose merciless streak of evil was surreptitiously concealed behind a veneer of civilisation and decency.⁸⁸ This pseudo-psychoanalytical approach utilised diagnostic language, attempting to outline the defining features of the 'German mind'. Rolf Tell's brashly titled *The Eternal Germ-Maniac – Hitler and his Spiritual Ancestors* offers an illustration of such armchair psychology, arguing that 'Hitler and Hitlerism are no difficult problems for the science of mental diseases'.⁸⁹ Likewise, *The German Mentality*, written under the pseudonym Verrina (a name taken from Schiller's *Fiesco*), contended that the German regarded 'himself to be a superior nobleman', a member of the *Herrenvolk*.⁹⁰ This book questioned the moral and psychological integrity of the Germans, alleging that they were caught in the 'mass psychosis of Hitlerism', with 'all ethical sentiments' having 'completely fallen out of balance' and their 'comprehension of good and evil' now 'topsy-turvy'.⁹¹ These interpretations sometimes strayed into racial pseudo-science and eugenics, as exemplified by geologist Sir Thomas H. Holland's remarks in the foreword to F. J. C. Hearnshaw's *Germany the Aggressor – Throughout the Ages*:

The question of prime importance for the world just now is to find whether this historical record shows a development on lines parallel to those of the accepted characteristics of civilization, or whether it indicates any real divergence of a kind which a naturalist would recognise as due to the evolution of a new sub-species.⁹²

⁸⁸ Hoenicke Moore, *Know your Enemy*, 177.

⁸⁹ Rolf Tell, *The Eternal Ger-Maniac: Hitler and His Spiritual Ancestors* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942), xii–xiii. There were, however, also more official, clinical attempts to comprehend Nazism through psychology, see Daniel Pick, *The Pursuit of the Nazi Mind: Hitler, Hess, and the Analysts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹⁰ Verrina [pseud.], *The German Mentality*, Rev. 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1946), 242.

⁹¹ Verrina, *The German Mentality*, 241–2.

⁹² Thomas H. Holland, 'Foreword', in Fossey John Cobb Hearnshaw, *Germany the Aggressor Throughout the Ages* (London; Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, 1940), 3.

Yet Vansittart himself actively rejected such rhetoric, emphasising that the ‘German Problem’ was principally a cultural phenomenon. Rather than racial characteristics, he insisted that the values of Western civilisation – namely the tenets of democracy, tolerance, liberalism – had simply failed to emerge in Germany.⁹³ In fact, Vansittart was at pains to emphasise that ‘good Germans’ did exist, even if only in ‘a weak minority’ and ‘quite ineffective’ when needed.⁹⁴ And if he can hardly be said to have embraced the German exile community with open-arms, warning his readers to ‘beware of these wolves in sheep’s clothing’, he was willing to cooperate with the sympathetic Fight for Freedom group.⁹⁵

This was a concession that did not sit well with ultras from within the anti-German movement, most notably the irascible Eleonora Tennant.⁹⁶ Tennant, an enthusiastic supporter of Franco and member of the Nazi-allied Anglo-German Fellowship before the war, had even attended a Nazi rally in Nuremberg and met Hitler personally several times.⁹⁷ She nevertheless became a fervent advocate of the anti-German movement and a leading figure in the Never Again Association. Vansittart, who had previously been offered the chair of the organisation, was now

⁹³ ‘Should We Blame the Whole German People?’, *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943; Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, 37; George Richards, ‘The German People’, letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 20 March 1941; Henry Noel Brailsford, *Our Settlement with Germany* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1944), 101.

⁹⁴ ‘Lord Vansittart and the Germans – No Hatred, But Distrust’, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 March 1942; *Lord Vansittart on the German Atrocities (interview with Leslie Mitchell)*, 30 April 1945, *British Movietone*, newsreel, No. 45700, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

⁹⁵ Vansittart, *The Roots of the Trouble*, 10.

⁹⁶ Rose, *Vansittart*, 262-4; Später, *Vansittart*, 374-96; see VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.

⁹⁷ Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933–1939* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 182–6; Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, *Right-wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 186–7; Letter Vansittart to Mrs. Steward, British Prisoners of War Relatives Association, 20 May 1944, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.

publicly accused of collaborating with the enemy and being under the influence of Germans.⁹⁸ The charge generated an acrimonious quarrel over the purity of their respective convictions, ultimately leading to the collapse of Never Again. It was a bitter and extraordinary disagreement, exemplifying the diversity of opinion that existed, even amongst the most fervent proponents of anti-German ideas.

‘A Mood of Revenge and Hatred’

Black Record had catalysed a shift in British thinking about Germany, encouraging a retreat into the Germanophobic imagery of the ‘savage Hun’ that had prevailed during the First World War. Vansittart’s articulate prose, reflective of his talents as a published poet and playwright, imbued his historical thesis with a lively and memorable quality. His pamphlet, while sensationalist and intentionally provocative, had succinctly and emphatically defined an original but familiar British *Feindbild* of Germany, daubed in populist rhetoric. This was even recognised by Vansittart’s most enduring opponent, Victor Gollancz, who condemned the ‘mood of revenge and hatred for the whole German people’ unleashed by *Black Record*.⁹⁹ The Vansittart thesis, he suggested, was ‘a savage appeal to primitive blood-lust’ and had inspired a ‘base propaganda of hatred and revenge against the German people’ across Britain.¹⁰⁰ Gollancz labelled the *Sunday Times* as ‘the chief organ of

⁹⁸ Council Statement (sent to all members), August 1944, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; Letter Vansittart to Dr. A. Guirdham, 19 June 1943, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; Reply Dr. A. Guirdham to Vansittart, 25 June 1943, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; Transcript of a speech by Eleonora Tennant at public meeting, Conway Hall, 27 February 1944, VNST II/1/23, Correspondence about the “Never Again” Association, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.

⁹⁹ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 124; Curt Geyer, Edward FitzGerald, and Walter Loeb, *Gollancz in German Wonderland* (London: Hutchinson, 1942); Tombs, ‘The Victory of Socialist “Vansittartism”’, 296.

¹⁰⁰ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 62.

Vansittartism', but support for Vansittart's ideas could be found right across the written press, providing a means for broadening his popular appeal.¹⁰¹ There was, Gollancz lamented, 'steadily swelling propaganda for the punishment, by the victors, of the war-guilt and atrocity-guilt of the vanquished'.¹⁰²

The growing appeal of these ideas is also perceptible in a number of wartime opinion polls, with a Mass-Observation survey of December 1942 stating that there was 'a high percentage of opinion that Germany is a warlike nation and will always cause trouble – that so long as Germany remains, there will always be wars'.¹⁰³ Correspondingly, 43% of respondents to a Mass-Observation poll in the spring of 1943 claimed they 'hated or had no sympathy for the German people', a number which had increased to 54% by February 1945.¹⁰⁴

This transformation of British conceptions of the 'German Problem' extended into the political realm, as government rhetoric and military strategy increasingly disregarded any distinction between 'German' and 'Nazi'. In the course of the war, Germanophobia would be utilised as a means of unifying the British people behind an ever-intensifying war effort. The basic principles of *Black Record* were taken up by leading members of the government, including Winston Churchill, Harold Nicolson, Gilbert Murray, Duff Cooper, and Brendan Bracken, as well as the Labour grandees Hugh Dalton and Clement Attlee. In April 1941, following military setbacks in North Africa and the Balkans, Churchill addressed the British people, explaining that 'there

¹⁰¹ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 95.

¹⁰² Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 107-8.

¹⁰³ File report 1543, 'Germany After the War', December 1942, Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton.

¹⁰⁴ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 156-7. File report 1624, 'Private Opinion About the German People', March 1943, Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton; File report 2565, 'Attitudes to the German People', February 1948, Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton. These were, moreover, likely to be conservative estimates, with investigators suggesting that some respondents had concealed their vitriol for Germany due to social desirability bias.

are less than seventy million malignant Huns – some of whom are curable and others killable’.¹⁰⁵ In the same year, the British bombing campaign against German towns and cities stepped up, gradually moving towards attacks on civilian housing which culminated in the Area bombing directive of February 1942.¹⁰⁶ It was a controversial shift in military strategy, exemplifying the British government’s growing antagonism towards Germany.

The furore that had emerged following the publication of *Black Record* had elevated Vansittart to a singular position: British public and political discussions about Germany would, from this point on, be held in light of his ideas. Vansittart’s ideas had permeated all sections of British society, politics, media, military, and civil service, influencing conceptions of the Germany and the future peace.¹⁰⁷ In 1945, Donald Lach conceded in a review of the Anglo-America debate over Nazism that ‘[Vansittart’s] efforts [...] have probably had more general influence in all strata of society than those of any other student of the German problem’.¹⁰⁸

Shall Our Children Live or Die?

Vansittart’s radical anti-German rhetoric was, however, far from the only interpretation of the ‘German Problem’ to emerge in wartime Britain. Victor Gollancz, one of *Black Record*’s fiercest critics, outlined a radically contrasting image of Germany and the origins of the Third Reich. The Nazis, he argued, were a dictatorial cabal, exploiting their own people in order to wage war: any accusations of collective guilt were a vengeful delusion that should be rejected on moral grounds. Gollancz was a devoted humanitarian, with political sympathies that wandered

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Calder, *The People’s War*, 491.

¹⁰⁶ See R. J. Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (London: Penguin, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Lach, ‘What Would They Do’, 229.

between the socialist and liberal camps, and, like Vansittart, had been a prominent opponent of appeasement in the 1930s.¹⁰⁹ As a prominent publisher, writer, and organiser of the Left Book Club, he was able to exercise a profound influence upon the public debate over Germany. His position as the head of the renowned publishing house Gollancz Ltd allowed him to propagate his following, distributing numerous anti-Vansittart works in the course of the war.

In 1942, Gollancz's published his own book, the emphatically titled *Shall Our Children Live or Die? A reply to Lord Vansittart on the German problem*.¹¹⁰ In it, he acknowledged that the 'German Problem' had been the 'explosive force' and 'active principle' at the heart of the twentieth century's major wars, but suggested its origins lay at the feet of capitalist imperialism.¹¹¹ Germany, late to industrialise and unify, had been left with great industrial power in a 'world already divided up' between nations such as Britain and France.¹¹² This resulted in a relative impotence on the world market, leading to the First World War, which had been further aggravated by the economic constraints of the Treaty of Versailles.¹¹³ The peace of 1919 was, Gollancz suggested, unnecessarily severe, imposing exacting reparations and territorial changes that shook the fragile foundations of the Weimar Republic's fledgling democracy. The 'appalling unemployment and under-employment' which transpired amid economic downturn and the 'disastrous split in the progressive forces' gave rise to an extreme political reaction: Nazism.¹¹⁴ Yet this was not a peculiar German trait, but rather a symptom of modern capitalism's inherent frailty

¹⁰⁹ Sidney Aster, 'Appeasement: Before and After Revisionism', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19, No. 3 (September 2008): 446.

¹¹⁰ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*.

¹¹¹ Gollancz, 29.

¹¹² Gollancz, 12-3, 26-8.

¹¹³ Gollancz, 28.

¹¹⁴ Victor Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means* (London: Gollancz, 1945), 12.

– namely, the tendency of people in the midst of despair to ‘vote for anyone who will promise them bread, hope and a job’.¹¹⁵

Gollancz’s condemnation of the Treaty of Versailles was, of course, nothing new. The 1919 treaty had inspired a great deal of opposition: that year John Maynard Keynes famously denounced it as a ‘Carthaginian peace’.¹¹⁶ But not everyone agreed, with Vansittart and his supporters bitterly opposing such public denunciations of Versailles. These were, they argued, propagandist fabrications disseminated by Nazis and German exiles in order to justify their own actions.¹¹⁷ Versailles was, Vansittart explained to an audience at Chatham House, not an ‘onerous Treaty’ but rather an ‘inadequate’ one which had not been ‘properly enforced’.¹¹⁸

Yet *Shall Our Children Live or Die?* also looked beyond the short-term origins of the Hitler’s rise to power, with its socio-economic analysis contesting the notion of Germany’s supposed cultural or psychological peculiarity.¹¹⁹ Gollancz characterised the emergence of the Third Reich as a deadly alliance between traditional bases of power and monopoly capitalism, resulting from long-term trends in German history.¹²⁰ The nation’s past was ‘one of progressive coalescence, into a

¹¹⁵ Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, 12.

¹¹⁶ John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Brace and Howe, 1920). By the 1940s, Versailles had many critics, see Brown, *Commonsense*, 10; Heinrich Fraenkel and Richard Acland, *The Winning of the Peace* (London: Gollancz, 1942), 73.

¹¹⁷ Später, *Vansittart*, 201-3.

¹¹⁸ Vansittart, ‘The Problem of Germany’, 323. These arguments which echoed the debates over appeasement in the 1930s, with Vansittart placing blame squarely upon the shoulders of the ‘guilty men’ of Britain and beyond, see Ronald Buchanan McCallum, *Public Opinion and the Last Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), 190; ‘The German Problem’, editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1942.

¹¹⁹ These ideas foreshadowed the Sonderweg thesis of Germany history that would emerge in the 1960s, see Jürgen Kocka, ‘German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 3–16; Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939: Before War and Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹²⁰ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 21.

single instrument of absolutist State power, of the militarists, the Junkers (the big landowners) and, finally, the industrialists'.¹²¹ Germany had 'missed' its democratic revolution in 1848 due to the 'failure' of its middle class, meaning the nation unified under the auspices of an alliance between state and military power, entrenched elites, and capitalists.¹²² The result was a unique identification of military power with the desire to find world markets, culminating in the Third Reich: Hitlerite Germany was an attempt to turn Europe, and then the whole world, into an exploited 'semi-colony'.¹²³ It was, Gollancz insisted, 'vulgar to blame the German people – the toy-maker of Nuernberg or the steel-worker of the Ruhr – for something the roots of which lie deep in history'.¹²⁴ Rather, Nazism was a tyrannical and extreme iteration of modern capitalism, its crimes the shared responsibility of the system's representatives throughout the world:

Every one of us [...] is 'guilty': every Englishman, every German, every Frenchman, every Pole: or, if you prefer, no one of us is guilty. Capitalists in general are in one sense 'guiltier' than the masses of ordinary people, for it is they who have had the power to cause, often without the smallest desire to do so, such appalling evil.¹²⁵

A final strand of Gollancz's thesis was to highlight the intricate network of concentration camps and secret police informants purported to be terrorising the German people into submission. It was common for him, as well as other liberal and left-wing commentators, to denounce the Nazi leadership as a clique of 'gangsters' who had emerged in a putsch against 'the will of the majority' and maintained their power through a combination of terror and intimidation.¹²⁶ This analysis fed into another of Gollancz's wartime campaigns, namely his work, alongside Eleanor

¹²¹ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 30.

¹²² Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 30-32.

¹²³ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 17.

¹²⁴ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 32.

¹²⁵ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 74.

¹²⁶ A. B. Rev., 'Vansittartism', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1943; Hoenicke Moore, *Know your Enemy*, 88-9.

Rathbone and other campaigners, demanding official action to counteract the Nazi persecution of Europe's Jews.¹²⁷ Gollancz, himself from a Jewish background, had published books in the 1930s that documented the rising tide of anti-Semitism, including *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*.¹²⁸ In the course of the war, he displayed exceptional foresight regarding the genocidal capacity of the Nazi regime, even warning in his 1943 pamphlet *Let My People Go* that a Nazi programme to exterminate the Jews risked 6,000,000 deaths.¹²⁹

In *Shall Our Children live or Die?*, Gollancz articulated a more intellectual, socialist, and humanitarian interpretation of the 'German Problem', rejecting the Germanophobic rhetoric of *Black Record* and admonishing capitalism and imperialism. It established Gollancz as the *de facto* head of an anti-Vansittart movement that would find support primarily amongst liberals, socialists, and church leaders. His work was particularly warmly received by the *Manchester Guardian*, who applauded its moral stance and focus on the inherent violence of the capitalist system.¹³⁰ Yet *Shall Our Children live or Die?*'s appeal was not entirely an elite one, playing into a broader 'anti-Vansittartist' sentiment. It found favour amongst anyone who rejected the bombastic rhetoric of Vansittart and his followers, eventually selling over 50,000 copies – an impressive figure, even if only one tenth of *Black Record*'s sales.

The influence of Gollancz's historical materialist analysis was amplified through its revision and reiteration by a number of sympathetic commentators. In

¹²⁷ Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 328–58.

¹²⁸ World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag* (London: Gollancz, 1933).

¹²⁹ Victor Gollancz, *'Let My People Go': Some Practical Proposals for Dealing with Hitler's Massacre of the Jews, and an Appeal to the British Public*, 4th ed. (London: Gollancz, 1943).

¹³⁰ George Glasgow, 'Books of the Day – Germany and the Revolution', review of *Shall Our Children Live or Die?* by Victor Gollancz, *Manchester Guardian*, 22 February 1942.

Commonsense versus Vansittartism, Douglas Brown, writing under the banner of the Labour Party, argued that Nazism was the inevitable result of Western imperialism and the wrongs of the capitalist system – in other words, a particularly fierce variant of class struggle.¹³¹ Likewise, E. H. Carr, an arch-appeaser before the war, condemned the thesis of inherent German wickedness as an unreasoned ‘emotional reaction’, advocated by defunct scholars of history.¹³² Germany’s democratic growth had, he argued, been unnaturally stunted by the belatedness of the country’s unification, allowing for Prussian militarism to prosper unchecked, rather than any ‘ineradicable national characteristics’.¹³³ H. N. Brailsford, in his popular Penguin paperback *Our Settlement With Germany*, argued that the development of Germany’s bourgeoisie had been atypical: there had been no successful middle-class revolution in Germany, as in Holland, England, and France, allowing power to fall to the Junker class under the guidance of Bismarck.¹³⁴ These interpretations derived from the SPD’s view of German history, articulated by German exiles, and, ultimately, from Marx and Engels.

These relatively radical left-wing ideas came under attack and, predictably, Vansittart was foremost amongst those taking aim at Gollancz and his supporters. They were, he suggested, seeking to misrepresent the current conflict as an international class war, in which the Germans were no more to blame than anyone else – “‘let us stop killing Germans and start killing each other,’ is the rough idea’.¹³⁵ Likewise, Thomas H. Minshall concluded with some disdain in his 1943 book *Future Germany* that the *intelligentsia* who made up the ‘cooperative school’ were reciting the Nazi excuse for the war as a clash between capital and labour.¹³⁶ Their plans for

¹³¹ Brown, *Commonsense*, 7.

¹³² Edward Hallett Carr, *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942), 211.

¹³³ Carr, *Conditions*, 213.

¹³⁴ Brailsford, *Our Settlement*, 20. These arguments again anticipated certain interpretations of the Sonderweg thesis.

¹³⁵ Robert Vansittart, ‘A Guilty Nation – Charges Against the Germans’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 August 1944.

¹³⁶ Minshall, *Future Germany*, 15-6.

the abolition of capitalism were merely a 'rearrangement of the furniture of Europe', ignoring the need for stringent controls on German ambitions, which risked the future peace. In countering Vansittart's anti-German rhetoric, Gollancz had inaugurated a heated debate over the 'German Problem' that would outlast the war itself.

Other Germany

Gollancz's most dependable ally was George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, whose commitment to propagating a more liberal interpretation of the German past was unrelenting. The Church of England was divided on the matter of Germany and, as we have seen, Archbishop Temple was enthused by Vansittart's *Black Record*. Yet a substantial faction of leading Anglicans advocated of a more forgiving, humanitarian assessment of the German people.¹³⁷ Alfred Blunt, Bishop of Bradford, had publicly repudiated Vansittart's work, but it was George Bell who stood out in his steadfast attempts to distinguish between German and Nazi pasts.¹³⁸ Germany was, he argued, the first country in Europe to be occupied by the Nazis, its people innocent victims. It was a position he repeatedly outlined in the House of Lords, where he faced off against Vansittart himself:

I dare not acquit the Germans as a whole of some guilt for accepting the Nazi regime, but the chief blame in Germany for letting the Nazis seize control lies with certain powerful anti-democratic forces, partly in military and partly in industrial circles, who betrayed their own country for their selfish ends.¹³⁹

In the speech, Bell emphasised the 'paralysing effect' of Nazi oppression, cruelty, and murder, identifying a 'multitude of assassins and spies' as the root of Hitler's power,

¹³⁷ Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 172.

¹³⁸ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 97; Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 117.

¹³⁹ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 126 (1943), 10 March 1943, Col. 535-82; Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 172. William Barkley, 'Bishop and Peer Duel About 'Good' Germans, *Daily Express*, 11 March 1943.

rather than any popular backing. This interpretation of the Nazis as an aberrant and alien imposition on the history of Germany, was a foundation for Bell's public opposition to the ongoing Allied bombing campaign. In April 1941, he wrote to the *Times*, decrying attacks on innocent women and children in Germany as barbarian.¹⁴⁰ It was a position he would revisit throughout the course of the war.

George Bell, along with Gollancz, became convinced that definitive evidence of an 'Other Germany', representing respectable liberal democratic values and in active opposition to Nazism, would invalidate the arguments put forth by Vansittart and his supporters.¹⁴¹ Germany's achievements in the fields of science and the arts were lauded as proof that the Third Reich was a repudiation of the country's rich and accomplished past. The names of great musicians and writers were oft-repeated as examples of Germany's inherent humanity, offering a more sanguine interpretation of the nation's history. 'I need hardly tell you', an exasperated Vansittart retorted, 'that Bach and Beethoven will be irrelevantly lugged into the argument'.¹⁴² Likewise, electoral data from before 1933 was utilised as evidence that there had been a many millions of anti-Nazi Germans when Hitler rose to power.¹⁴³ But most importantly, Bell proclaimed the existence of a deep-rooted opposition to Nazism residing within Germany, linked to the German churches, the socialist movement, and the German army.¹⁴⁴ This underground resistance offered a symbol of hope for the future: a popular uprising could resolve the 'German Problem' once-and-for-all.

¹⁴⁰ George Bell, 'The Pope's Appeal', letter to the editor, *Times*, 17 April 1941; Tom Lawson, 'The Church of England and the German Past, Present and Future 1944-5: a case study in the international search for a 'usable past'', in *The Lasting War: Society and Identity in Britain, France and Germany after 1945*, eds. Monica Riera and Gavin Schaffer (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 195.

¹⁴¹ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 98.

¹⁴² Vansittart, *Black Record*, viii.

¹⁴³ Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Lawson, 'The Church of England', 193.

Bell and Gollancz urged for official cooperation with Germany's anti-Nazi resistance movement, suggesting that the Allied governments should encourage a German revolution. Bell's long-term commitment to ecumenical ideals had led to a close association with the renowned anti-Nazi pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, now resident in Germany after his time in London prior to the war. In the summer of June 1942, Bell met with Bonhoeffer in neutral Sweden, acquiring precise information about a planned assassination attempt on Hitler.¹⁴⁵ He passed this on to the Anthony Eden, with the intention of ascertaining if the Allied governments would be willing to negotiate with a new German leadership and, if so, whether they would make a public declaration of this disposition. Despite Bell's best efforts at political backchanneling, the powers-that-be, now increasingly anti-German in their outlook and firmly committed to a policy of unconditional surrender, were unmoved.¹⁴⁶

Unflinching in the face of official hostility, Bell would continue to seek public recognition of a distinction between Nazis and Germans. In March 1943, speaking in the House of Lords, he demanded recognition of the 'distinction between the Hitlerite State and the German people':

We must make the distinction plain and so hasten victory. We must make it plain in the interests of our cause, and of truth. I do not hesitate to say that those who fail to distinguish between Nazis and other Germans in England or elsewhere, who say that there is no difference, are playing into Hitler's hands.¹⁴⁷

His arguments did find favour amongst certain elements of a Labour Party rife with division, including Aneurin Bevan.¹⁴⁸ In July 1943, Bevan described Vansittart in the *Picture Post* as an 'sincere and unselfish victim of his own delusions' whose 'habit of

¹⁴⁵ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 98-9; see Edwin Hanton Robertson, *Unshakeable Friend* (London: CCBI, 1995).

¹⁴⁶ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 102.

¹⁴⁷ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 126 (1943), 10 March 1943, Col. 535-82.

¹⁴⁸ Burridge, 'Great Britain', 575.

making loose generalisations about whole peoples' was 'usually evidence of illiteracy'.¹⁴⁹

That said, many of the leading figures within the Labour movement, including Clement Attlee, Hugh Dalton, and members of the TUC executive, were increasingly contemptuous towards Germany.¹⁵⁰ In fact, Bell's crusade was an increasingly uphill struggle, representing a provocative fringe movement at a moment when anti-German sentiments were crystallising themselves in the political and public mainstream.¹⁵¹ In the House of Lords, the notion of a German resistance was mercilessly mocked by Vansittart:

I have spent a time looking for them with a microscope, from the practical point of view, and I have invariably found a full stop [...]. The Germans have fought us like one man and seventy million tigers [...]. There is really no such place as Hitlerite Germany.¹⁵²

In the coming months and years, with the hope of a successful coup against the Nazi regime yet to materialise, the perceived validity of an 'Other Germany' faded even further. Those who had pinned their colours to the mast of an impending revolt against Hitler were forced to explain why the underground movement had been so ineffectual.

In July 1944, when news of an attempted assassination of Hitler did emerge, Bell dwelt upon his personal shortcomings and regarded the plot's failure as a tragic vindication of his inability to gain official support for the potent anti-Nazi forces working underground in Germany.¹⁵³ Yet to Vansittart, who by 1944 had taken to writing a regular column in the *Daily Mail*, the bomb plot was interpreted as a ploy

¹⁴⁹ Aneurin Bevan, 'Should We Blame the Whole German People', *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943.

¹⁵⁰ Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism"', 302, 308; Grantham, 'Hugh Dalton'.

¹⁵¹ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 107; Später, *Vansittart*, 203-13.

¹⁵² Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 126 (1943), 10 March 1943, Col. 535-82.

¹⁵³ Chandler, 'The Patronage', 106.

by the German High Command to save themselves from the consequences of defeat.¹⁵⁴ This was reiterated a fortnight later, when Vansittart suggested that there was little point in trying to distinguish between Germans, even if they were fighting one another:

Let us have no illusions about any of the war-makers, even when they squabble and sting each other. That is not virtue, but venom.¹⁵⁵

This sceptical assessment of the bomb plot had advocates at the heart of the British government, including Clement Attlee who remarked upon hearing the news that 'it was an illusion to imagine there was a normal Germany to which one could return'.¹⁵⁶ The campaign to engage widespread recognition of an 'Other Germany' had, it seemed, conclusively failed.

The Rise of Brutality

The clash of ideas between the Vansittart and Gollancz touched upon some of the most significant questions of contemporary political philosophy, human psychology, and historical analysis: how could a country's past, or for that matter its people's character, be rationalised and understood? The wide array of answers which had emerged, stretching across the political spectrum, demonstrated the inherent complexities of the issue and its capacity to extend beyond straightforward ideological lines. Nevertheless, a clear gulf had emerged – and a complex political discussion was gradually abbreviated into a dichotomised culture war. This was, at its core, a clash between two radically different political philosophies: Gollancz, Bell, and their associates were actively engaged with left-wing and liberal politics, ecumenical ideas, socialist internationalism, and notions of 'Europeanness', while

¹⁵⁴ Robert Vansittart, 'They'll Cheat Us Yet, Those Generals!', *Daily Mail*, 22 July 1944.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Vansittart, 'The Curtain-Raiser Has Flopped', *Daily Mail*, 8 August 1944.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 13.

Vansittart and his supporters seemed distinctly nationalistic and isolationist. Likewise, their means of interrogating the 'German Problem' were wholly opposed: was this a socio-economic phenomenon or a cultural one? In time, as vitriol and mutual contempt took centre stage, the respective positions of opposing sides became increasingly mythologised and misconstrued. Britain's *Feindbild* of Nazi Germany was not a source of unity or accord, but rather the root of a deep and increasingly antagonistic division across British society, with long-lasting repercussions.¹⁵⁷

Black Record had ushered in a bellicose tone, its polemical style inspiring supporters and opponents with an equal ferocity. In December 1941, the *Economist* lamented 'the rise of brutality' which had begun to accompany discussions of the postwar peace – it was a trend set to continue for years to come.¹⁵⁸ Vansittart's rhetorical axe fell fiercely upon those who challenged him or his ideas. In the various editions of *Black Record*, the forewords of newer publications, and in the letter pages of the national and regional press, he countered perceived slights with a characteristically unforgiving swagger. His predominantly left-wing and liberal opponents were labelled, amongst other things, as the 'Suckers' Chorus', 'illusionists', 'Innocents at Home', 'Wishful Thinkers', 'intellectual dove-cotes', 'confident amateurs', and the 'invincibly ignorant'.¹⁵⁹ Vansittart felt his opponents

¹⁵⁷ This distinction relates to Kenneth Morgan's distinction between the received images of the Second World War in Britain and their social reality, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

¹⁵⁸ Aneurin Bevan, 'Should We Blame the Whole German People', *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943; 'The Rise of Brutality', *The Economist*, 27 December 1941.

¹⁵⁹ Vansittart, *Black Record*, v, viii; Vansittart, *The Roots of the Trouble*, 9; Robert Vansittart, 'Vansittartism', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 August 1943; Robert Vansittart, 'Should We Blame the Whole German People', *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943; William Hickey [Tom Driberg], 'Hammer of Huns', *Daily Express*, 20 January 1941; Robert Vansittart, 'Vansittartism', letter to the editor, *The Economist*, 17 January 1942; Robert Vansittart, 'The Rise of Brutality', letter to the editor, *The Economist*, 31 January 1942; Robert Vansittart, 'The German People', letter to the editor, *The Scotsman*, 11 June 1942.

were advocating another form of appeasement and it was his task, once more, to stand firm.¹⁶⁰ 'This country has been, and still is, full of this rubbish', he exclaimed, condemning the 'Germanophiles at Westminster' who had 'believed blindly in Germany' before the First World War.¹⁶¹ Gollancz and his supporters were regarded as proof of 'the depth to which German propaganda has penetrated this country, paralysing its instinct of self-preservation during the last three generations'.¹⁶² Vansittart's excoriating remarks were matched by some of his allies, as exemplified by the remarks of Conservative MP Beverley Baxter, who proclaimed that he 'would not mind if the people who urged us not to hate the Germans were dropped into Germany from a Lancaster'.¹⁶³

But vitriolic rhetoric went both ways in the debate over the 'German Problem' and there was scarcely a newspaper in the entire country that didn't, at some point, play host to a feud over conflicting ideas about Germany and the Third Reich. Vansittart's opponents most often characterised him as a callous and vindictive character, pursuing a personal vendetta against the German people. Vansittart openly acknowledged his troubled experiences as a youth in Germany, noting that as a 'sensitive Englishman' he had 'Hymns of Hate daily dinned into his ears'.¹⁶⁴ The journalist and Labour MP Tom Driberg was amongst those who used this to question the integrity of Vansittart's thesis, describing him as 'an excellent and sad example of the intelligent, cultured man who has just one kink – in his case due, apparently, to the fact that he was ill-treated as a boy at school in Germany'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Also see, Paul Einzig, *Can We Win the Peace?* (London: Macmillan, 1942), 8–9.

¹⁶¹ Vansittart, *Black Record*, v-vi.

¹⁶² Vansittart, *Black Record*, viii.

¹⁶³ "'Let a Lancaster Drop the Non-Haters'", *Daily Express*, 24 September 1941.

¹⁶⁴ Vansittart, *Black Record*, 36.

¹⁶⁵ Tom Driberg, 'Appeasers Now Vansittartites', letter to the editor, *Picture Post*, 31 July 1943; 'Drink, Duels and Cheating', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1940; William Hickey [Tom Driberg], 'Hammer of Huns', *Daily Express*, 20 January 1941.

By far the most common criticism aimed at Vansittart was that his ideas about the German people were racist. To quote Driberg again, *Black Record* was 'uncharitable, unhistorical, ungentlemanly' and echoed 'the Nazi habit of racial generalisation' – while his advocates were, 'the simple-minded folk who regard all Germans as "Huns" fit only to be bombed indiscriminately'.¹⁶⁶ In *Picture Post*, Aneurin Bevan described Vansittart's thesis as the 'blood stream theory of history'.¹⁶⁷ Likewise, the Bishop of Bradford condemned his 'idea of racial qualities and racial defects' as 'untrue to history', 'pernicious to human morality', and an exact parallel of Nazi racial thought.¹⁶⁸ Vansittart was quick to respond, writing a letter condemning the Bishop's accusation as 'another stale falsification': 'I do not deal in biology. The central fact speaks for itself: other nations have progressed, whereas the German nation has regressed through *miseducation*'.¹⁶⁹ This was something he felt pressed to repeatedly clarify, on another occasion writing to the *Yorkshire Post* to implore that he did 'not deal in racialism' and that there was 'no such thing as a pure race'.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, in his 1945 book *Bones of Contention*, Vansittart claimed he had been unfairly labelled as 'Britain's leading racist' for 'denouncing the Germans instead of the Nazis' and 'refusing entirely to forget our 800,000 dead of the *last* German war'.¹⁷¹ As Jörg Später and Michael Roi have both argued, while Vansittart's rhetoric was aggressive and belligerent, he had every right to feel somewhat aggrieved at these particular accusations.¹⁷² He maintained that the distinct qualities

¹⁶⁶ William Hickey [Tom Driberg], 'Pickled Eggs', *Daily Express* 09 April 1941.

¹⁶⁷ Aneurin Bevan, 'Should We Blame the Whole German People', *Picture Post*, 17 July 1943.

¹⁶⁸ Alfred Blunt, 'Bishop of Bradford...', letter to the editor, *Picture Post*, 31 July 1943.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Vansittart, 'Readers' Letters – Lord Vansittart Replies to his Critics', letter to the editor, *Picture Post*, 21 August 1943.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Vansittart, 'Lord Vansittart on his Peace Plan', letter to the editor, *Yorkshire Post*, 20 February 1942.

¹⁷¹ Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, 124.

¹⁷² Später, *Vansittart*, 146-50; Rose, *Vansittart*, 258; Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement: Sir Robert Vansittart and Alliance Diplomacy, 1934-1937* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 1.

of the German character were cultural in origin – in short, the result of education rather than genetics.

There was, in sum, a harsh intensity to the debate over Germany that regularly descended into an acrimonious and malicious slanging match. The ultimate outcome of this unguarded rancour was the obfuscation of an incredibly complex and nuanced dialogue regarding the history of Germany. It would give rise to pervasive misapprehensions which further polarised opinion, not least the ‘Vansittartist’ tag that obscured the precise ideas put forth by Lord Vansittart under a more vague anti-German umbrella. In August 1943, *Picture Post*’s vast array of correspondence on the topic of ‘should we blame the entire German people?’ included a telling juxtaposition: one letter entitled ‘a country of beasts’ was placed with some cynicism next to another, ‘not a country of beasts’.¹⁷³ A few weeks later, the paper, now overwhelmed by messages, asked readers to refrain from any further response, the sum total of letters received being 51% in favour of Lord Vansittart, 49% in opposition.¹⁷⁴ Quite clearly, anti-Germanism stood as a very divisive force in British political discourse.

‘Disease and Treatment’

Britain’s wartime discussions regarding Germany had utilised history as a means of interrogating the foundations and defining characteristics of Nazism. At the heart of this scrutiny lay an implicit (and at times explicit) aspiration, namely the treatment and categorical resolution of the ‘German Problem’. In the pursuit of this goal, there was growing expectation that the future peace settlement would have to

¹⁷³ William E. Cox, ‘Surrey reader: “a country of beasts”’, letter to the editor, *Picture Post*, 21 July 1943; Bernard Armstrong, ‘Welsh Reader: “not a country of beasts”’, letter to the editor, *Picture Post*, 21 July 1943.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Future Germany – Selection of Readers’ Views’, *Picture Post*, 7 August 1943.

rearrange the economic, social, or cultural characteristics of Germany, Europe, or perhaps even the entire world. Yet the precise programme of reform to be enacted at the end of the war was far from clear. In the final years of the war, British and Allied policymakers, working within the climate of opinion fashioned by Vansittart, Gollancz et al, were tasked with drawing up a precise vision of how Britain was going to 'win the peace'. Their efforts, which intersected not only with domestic pressures but also the unfolding events of the war and the geopolitical machinations of the 'Grand Alliance', would help to construct the contours of the postwar world.

For much of the war, it had remained acutely difficult to foresee the end of the conflict or the kind of government, if any, that would be left in Germany to sign an armistice.¹⁷⁵ In December 1941, a British government memorandum on the future of postwar Europe reminded ministers to be 'guarded in public statements and not give undertakings which may be impossible to fulfil or lead to charges of bad faith'.¹⁷⁶ It was a warning steadfastly observed for much of the war: while the governments of the 'Big Three' periodically broached the question of 'what to do with Germany', definitive answers were seldom forthcoming.

In Britain, there were no formal discussions of postwar questions in the War Cabinet until 1942 and even the Foreign Office had remained largely aloof on such issues.¹⁷⁷ In 1943, the establishment of the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee and a Ministerial Committee on Armistice Terms (with Clement Attlee as its chairman) signalled an acceleration of Britain's official planning for the peace.¹⁷⁸ This was, in part, a response to Roosevelt's formation of an Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy. In the coming months, British ministers discussed a number of official reports on various aspects of the forthcoming peace, but remained

¹⁷⁵ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 11.

¹⁷⁶ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 18.

¹⁷⁷ Baylis, 'British Wartime Thinking', 266.

¹⁷⁸ Baylis, 'British Wartime Thinking', 268.

reluctant to make firm decisions with conditions at the end of the war still hard to predict.¹⁷⁹ In December 1943, the so-called 'Attlee plan', which proposed a three-zone military occupation of Germany, with the British in the north west, was approved by the British Chiefs of Staff.¹⁸⁰ There was also general agreement amongst Britain's military and civilian planners for total disarmament of defeated Germany.¹⁸¹ But outstanding questions remained, including the length and administrative machinery of the Allied occupation, the means of enforcing disarmament, the mechanics of Germany's surrender, and the value and/or practicality of territorial alterations, dismemberment, or decentralization.

D. C. Watt has outlined the main schools of thought underpinning Britain's official position on the 'German Problem'.¹⁸² The Churchillians, convinced that the roots of the issue lay in Prussia, faced off against Attleeian socialists, who called for expansive social and economic reform to break the alliance of Junkers and industrialists. Churchill also remained keen on some form of European integration, although the specific form this might take remained far from clear.¹⁸³ Their disagreements rejuvenated some of the diverging interpretations of Britain's war aims: broadly, whether was this conflict should usher in progressive change or a reinstatement of the status quo. There were also incongruities between the Foreign Office, who remained anxious to maintain the wartime 'Big Three' coalition, and the Chiefs of Staff, who from 1944 onwards came to believe that Soviet Russia would present the biggest threat to Europe's postwar balance of power.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, British policy regarding Germany was increasingly inseparable from diplomatic relations

¹⁷⁹ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 35-6.

¹⁸⁰ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 12; Burridge, 'Great Britain', 576.

¹⁸¹ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 37-41.

¹⁸² Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 34.

¹⁸³ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 146.

with the Soviet Union and the United States, with official planning a truly inter-Allied affair.¹⁸⁵

The Atlantic Charter, unveiled in August 1941, had unveiled the first coherent inter-Allied vision of the postwar world – albeit without Soviet involvement. Yet the prevailing uncertainty over the eventual outcome of the conflict, as well as ambiguity over war aims, meant this Anglo-American proclamation was more of a statement of principles than a political programme. The peace would see no territorial gains for the victors; territorial adjustments would be made according to ‘the wishes of the people concerned’; there would be a right to self-determination, lower trade barriers, global economic cooperation and the advancement of social welfare, disarmament; and work towards freedom of the seas and a world free of want and fear. In January 1942, the Declaration by United Nations, a pledge amongst all Allied nations to uphold the Atlantic Charter, was notable for proscribing separate peace deals with Nazi Germany. This was a precursor to the policy of unconditional surrender, formally announced at the Casablanca Conference of 1943 at the bequest of President Roosevelt.¹⁸⁶ The decision to pursue the complete defeat of the Third Reich’s armed forces would have significant implications for Allied policy towards Germany. There was no longer any question of publicly encouraging the overthrow of the Nazi regime and it seemed as if the governance of Germany would, at least for an interim period, fall to the victorious armies of the ‘Big Three’.

But it was not until the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in autumn 1943 that inter-Allied deliberations on the future shape of Germany began in earnest.¹⁸⁷ Here, the British and American delegations pushed for the ‘minimum

¹⁸⁵ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 45; Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 39; David Reynolds, ‘The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance’, in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, vol. 2, *Politics and Ideology*, eds. Richard J.B. Bosworth and Joseph Maiolo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 301-23.

¹⁸⁶ Balfour, ‘Another Look’.

¹⁸⁷ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 6-7.

necessary' safeguards to be enforced, namely comprehensive disarmament, as to allow a reformed Germany to take a full place in Europe's recovery.¹⁸⁸ A few months later, at the Teheran Conference there remained a striking level of disagreement amongst the Allied leaders, whose fluctuating and, at times, contradictory policies for postwar Germany caused a great deal of tension. It was at Teheran that Stalin infamously 'joked' about the possible execution of 50,000 to 100,000 German officers, inspiring Roosevelt to retort facetiously that 'maybe 49,000 would be enough' while Churchill, exasperated, left the room.¹⁸⁹ The British, uncertain over the long-term commitment of the USA to Europe and divided over the potential threat posed by the Soviet Union, were unwilling to publicly commit to a precise programme. In fact, inter-Allied hesitations and disputes meant that, apart from the agreement to act in concert on postwar planning, no official Allied policy on the treatment of postwar Germany was publicly announced before 1945.¹⁹⁰

The 1943 Moscow conference had, however, approved the establishment of the European Advisory Commission, an inter-Allied body intended to formalise plans for postwar Germany which was established in London the following January. It made several significant decisions, including the ratification of the 'Attlee plan', with the London Protocol of 1944 confirming a three-power zonal occupation and the partition of Berlin, and the creation of an Allied Control Council, an inter-zonal organisation that would govern Germany as a single economic unit. Yet while substantial progress was made by the EAC, its decisions, closely tied to military planning, remained top secret.

From 1943 onwards, as victory became increasingly assured, the British press and public grew impatient with the apparent lack of progress regarding plans for the

¹⁸⁸ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 9-10.

¹⁸⁹ Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran* (New York: Morrow, 1985), 314.

¹⁹⁰ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 6.

postwar peace.¹⁹¹ As a result, the final two years of the war saw the public debate over Germany's past had been transformed into a discussion of the country's future. The various diagnoses of the 'German Problem' were transmuted into more precise blueprints for its treatment.¹⁹² These proposals were often imbued with a sense of profound significance, as the fanatical American polemicist Louis Nizer explained in particularly pompous fashion:

A few days stand [...] mountain-high in the story of emancipation [...]. Such a day is upon us now. All mankind will have cause for many centuries to look upon us and judge whether we missed or met its historic challenge. We must not fail.¹⁹³

A Desire to Revolutionise

Victor Gollancz, along with many of his allies, had already established a solution to the 'German Problem': revolution. Nazism, they believed, had emerged from its socio-economic context and it was this, above all else, which needed to change. In *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, Gollancz contended that the end of Nazism must be accomplished from within, in the form of a democratic socialist revolution.¹⁹⁴ It was 'Other Germany', especially Germany's oppressed workers and left-wing political organisations, that would lead the way for such revolutionary change. Yet there was, as Gollancz outlined in a four-point programme for solving the 'German Problem', little use in focusing too closely on Germany itself. The problem was monopoly capitalism, which ought to be abolished in favour of collective planning and international socialism in the interests of 'common people everywhere'.¹⁹⁵ It was a partisan and radical proposition and one which was never

¹⁹¹ 'No Policy for Germany', *The Economist*, 29 July 1944.

¹⁹² Hoenicke Moore, *Know your Enemy*, 50.

¹⁹³ Nizer, *What To Do*, 163.

¹⁹⁴ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 33.

¹⁹⁵ Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live or Die?*, 23.

likely to attract popular acclaim, not least amongst the conservative organs of the British press.

Gollancz's vision of a revolutionary uprising was reiterated by a variety of left-wing commentators. E. H. Carr's *Conditions of the Peace* suggested that 'the political, social and economic problems of the post-war world must be approached with the desire not to stabilise, but to revolutionise', proclaiming 'a revolutionary current' to be 'in the air'.¹⁹⁶ Konni Zilliacus, a left-wing Labour Party MP openly sympathetic to the Soviet Union, argued under the pseudonym Diplomaticus that socialism was the only way forward for the reconstruction of Germany and Europe.¹⁹⁷ Douglas Brown, a more moderate figure in Labour ranks, agreed that socialism offered 'the only real solution' at a time when the future of Europe and the world was in the balance.¹⁹⁸ Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, called for international solidarity between the victorious Allies.¹⁹⁹ G. D. H. Cole, a committed libertarian socialist, suggested that Germany's failure to have a 'liberal revolution' proved the German people were not suited to democratic parliamentarianism or even liberal Socialism.²⁰⁰ Yet the exact nature of the 'coming German Revolution' was, he insisted, much less important than its realisation:

The vital thing is to make sure of a successful revolution in Germany – successful Socialist Revolution [...]. It matters much less what form that revolution takes whether 'liberal' or totalitarian.²⁰¹

In addition, numerous left-wing German exiles put forth their own plans for building a socialist Germany, most notably Mary Saran, Willi Eichler, Wilhelm Heidorn, and Minna Specht, whose *Re-making Germany* included a preface from

¹⁹⁶ Carr, *Conditions*, xxi, xxiii.

¹⁹⁷ Diplomaticus [Konni Zilliacus], *Can the Tories Win the Peace? And How They Lost the Last One*, (London: Gollancz, 1945).

¹⁹⁸ Brown, *Commonsense*, 19, 22.

¹⁹⁹ Harry Pollitt, *How to Win the Peace* (London: The Communist Party, 1944).

²⁰⁰ G. D. H. Cole, *Europe, Russia, and the Future* (London: Gollancz, 1941), 148, 152, 154.

²⁰¹ Cole, *Europe, Russia and the Future*, 155.

Labour MP Jim Griffiths.²⁰² Heinrich Fraenkel and Richard Acland wrote in *The Winning of the Peace* of the need for a 'New Order' in Germany, radically altering the country's economic system which was 'the roots of the whole trouble'.²⁰³

These revolutionary proclamations were by no means outlandish: for many, the second major conflict in as many decades called for a more comprehensive approach to the peace. As a result, the prospect of radically transforming the political, economic, or social structures of Europe or perhaps even the entire world had consistently figured in discussions of the war's end. Long-standing suggestions for a federated Europe, such as Count Kalergi's *Europe Must Unite*, or world governance, such as Clarence Streit's *Union Now*, re-emerged as potential solutions to end decades of conflict.²⁰⁴ In 1940, H. G. Wells outlined his renewed plea for world governance in *The New World Order*, while a few years later C. J. Hambro advocated a new and improved version of the League of Nations.²⁰⁵ Henry Brailsford anticipated a form of world governance, backed by a multinational military force.²⁰⁶ In *How to Deal with Germany – A Plan for European Peace*, Sir Walter Layton argued that a European political union would ensure a 'drastic', 'lasting', 'realistic', 'worldwide' and 'constructive' peace.²⁰⁷ For George Bell and a substantial proportion of the Anglican community, the future lay in the ecumenical movement.²⁰⁸ They hoped that a united

²⁰² M. Saran, W. Eichler, W. Heidorn, and M. Specht, eds., *Re-making Germany* (London, International Publishing Company, 1945).

²⁰³ Fraenkel and Acland, *The Winning of the Peace*, 16.

²⁰⁴ Richard Nicolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe Must Unite*, trans. Sir Andrew McFadyean. (Glarus, Switzerland: Paneuropa Editions, 1940); Clarence K. Streit, *Union Now* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1939); Minshall, *Future Germany*, 175.

²⁰⁵ H. G. Wells, *The New World Order. Whether It Is Attainable, How It Can Be Attained and What Sort of World a World at Peace Will Have to Be* (London: A. A. Knopf, 1940); Carl Joachim Hambro, *How to Win the Peace* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943).

²⁰⁶ Brailsford, *Our Settlement*, 10-11, 135, 140.

²⁰⁷ Walter Layton, *How to Deal with Germany: A Plan for European Peace* (London, News Chronicle Publication Dept., 1944), 2, 3, 6.

²⁰⁸ Robertson, *Unshakeable Friend*.

Christian Church would take the lead in Europe's reconstruction, both physically and morally, in the aftermath of war.

Yet while these proposals for European integration or a renewed body for resolving international disputes remained a distinct possibility, the hopes of Gollancz and others for a German revolution seemed increasingly forlorn. There was little sign that an uprising of German workers was imminent. Moreover, as we have seen, British and Allied policymakers had by 1943 discarded any possibility of embracing the overtures of an alternative German government. Those who placed their faith in the 'Other Germany' were forced to face the prospect that no such revolutionary change would come to pass, at least not until the war's conclusion. In lieu of revolution, several commentators attempted to outline a vision of the postwar peace that was reconciliatory, rather than vengeful. E. H. Carr had recognised as early as 1942 that a postwar military occupation was likely, arguing that it must be one of cooperation rather than repression and the 'starting-point for German cooperation in creating a framework of European order'.²⁰⁹ There were also insinuations that representatives of 'Other Germany' should be handed power at the cessation of the fighting, with Fraenkel and Acland adamant that any peace settlement should allow the Germans to work out 'their own salvation'.²¹⁰

Victor Gollancz, increasingly consumed with both his professional responsibilities and the campaign to raise awareness of the Nazi persecution of Europe's Jews, gradually withdrew from the debate over Germany. In June 1943, overworked and burdened with guilt, he suffered what his biographer describes as a 'very serious nervous breakdown'.²¹¹ Gollancz would recover in a few months, but for the remainder of the war he devoted himself almost exclusively to a new cause:

²⁰⁹ Carr, *Conditions*, 228.

²¹⁰ Fraenkel and Acland, *The Winning of the Peace*, 9.

²¹¹ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: A Biography* (London: Gollancz, 1987), 377.

Zionism.²¹² Without its principal figurehead, the anti-Vansittart campaign ground to a halt. In the final two years of the war, there were few, if any, noteworthy attempts to revise his increasingly improbable proposals for a revolutionary resolution to the 'German Problem'.

The Most Drastic Cure in History

In contrast, 1943 saw Lord Vansittart outline his own vision of the postwar world, suggesting that Germany's treatment had to be 'the most drastic cure in history' or else 'the world will die of the German disease'.²¹³ Vansittart penned a comprehensive twelve-point peace plan which was publicised with much aplomb by the Win the Peace Movement.²¹⁴ He summarised his 'hard peace' proposal as 'full larders, empty arsenals', but it comprised an extensive list of demands including unconditional surrender; a 'prolonged' military occupation, lasting for '*at least* a generation'; punishment for those guilty of war crimes; complete and permanent disarmament; decentralization and demilitarisation of the German police; abolition of all forms of military training; reparation for damages; the destruction of Germany's military industrial potential; a ban on financial aid to Germany without Allied agreement; re-education; and supervision of all forms of media.²¹⁵ In his 1945 book *Bones of Contention*, Vansittart stressed that only his 'simple truths' could forestall a third world war and described the forthcoming peace as 'civilization's last chance':

²¹² Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 378-400.

²¹³ Vansittart, *Black Record*, 53; Robert Vansittart, 'Foreword', in Coole and Potter, *Thus Spake Germany*, xii; 'His Cure for Germany', *Daily Mail*, 2 March 1943.

²¹⁴ Robert Vansittart, 'What Shall We Do with Germany? There's Nothing to be Frightened of Says Lord Vansittart', *Sunday Express*, 28 November 1943; Vansittart, 'The Problem of Germany', 313-24.

²¹⁵ 'Vansittart Says Third War Unless', *Daily Express*, 27 March 1943; Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, 48, 82.

My diagnosis of the German nation is an extremely harsh one, but history will bear me out. When men's heads are clearer and their eyes free from the dust of German propaganda, history will pass a judgment never exceeded in harshness on modern Germany and on her accomplices, witting and unwitting, in this country and elsewhere. My cure, therefore, is drastic. It consists in destroying all reactionary tendencies in Germany. This can only be done by applying drastic measures of supervision to the German nation.²¹⁶

There were those who condemned Vansittart's 'hard peace' as a vindictive and vengeful manifestation of wartime hostility. Julius Braunthal described the proposals as 'eyeless in hate' and 'bent to mete out to the Germans the doom of revenge'.²¹⁷ Harold Laski criticised what he perceived to be nationalistic malice: the Germans, he argued, were a people 'conditioned by a very different history' from a democratic nation like Britain, but it was not 'our business [...] to punish [the Germans] because that history has been different'.²¹⁸

Yet Vansittart's proposals found a great deal of support from within the British media and political establishment, not least the influential Conservative backbenchers who made up the Post-War Policy Group. This body, which had deliberated upon plans for the peace for since 1943, published its findings in the final months of the war under the title *Germany: Disease and Treatment*.²¹⁹ They followed a narrative reminiscent of *Black Record*, unveiling a set of recommendations intended to ensure Germany was prevented from 'launching yet another war' and plunging Western civilization into 'the abyss of another Dark Age'.²²⁰ Their outlook was clear: the Germans could not be trusted and a severe, restrictive occupation must be rigorously enforced.²²¹ A detailed five-point programme, broadly similar to

²¹⁶ Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, 46.

²¹⁷ Julius Braunthal, *Need Germany Survive?* (London: Gollancz, 1943), 212.

²¹⁸ Laski, *Are They Human?*, 4-8.

²¹⁹ Anthony Weymouth [Dr. Ivo Geikie-Cobb], ed., *Germany: Disease and Treatment - Based on the Memoranda of the Post-War Policy Group* (London; New York: Hutchinson, 1945); see 'Obituaries', *Times*, 18 August 1953.

²²⁰ Weymouth, *Germany: Disease and Treatment*, 78.

²²¹ Weymouth, *Germany: Disease and Treatment*, 82.

that espoused by Vansittart, called for a military occupation, complete disarmament, punishment for war crimes, re-education, reparations (most likely in-kind), and territorial changes (including the removal of East Prussia from Germany).²²²

In fact, many of Vansittart's ideas had gained advocates from within the political mainstream, even amongst moderates and liberals who expressly opposed the rhetorical Germanophobia of *Black Record*. A case in point is the Chatham House Study Group, a group of foreign policy experts commissioned by the Royal Institute of International Affairs to study the 'Problem of Germany'. This body put forth a self-described 'realist' assessment of the postwar peace, rejecting the 'two extreme hypotheses of total permanent domination over the whole of German life, and total co-operation with defeated Germany on a basis of equality'.²²³ Their strawmen facilitated a position which hardly differed from Vansittart's own, including calls for a lengthy military occupation, complete disarmament, and re-education. Likewise, the *Economist* consistently criticised Vansittart's hostile rhetoric and branded the Post-War Policy Group a band of appeasers, calling instead for a 'moderate' policy focused on the maintenance of the peace.²²⁴ Yet the publication's meticulous proposals for the peace settlement still specified a five-year military occupation and complete disarmament.²²⁵

In September 1944, when Churchill and Roosevelt gave their approval to the so-called Morgenthau Plan at the Second Quebec Conference, the political legitimacy

²²² Weymouth, *Germany: Disease and Treatment*, 123-8.

²²³ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Problem of Germany: An Interim Report by a Chatham House Study Group* (London; New York: The Royal institute of international affairs, 1943), 4.

²²⁴ 'Peace Terms', *The Economist*, 22 May 1943.

²²⁵ 'Terms for Germany', *The Economist*, 30 September 1944; 'The Problem of Germany I – the German Problem', *The Economist*, 10 March 1945; 'The Problem of Germany II – An Independent Rhineland', *The Economist*, 17 March 1945; 'The Problem of Germany III – Germany in Europe', *The Economist*, 24 March 1945; 'The Problem of Germany IV – the Moderate Policy', *The Economist*, 31 March 1945.

of the 'hard peace' ideas of Vansittart were bolstered even further. This memorandum advocated the de-industrialisation of Germany, a hard-line approach which appeared to be a drastic alteration of the official Anglo-American position on the postwar settlement. Churchill had accepted the plan primarily on economic grounds, namely in order to secure American aid and with the prospect of procuring British economic supremacy in postwar Europe.²²⁶ It was also a programme seemingly in line with the growing popular support for anti-German ideas in Britain and America. Yet the proposal invoked sharp criticism from within both administrations, heavily criticised by the US State Department, Department of War, and senior British officials. It was abruptly abandoned, albeit not before the Joints Chiefs of Staff had agreed to JCS 1067, a military government handbook which echoed Morgenthau's thinking and would remain in place until 1947.²²⁷ That said, there was no public repudiation of the Morgenthau Plan in Britain, nor an alternative plan to take its place.²²⁸ As the war came to a close, it was plain to see that mainstream public and political opinion was, as Aaron Goldman states, crystallising into a doctrine markedly similar to Vansittart's.²²⁹

The Liberation of the Camps

In the spring of 1945, advancing Allied troops first uncovered evidence of the Third Reich's crimes, liberating a number of concentration and extermination camps. In April and May, newspaper reports, radio broadcasts, newsreels, photographs, and personal testimonies flooded back to Britain: as Antero Holmila has remarked, the

²²⁶ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 16; Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 54.

²²⁷ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 55; Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 29.

²²⁸ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 56.

²²⁹ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 161; Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 3, *The War of Words* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), 170.

greatest mass murder in history was also a media event.²³⁰ These first public confrontations with Nazi mass murder were a hugely significant juncture in the comprehension of the 'German Problem' and plans for the postwar settlement.

Vansittart's aptitude for incorporating current events in support of his overarching thesis was never clearer than when these crimes were first exposed. He had consistently maintained that the Germans were guilty of outrages and war crimes, warning as early as October 1942 that 'in view of the systematic atrocities committed both by the Gestapo and the German Army, remedies should be proposed before systematic extermination has gone beyond repair.'²³¹ In 1945, these previously unverified suggestions became a stark, unsettling reality which seemed to uphold Vansittart's reputation for prescience. In the House of Lords, Vansittart was quick to assert that the German people, though now allegedly feigning ignorance, were willing executioners:

When the foreign prisoners and slaves were driven to work they were sometimes mocked and stoned, even by children. The population in their off hours would go to peer through the cage wires and throw bits of offal to see the skeletons scramble.²³²

There was, according to Vansittart, only one conclusion to be drawn: 'every single German throughout Germany is responsible' having willingly consented to the inhuman policies of the Third Reich.²³³ The revelations seemed to vindicate Vansittart's thesis of the 'German Problem' and he incorporated these crimes into his long history of Germany's 'black record' alongside well-known atrocity stories

²³⁰ Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945-50* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1.

²³¹ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 125 (1942-3), 11 February 1943, Col. 1057-91; 'Vansittart on 'Extermination'', *Sunday Express*, 18 October 1942; Später, *Vansittart*, 231-42.

²³² 'Peers Debate Atrocities: Vansittart Proposes Annual Repentance Day for Germany – British Dupes of the Lie that they 'Didn't Know'', *Daily Express*, 2 May 1945.

²³³ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 136 (1945), 1 May 1945, Col. 61-97.

from the First World War.²³⁴ In other words, he offered an explanatory paradigm for atrocities which, for many, stood as an incomprehensible act of evil, inconceivable within the constraints of modern civilised society.²³⁵

In April 1945, his account was given as mass audience in an interview with Leslie Mitchell, filmed for *Movietone*:

Leslie Mitchell: Lord Vansittart, are you in any way surprised at the latest evidence of German atrocities?

Lord Vansittart: No, I am not because there is in a perfectly horrifying number of Germans a deep underlying streak of cruelty which came very strongly to light in the last war and the evidence of that has been multiplied a thousand-fold in this one. There's really nothing new when you compare what's happened now, what's been revealed now, with what we already knew with regard to the atrocities perpetrated from the beginning of the war.²³⁶

The revelations of the camps, above all Belsen, amplified the popular anti-German sentiment in Britain, building support for a 'hard peace'.²³⁷ The Win the Peace Movement did not hesitate to take advantage of this trend, utilising Vansittart's status to expand the group's membership through a series of prominent publicity campaigns.²³⁸

²³⁴ Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 26.

²³⁵ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 221.

²³⁶ *Lord Vansittart on the German Atrocities (interview with Leslie Mitchell)*, 30 April 1945, *British Movietone*, newsreel.

²³⁷ 'These are the Germans', *Daily Mail*, 19 April 1945; *Proof Positive*, 30 April 1945, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Issue 1478, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; Joanne Reilly, *Belsen in History and Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 71–4; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, 210, 215–21.

²³⁸ 'Win the Peace Movement', advertisement, *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1945.

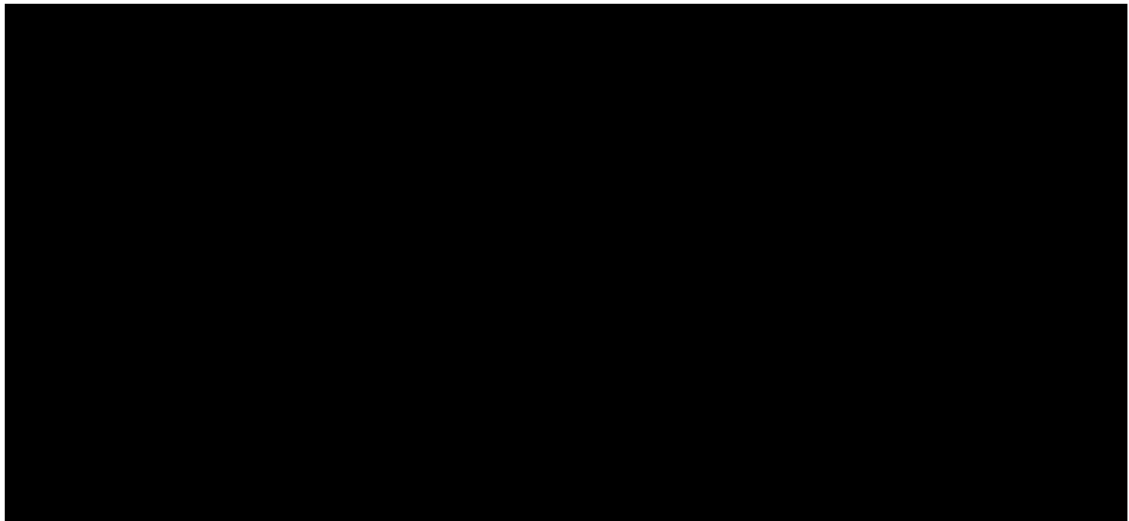


Illustration 2: Win the Peace Movement advertisement, *Daily Mirror*, 1 May 1945

For Victor Gollancz, these crimes were to be interpreted within a wholly different framework. In April 1945, Gollancz published a new pamphlet, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, in which he emphasised the universality of these crimes, characterised as the consequence of environmental influences and inherent human frailties rather than 'nonsensical myths about blood'.²³⁹ He expressly refuted Vansittart's interpretations of the camps as proof of the wickedness and collective guilt of the German people. Rather, the camps were the most obvious component of a coercive network of terror and denunciation that had served to sustain the power of the Nazi leadership:

I say, then, that the evidence of these camps, far from proving that all Germans are vile and that the whole German people is "collectively guilty", proves the opposite [...]. The very existence of this hellish apparatus - these concentration camps, torture chambers, Gestapo prisons, spies, block wardens and the rest with which Germany has been honeycombed - indicates the presence of an opposition, actual and potential, far more extensive than can be measured by the mere number of tortured victims.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, 13-4.

²⁴⁰ Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, 6.

Gollancz's arguments found support from familiar sources, most notably members of the Anglican community who remained faithful to the notion of an 'Other Germany' coerced by dictatorship. The vast majority of the German people, it was asserted, were victims rather than co-conspirators in mass murder.²⁴¹

Yet these interpretations came up against the Germanophobic outlook of the British media, who were increasingly anxious to lay the blame on the German people as a whole.²⁴² In the *Daily Mirror*, for instance, Bernard Buckham complained about the 'stupid soft-hearts [who] attempt to draw a distinction between the Nazi warmakers and torturers and the German people as a whole'.²⁴³ In much of the mass media, the perpetrators were portrayed as identifiably 'German', rather than specifically 'Nazi'.²⁴⁴ The major newsreels each declared that 'the responsibility for these terrible crimes falls squarely on the German people', while the *Daily Express* wondered whether Germans could be considered as part of humanity ever again.²⁴⁵ In mid-April, the Germanophobic tenor of the British reaction to the revelations of Nazi atrocities was encapsulated by David Low's cartoon in the *London Evening Standard*.²⁴⁶ In it, a bowler-hatted Englishman is shown brandishing a newspaper

²⁴¹ Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 137, 159, 172.

²⁴² Reilly, *Belsen*, 69.

²⁴³ Quoted in Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 28.

²⁴⁴ Reilly, *Belsen*, 69; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, 220-1. There was also a sharp increase in hostility towards German exiles in Britain, with the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror describing a 'certain feeling of hate against all Germans'.

²⁴⁵ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, 210; *An End to Murder*, 31 May 1945, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 45/44, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *Burning of Belsen*, 31 May 1945, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 834A, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>; *Germans See Belsen Film*, 31 May 1945, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Issue 1190, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; 'Opinion', editorial, *Daily Express*, 19 April 1945; Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 28.

²⁴⁶ David Low, 'Don't Forget Some of Us are Germans, Friend', cartoon, *London Evening Standard* 19 April 1945.

report on the atrocities, remarking that ‘the whole German people should be wiped out for this!’; a number of the ghoulish survivors pointedly reply, ‘Don’t forget some of us are Germans, friend’.

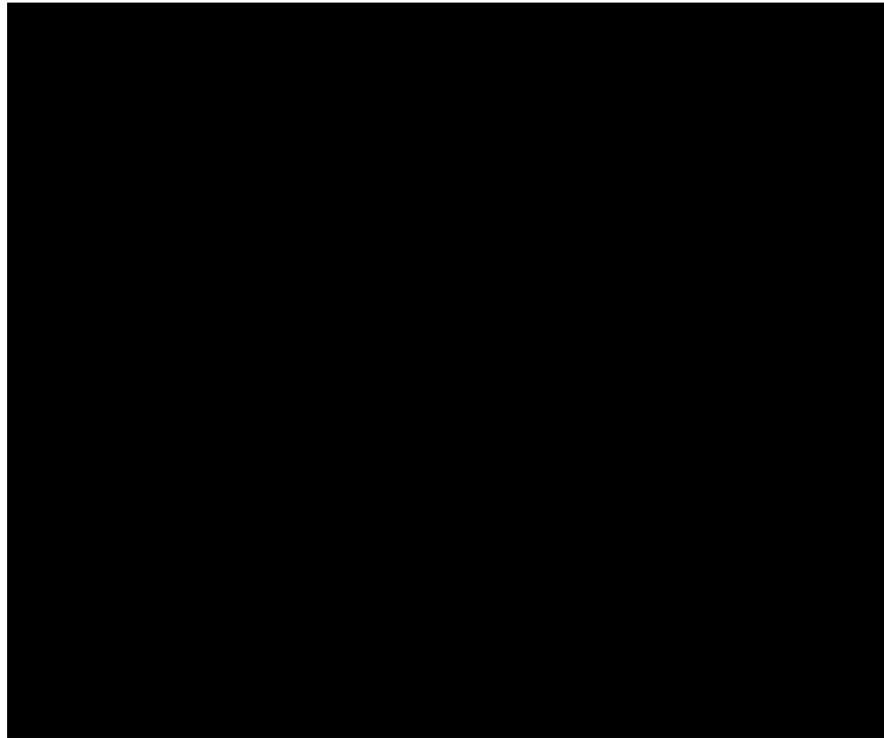


Illustration 2: David Low, *London Evening Standard*, 19 April 1945

These anti-German analyses built upon of a well-established *Feindbild*, a black-and-white, ‘us versus them’ portrayal whereby the savage perpetrators were contrasted with the inherent virtue of the British liberators.²⁴⁷ This was, moreover, actively encouraged by the Psychological Warfare Executive, who in October 1943 had recommended that cases of terror, persecution and tyranny be emphasised as being ‘committed in the name of the whole German people’; this guidance was

²⁴⁷ Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 23-4, 194,

reiterated in June 1945.²⁴⁸ It was all much to the regret of Gollancz, who lamented that:

an influential section of the Press, and many writers and public men are using these revelations - which are no revelations at all to those who have lived in an agonised consciousness of them, day after day, for twelve long years - as proof at last of the utter wickedness of all Germans, and of the "collective guilt" of the whole German people. And what is so shameful about his campaign is that, however ignorant the general public may be, these writers know very well that what is really proved beyond any possibility of doubt is the exact opposite.²⁴⁹

Conclusion

The intense debate over the 'German Problem' which had emerged in wartime Britain helped to shape public and political conceptions of Germany, Nazism, and the forthcoming peace. Lord Vansittart and Victor Gollancz stood as figureheads of two fundamentally opposed interpretations of the German past. But while their mutual antipathy and political differences are readily clear, these two men also had much in common: both were unwavering anti-appeasers who arose to public attention in the 1930s and comprehended the criminality of the Third Reich with greater foresight than many of their compatriots. It was this shared personal trajectory which had installed Vansittart and Gollancz as the leading British commentators on the 'German Problem'.

When the war came to an end in May 1945, leading British policymakers had made very few public commitments regarding the treatment of their defeated enemy.²⁵⁰ It was at the Potsdam Conference, in July – August 1945, that an agreement on what to do with Germany was to be finally realised. The programme

²⁴⁸ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 302.

²⁴⁹ Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means*, 3.

²⁵⁰ Cairncross, *The Price of War*, 11.

they outlined would, in many ways, hardly differ from Vansittart's own – minus his antagonistic rhetoric. He could hardly have been disappointed at the way the 'German Problem' seemed set to be resolved.²⁵¹

That said, the precise influence of Vansittart upon Allied policy remains a point of contention.²⁵² There were, without doubt, a great number of factors informing the eventual form of the postwar peace, not least the outlook of Britain's wartime allies. The resolution of the 'German Problem' was an inter-Allied affair and domestic pressures could only wield so much influence. Yet at the same time, British politicians and bureaucrats were not immune to the climate of opinion regarding Germany that Vansittart had been so central in shaping. Moreover, the general trajectory of Britain's leading policymakers towards a harsher peace, refusing to acknowledge the existence of an 'Other Germany' but rather seeing Germans and Nazis as largely indistinguishable, is unmistakeable. If Vansittart's impact on the upon the final form of the Allied peace settlement for Germany remains difficult to determine, it would be erroneous to discount his influence entirely.²⁵³

There can be little doubt, however, that the wartime debate over the 'German Problem' helped to construct British understandings of German history and the Third Reich. These public discussions were the first sustained attempt made in Britain to historicise Nazism in the context of the war²⁵⁴, with significant ramifications for the postwar occupation and beyond. The contrasting interpretations of the Third Reich had included enduring debates over the 'special path' of German history, the existence of a non-Nazi German opposition, consent versus coercion, the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of totalitarianism, Nazi racial policy, and the history of the Weimar Republic. The numerous books, pamphlets, songs, public

²⁵¹ Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 157, 183; Rose, *Vansittart*, 273.

²⁵² Goldman, 'Germans and Nazis', 186-7.

²⁵³ Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 50

²⁵⁴ This distinction is made in Stone, *Responses to Nazism*, 6

meetings, parliamentary debates, and newspaper articles in which the 'German Problem' was discussed from 1941 to 1945 were mediators of Britain's cultural memory.²⁵⁵ In other words, this debate helped to compose collective visions of the German past and the Third Reich that would remain a powerful influence upon British perceptions of Germany for years to come.

But most immediately, the debate had fashioned public expectations of a forthcoming peace settlement anticipated to resolve the 'German Problem' once-and-for-all. There is good reason to question D. C. Watt's assertion that Vansittart was generally regarded as 'non-British' and in 'bad taste', being generally 'worsted by his opponents.'²⁵⁶ Rather, Vansittart's anti-German message of collective guilt, while regarded by some as crude and overbearing, seems to have had a popular resonance in wartime Britain.²⁵⁷ It built upon memories of the First World War and found support across much of the consistently Germanophobic mass-market media. On the other hand, Victor Gollancz's message of humanitarian goodwill coupled with socialist theorising, distinguishing between Germans and Nazis, had principally struck a chord with a more elite faction of intellectuals.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ I employ the term as outlined by Astrid Erll, 'the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts', see Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: an introduction', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 2, 5. These socio-cultural contexts are the media, institutions and practices which 'construct a shared past' and can 'trigger' individual memories, see Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 109–18; Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (April 1995), 125–33.

²⁵⁶ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 31.

²⁵⁷ Gerald Hughes, 'Don't Let's Be Beastly', 266.

²⁵⁸ Hedva Ben-Israel, 'Cross Purposes: British Reactions to the German Anti-Nazi Opposition', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, no. 3 (July 1985): 432, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948502000305>.

In the spring of 1945, the revelations of the concentration camps had reaffirmed the ascendancy of Vansittart's ideas and boosted popular support for a 'hard peace', consigning the notion of an 'Other Germany' to the fringes of the public debate. Four years after the publication of *Black Record*, the 'diplomat with his coat off' had seemingly won the day. Yet the divisive culture war which had emerged in wartime Britain was far from over: as the Allied occupation got underway, this clash of ideas remained an enduring context for public and political understandings of Germany.

Chapter Two

Winning the Peace

‘We have won the German war. Let us now win the peace’

*Field Marshal Montgomery, 8 May 1945.*¹

These cautious words, at a moment of otherwise exuberant celebration, exemplify the growing realisation amongst Britain’s civilian and military leaders that, whilst the fighting was at last coming to an end, there was still much work to be done. The victorious Allies were once again faced with the formidable task of drawing up, and enacting, a European peace settlement, seeking a resolution to the so-called ‘German Problem’. Memories of the failed peace of 1919 were conspicuous in the minds of citizens and policymakers alike and, as one contemporary commentator pithily remarked, ‘to the cant of “never again” succeed[ed] the cant of “not like last time”’.² Yet profound disagreements over the exact diagnosis of Germany’s supposed malady, be it capitalism, imperialism, Prussianism, Nazism, militarism or some other ‘ism’ entirely, had emerged in Britain during the war. This debate over the ‘German Problem’ had generated radically contrasting interpretations of the apposite approach to take this time around.

The following chapter outlines the configuration of the British occupation of Germany as it was decided at the end of the war. It was at the Potsdam Conference in the late summer of 1945 that a precise outline of Allied policy for postwar Germany first emerged. This study reflects upon the public and media responses to the Potsdam Agreement and its implementation, charting the mediation of occupation

¹ Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery*, 341.

² McCallum, *Public Opinion*, vii.

policy back to Britain during the first two years of the peace. This is centred upon an overview of the CCG (BE)'s public relations strategy, which sought to control the information emanating from postwar Germany.

It is shown how much of the British media, reflecting the popular demand for a 'hard peace', offered a relatively optimistic appraisal of the first steps being made towards securing a lasting peace. Germany was seemingly set to be vanquished for the foreseeable future. Yet Victor Gollancz and his allies continued to lobby for a more humanitarian and reconciliatory approach to the peace. Meanwhile, in the face of mounting problems in the Zone of occupation and intensifying inter-Allied disagreements, British officials had grown increasingly mindful of the inherent shortcomings of the Potsdam Agreement. In the midst of the nascent Cold War, an influx of refugees expelled from eastern Europe had aggravated existing shortages of food and housing. Leading British policymakers, concerned at the burgeoning expenditure required to offset humanitarian disaster and uneasy over the intentions of the Soviet Union, sought to urgently revise their approach in Germany. In time, Britain's political and military leaders, alongside their American counterparts, surreptitiously embraced a more reconstructive peace settlement that ran contrary to the ethos of Potsdam. But, as the final section reveals, the British public and media response to the refugee crisis was quite different. While Gollancz instigated a pressure group, Save Europe Now (SEN), to demand a more compassionate response to Germany's suffering, the primary reaction in Britain was one of ambivalence or even outright enmity. It was apparent that the fault lines of the wartime debate and the popular support for a 'hard peace' remained largely intact.

Potsdam

In his work on the Potsdam Conference (17 July – 2 August 1945), historian Herbert Feis remarks that the 'memories of the dissension among the allies who had

come together at Versailles [...] hung heavy'.³ The assembled Allied leaders could not help but recognise the grand significance of their task, imbued with a sense that this was a second and perhaps final chance to secure a sustainable peace. As in 1919, the peoples of Europe, fatigued by two extraordinarily devastating conflicts, increased the weight of expectation already laying heavily on the shoulders of their respective representatives at Potsdam.

The conference at Yalta (4 – 11 February 1945) had set in motion a plan for German reparations, agreed on a course of demilitarisation and denazification, resolved some of the territorial disputes over the future of Germany's borders⁴, and established the machinery of a military occupation. Churchill and Eden, anxious over America's postwar commitment to Europe and the potential threat of the Soviet Union, also successfully lobbied for the inclusion of the French as an occupying power.⁵ This followed the 'Percentages Agreement' of October 1944, when Churchill had sought to establish a consensus for Soviet influence in Europe.⁶ But it was at Potsdam, with victory secured, that the principles of Allied rule in Germany, which underpinned the aims and aspirations of the peace settlement, would be decided.⁷ The 'Grand Alliance' had already undergone one substantial change since February, with Truman replacing the recently deceased Roosevelt; in the course of the conference, Churchill's electoral defeat would see Clement Attlee sign the final agreement. Labour's victory corresponded with the direction of British official thinking about Germany, with Attlee a long-standing advocate of a relatively hard-line peace settlement and fervent believer in the implementation of radical social

³ Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace; the Potsdam Conference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), 181.

⁴ The conference confirmed Poland's revised borders between the Curzon and Oder-Neisse lines.

⁵ Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 319.

⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 147.

⁷ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 27.

and economic reform. In addition, the American military had successfully tested a new atomic superweapon the day before the conference began, an announcement which ratcheted up already heightened inter-Allied tensions.

At the Cecilienhof Palace in the outskirts of Berlin, the Allies finalised the structure of the occupation administration, establishing a four-power military government with a centralised Allied Control Council in the German capital. The ACC would work in conjunction with the newly-created Council of Foreign Ministers, tasked with drawing up final peace treaties and resolving outstanding territorial disputes. The four powers would rule independently in their own Zones, with total control over all areas of society from newspaper editing to industrial output, in the pursuit of shared aims. These included the pacification of their conquered foe, the eradication of Nazism and militarism, and the safeguarding of the European peace. But the German state was to be treated as a single economic unit, held together within its 1937 boundaries, as to facilitate an equitable distribution of commodities and a balanced economy. This, it was believed, would aid Europe's reconstruction efforts and help to overcome the obvious economic discrepancies across the four occupation Zones.



Map 1: The Occupation Zones of Germany, 1945. Source: Christopher Knowles, *Winning the Peace: The British in Occupied Germany, 1945-1948* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

The British took over the North West of Germany, which included the largely industrial, and heavily-bombed, Ruhr region. When initial plans to establish some form of indirect rule were realised to be wholly impractical, the British authorities opted for personnel-intensive civilian administration.⁸ The first months of the peace saw many thousands of civil servants relocate to small towns across the British Zone,

⁸ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 17.

billeted in barracks and requisitioned accommodation away from the war-torn cities. Day-to-day authority was assumed by the Military Governor, overseeing the work of the soon-to-be 26,000 members of the Control Commission for Germany (British Element).⁹ In addition, the 80,000 men of the 21st Army Group, who had taken interim charge of German territories, became the British Army of the Rhine, stationed in Germany to maintain order and provide military security.¹⁰ They would be accompanied by the British Air Forces of Occupation (Germany). In London, the Control Office for Germany and Austria, under the leadership of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, facilitated governmental oversight.

The British occupiers were tasked with the implementation of a course of far-reaching reform, intended to alter the shape of Germany's social, economic, political, and cultural structure radically from the top down. In the first place, Germany was to undergo denazification, abolishing the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and its laws, removing committed Nazis from positions of authority, and pursuing war crimes prosecutions against those deemed responsible for the Third Reich's transgressions of international law and crimes against humanity. It was believed, however, that the extirpation of Nazism from Germany demanded a more radical programme of re-education, democratisation, and political decentralisation. This involved close supervision of the judiciary, schools and universities, government administration, media, and wider society. It was a programme that would attempt to uproot aspects of the supposed 'German mentality', stretching much farther back into the past than 1933.

It was also agreed that Germany should undergo extensive economic reform, with a close focus on the elimination of the means of making war as well as

⁹ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 22.

¹⁰ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 17-18; Speiser, *The British Army of the Rhine*.

regulations on industrial production more generally. This would involve demilitarisation, decartelisation, economic decentralisation, and the physical dismantling of German industry. Potsdam also set in motion a series of reviews to gauge the state of the German economy and set an appropriate level of production: German living standards were not to exceed the average across Europe (excluding Britain and the Soviet Union). These Level of Industry plans, the first of which was agreed in March 1946 and restricted the output of heavy industry to 50% of its 1938 levels and listed the dismantling of 1,500 manufacturing plants. These plants were to be taken, in part, as reparations-in-kind by the occupying powers, who rejected a repeat of the Versailles Treaty's notorious monetary reparations. But at Potsdam, the British and Americans, anxious to allow some degree of German reconstruction, refused to yield to Soviet demands for specific levels of reparations to be set. The Soviet Union, whose wartime losses were unparalleled amongst the Allies, were keen to exploit German industry, suggesting they took 50% of \$20 billion worth of equipment and goods. The result was an uneasy compromise, with no overall figure agreed but continuation of the Soviet Union's removal of industrial plants from its own Zone and acceptance of their claim on one quarter of material removed from the western Zones.¹¹

Field Marshal Montgomery, in his new role as Military Governor of the British Army of the Rhine, proclaimed the four-power control of Germany to be 'one of history's boldest experiments'.¹² Yet the Potsdam Agreement was a flawed settlement, as many British and American officials privately recognised even as its terms were being finalised.¹³ In the first place, the war-ravaged condition of Germany would prove a substantial impediment to the efficient fulfilment of Potsdam's

¹¹ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 16.

¹² 'F.-M. Montgomery On Future Of Germany', *Times*, 12 November 1945.

¹³ Deighton, 'The "Frozen Front"', 450; Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 3, 29.

obligations, casting doubt upon the integrity of forecasts for Europe's reconstruction. In addition, the French, included in the system of Zonal administration but excluded from the discussions at Potsdam, refused to be bound by the agreement.

But more fundamentally, these proposals were wide-ranging in their potential scope while ambiguous in terms of means and objective: above all, there was no clear hierarchy of priority between recovery and security. Potsdam was an imperfect compromise between wartime Allies whose differences had become ever more marked in the final months of the war. In time, the Zonal authorities would each take a particular approach to the vague principles set out in 1945, creating markedly different modes of occupation.¹⁴ Their Zones each came to reflect their respective interpretations of the 'German Problem' and were, furthermore, inflected by their particular understanding of the nature of democracy itself. In the first year of the occupation, these inter-Allied disagreements, coupled with escalating practical problems, would render the Potsdam Agreement largely unworkable.

Public Relations

The growth of public relations as a facet of governance during the twentieth century is a noteworthy trend, perceptible across both democracies and dictatorships. The extension of suffrage, coupled with the greatly expanding role of the state, had encouraged greater attention be given to public opinion.¹⁵ This was augmented in the course of two world wars during which the inter-related fields of public relations and propaganda were regarded as vital in the maintenance of morale on the 'home front'. Michael Balfour and Ian McLaine, amongst others, have established the Second World War as a transformative juncture in the history of the

¹⁴ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, i.

¹⁵ Street, *Mass Media*; Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*.

British state's public communications.¹⁶ There is also a developing body of work on Cold War propaganda, specifically the covert activities of the Information Research Department to project anti-Soviet messaging in Britain.¹⁷ Relatedly, scholars have acknowledged the unprecedented commitment of Attlee's Labour administration to large-scale peacetime public relations, identified by Martin Moore as the origins of modern 'spin'.¹⁸

Yet the prominent role that public relations would play as part of the British occupation of Germany has gone largely unrecognised. The Control Commission's Public Relations/Information Services Control Group¹⁹ was tasked with managing the public image of the occupation forces, an endeavour which would take on various guises. The PR/ISC was headed by Major General W. H. Alexander Bishop, a former Deputy Director of the Political Warfare Executive, until former *Manchester Guardian* journalist Cecil Sprigge succeeded him in October 1946.²⁰ In the first instance, the organisation's officials intended to communicate all manner of messages to the

¹⁶ Balfour, *Propaganda in War, 1939-1945*; Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979).

¹⁷ Lyn Smith, 'Covert British Propaganda: The Information Research Department: 1947-77', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 1980), 67–83.; Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War: The Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1948-77* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), xvi; R. J. Fletcher, 'British Propaganda since World War II-a Case Study,' *Media, Culture & Society* 4, no. 2 (1982): 97–109.; Tony Shaw, 'The Information Research Department of the British Foreign Office and the Korean War, 1950-53,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 2 (April 1999): 263–81.

¹⁸ William Crofts, *Coercion or Persuasion?: Propaganda in Britain after 1945* (London: Routledge 1989), 12-13; Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*.

¹⁹ In 1948 the PR/ISC would merge with the Information Control Division (ICD) and be renamed the Information Services Division (ISD), see 'Integration of US with UK Information Services', 1948-9, FO 1056/143, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), National Archives, London.

²⁰ Hans-Ulrich Wagner, 'Repatriated Germans and "British Spirit"', *Media History* 21, no. 4 (October 2015): 445, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2015.1011109>. The PR/ISC had a high proportion of former journalists and editors within its ranks.

German people effectively, whether it be the evidence of Nazi crimes or basic information about the rules and regulations of the military government: public relations would play a vital role in both the policy of re-education and the maintenance of authority.

There was, officials reasoned, also bound to be a great amount of interest in the fate of Germany back in Britain.²¹ News about the occupation was, one official remarked, a 'closed shop', in which 'the entire picture of the Military Government in this Zone reaches the man in the street as a result of what he sees on the screen, what he hears on his radio, and what he reads in his newspaper.'²² The result being that any information supplied in this manner was expected to 'exert a decided influence on the public attitude towards Control Commission activities'. This, it was concluded, necessitated official oversight, ensuring that 'the aims, achievements and difficulties of Military Government in the British Zone are properly presented to the public'.

PR/ISC administrators resolved to control the output of the independent media, censoring unwelcome news while promoting a positive and constructive public image of the British occupation forces. The stated objective of the PR/ISC was to encourage a 'fair and accurate picture of military government operations',

²¹ Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London; Memorandum, November 1945, FO 1056/510 Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

²² Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

avoiding any mishaps that might encourage popular protest or media criticism.²³ Yet as Captain George W. Houghton²⁴, Director of Information Services in the Control Office for Germany and Austria, wrote in 1945, the underlying goal was to 'help the press to put over the right stuff' and to 'prevent the correspondents having to search in inappropriate quarters and thus produce inaccuracies and get on to undesirable subjects'.²⁵

In August 1945, a detailed public relations strategy was drawn up in order to dictate the character of information permitted to flow from Germany back home to Britain.²⁶ It suggested that, as the predominant feeling of the British public was still 'to hell with the Germans; let's put our own house in order first!', officials should be

²³ Emphasis in the original, see Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London; Memorandum on Press Comments on Control Commission/Mil. Gov., 21 September 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

²⁴ Houghton later becomes chief press officer for ISD, see Clemens, *Britische Kulturpolitik*, 83. In 1947, he returns to 'the more congenial air of Fleet Street', see Letter (Acting) Director of Information Services to Lindsay Fraser, German Service BBC, 3 April 1947, FO 946/67 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, BBC Request for Information on Control Office (C.O.G.A.) activities, National Archives, London.

²⁵ Houghton to Treadwell, 28 July 1945, FO 1056/508 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Releases, Hand-outs, and Policy: Press Conference, 1945, National Archives, London.

²⁶ Letter from Major Twist to Information Section, PR Branch CCG, 20 August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

wary of painting too bright a picture. In addition, any message that might promote the idea that 'controlling Germany is a simple matter' would likely cause 'an outcry from the folks at home for the troops to come back'. There was also to be no hint at the resumption of normal life in Germany, something that would likely cause outrage and delusion in equal measure.

In this scheme of public relations control, the independent mass media would be regulated through a variety of instruments. The newsreels were, to quote Nicholas Pronay, regarded as the 'bludgeon' in the scheme of British propaganda, used for government messaging in the course of both world wars.²⁷ In an arena like postwar Germany, the dependence of newsreel production companies on the authorities for film footage made them especially pliable to official control. As a result, PR/ISC officials sought to exploit the cooperation of producers, working with *Pathé News*, *Gaumont-British News*, and *British Movietone News* to publicise the work of the CCG (BE). From the very beginning of the occupation, they facilitated the filming of material in the British Zone, as well as providing their own footage.²⁸

But it was the newspapers, given their soaring popularity, that would provide the most influential and up-to-date accounts of life in occupied Germany: total newspaper circulation, in this golden age of the press, surpassed 15,000,000 copies.²⁹ Leading officials in the PR/ISC deemed it essential for all officers to remain aware of the occupation's press coverage, while also utilising various means to impede critical reporting.³⁰ The PR/ISC attempted to supply war correspondents, 'as the

²⁷ Pronay, 'Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45', 30.

²⁸ See FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

²⁹ Kevin Williams, *Get Me a Murder a Day!: A History of Mass Communication in Britain* (London: Arnold, 1998), 214.

³⁰ Houghton to Treadwell, 28 July 1945, FO 1056/508 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information

intermediaries between the occupation authorities and the public at home', with the 'most accurate and fullest information, compatible with the maintenance of security, for a properly balanced presentation of facts'.³¹ To this end, individual branches of the CCG (BE) were assigned trained public relations personnel, whilst higher-ups were encouraged to accommodate journalists as best they could and to provide any favourable news to the PR/ISC.

The strict regulation of access to news sources in Germany remained the chief means of official control, curtailing the journalistic freedoms primarily on the grounds of military security. Journalists sent to the British Zone in the hope of 'finding the news' were, like all visitors, required to follow a specific tour schedule arranged by PR/ISC officials. The documentary records of several touring parties of journalists have survived, showing that the specific routes, transportation, accommodation, and schedules of events were planned in painstaking detail.³² These itineraries were prepared, for the most part, in a unilateral fashion and tour groups were assigned a 'conducting officer', whose job was ostensibly to enforce compliance with the pre-planned programme. The same regulations were also used to control other visiting parties to Germany, whether it be filmmakers, politicians, or writers.

Norman Clarke, as chairman of the British Zone Correspondents Association, claimed that the exceptional circumstances of reporting in postwar Germany made it 'the most difficult story in the world to cover'.³³ Likewise, in May 1946, Godfrey

Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Releases, Hand-outs, and Policy: Press Conference, 1945, National Archives, London.

³¹ Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

³² Press Itineraries, 1949, FO 953/495-512 Visits and tours of editors and journalists to and from the United Kingdom (Germany), National Archives, London.

³³ Letter from Norman Clarke Chairman of British Zone Correspondents Association to Sholto Douglas and attached memorandum, 1947, FO 946/47 Control Office for Germany

Nicholson MP offered a scathing public critique of the Control Commission's public relations strategy. In the House of Commons, he questioned the restrictions placed upon journalists when visiting in Germany, describing the chaperoned visits as 'Cook's Tours' of 'very little use' and 'everything for which the expression "conducted tour" stands for'.³⁴ Nicholson reserved special indignation for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster John Hynd, who allegedly exercised 'complete censorship upon who shall go [...] and on what they shall do there'.

The use of official controls and regulations over the mass media was, of course, nothing new: the war itself had seen a great deal of cooperation between the British government and the fourth estate, especially concerning the conduct of frontline reporters. The transition to peacetime reporting regulations was slow, perhaps intentionally so, and wartime restrictions, including the need for official accreditation, were temporarily preserved in postwar Germany.³⁵ In fact, the official status of 'war correspondent' was not abolished until August 1946 and even after this date journalists were obliged to wear British military uniform. As Terence Prittie, Berlin correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, recalled: 'I lived virtually isolated from the people of Berlin, in a British requisitioned flat, eating British rations, using British transport facilities and British occupation currency, even initially wearing British uniform.'³⁶ Given the power dynamics which characterised relations between occupied and occupier, visibly belonging to one of the victor nations and depending on the support of the occupation forces severely constrained the professional

and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, German and Austrian Publicity: British Zone Correspondents' Association, National Archives, London.

³⁴ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 422 (1946), 10 May 1946, Col. 1419.

³⁵ Antje Robrecht, 'British Press Correspondents in Post World War II Germany', in *Journalists as Political Actors*, eds. Frank Bösch and Dominik Geppert (Augsburg: Wissner, 2008), 129.

³⁶ Terence Prittie, *My Germans: 1933-1983* (London: O. Wolff, 1983), 101.

independence of journalists.³⁷ Another hangover from wartime regulations which intruded upon the independence of the press was the risk of censorship.³⁸ The precedent of self-regulation set during the war persisted, but the suppression of news remained a threat for uncooperative journalists and editors.

Another means through which officials could control media reporting was the pooling of news sources, intended to coordinate a single narrative across multiple outlets that would reinforce a particular news angle or story.³⁹ Officials recognised that 'nine tenths of news from Germany has to emanate from official sources' and, as such, they could exact a formidable influence over the content of press reports.⁴⁰ The PR/ISC used press conferences and printed hand-outs to provide newspaper journalists with choreographed and officially vetted public statements. In addition, access to official personnel for interviews was strictly controlled and offered the CCG (BE) another even more direct means by which to put across their carefully composed public relations message. Conversely, the restriction of access to sources was also a way of deterring rebellious journalists from evading the oversight of PR/ISC officials.

³⁷ Robrecht, 'British Press Correspondents', 128.

³⁸ Nichlolas Pronay, 'Introduction – 'To stamp out the whole tradition...'', in *The Political Re-education of Germany and her Allies after World War II*, eds. Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson (London; Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 21.

³⁹ Telegram from Robertson to Dean, 12 June 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, On the Record Press Conferences, National Archives, London; Telegram from Dean to Robertson, 13 June 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, On the Record Press Conferences, National Archives, London; Roger Smither, 'Welt im Film: Anglo-American Newsreel Policy', in *The Political Re-Education of Germany and Her Allies: After World War II*, eds. Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 151–72.

⁴⁰ Digest of Story Filed by Maurice Pagence, Daily Herald, 16 November 1946, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

A Hard Peace

There had been a dearth of information from the conference itself, with the Allies imposing a news blackout purportedly in fear of Japanese spoiling tactics.⁴¹ But at the end of the meeting, the British press reported on the details of the Agreement in full, leaving the country in little doubt about the proposed direction of the peace settlement.⁴² The single communique issued by the three signatories proclaimed that ties between the 'Big Three' had been strengthened yet further.⁴³ The Potsdam Agreement, as Alan Bullock notes, perpetuated 'in the public if not in the official mind, the belief that the three wartime allies would continue together after the war was over'.⁴⁴ In this strictly mediated context, the various shortcomings of the Potsdam Agreement remained obscure to the on-looking British public. Rather, Potsdam was presented as a practical means of tackling the 'German Problem' and became the essential parameter of Allied success or failure in the endeavour to 'win the peace'.

There was an unusual degree of uniformity in the response of the British mass-market press to Potsdam, with optimism more-or-less across the board for the ongoing cooperation between three ideologically diverse nations.⁴⁵ This was hardly surprising, and not entirely inorganic, given the widespread veneration for the Soviet Union during the war and the popular approval for a stringent peace settlement.⁴⁶ It had, moreover, been clear since late 1944, as Foreign Office official Gladwyn Jebb noted, that 'any settlement which we may impose on Germany is likely to win

⁴¹ Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 69.

⁴² *Times*, 3 August 1945; *Daily Mirror*, 3 August 1945; BBB [Bernard Buckham], 'Whatever Happens We Stand by the Potsdam Decision', *Daily Mirror*, 5 October 1945.

⁴³ Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 70.

⁴⁴ Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 3, 29.

⁴⁵ Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 70;

⁴⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 147.

popular approval here provided it can be represented as “hard”.⁴⁷ The Potsdam Agreement was conspicuously branded in these terms, pronounced as an effective means of punishing and radically reforming Britain’s vanquished enemy. Yet the unveiling of a ‘hard peace’ was not lauded across the board: Victor Gollancz and Labour MP Richard Crossman were amongst those who questioned the technical aspects of the agreement, the potential for effective enforcement, and the administrative capacity of the British authorities to enact such a far-reaching programme.⁴⁸

In the coming months, there would be intermittent coverage of the efforts to implement the Potsdam Agreement, much of which was strictly regulated by the CCG (BE)’s public relations officials. The novelty of Britain’s newfound ascendancy over Germany and the work to implement a ‘hard peace’ initially prompted much intrigue. The British occupiers, confronting the challenging landscape of postwar Germany, were shown to be effectively implementing the programme set out at Potsdam. At the same time, there were residual doubts about the efficacy of Britain’s efforts to confront the intractable ‘German Problem’. Moreover, as the domestic agenda came back into focus, the perceived newsworthiness of occupation policy gradually subsided.

Re-education

In the British Zone of occupation, the staff of the British Army of the Rhine and its civilian counterpart, the Control Commission for Germany (British Element), set out with their own prejudices, aspirations, expectations, and methods. They

⁴⁷ Quoted in Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany*, 39.

⁴⁸ Victor Gollancz, ‘The German Settlement’, *Economist*, 11 August 1945; R. H. S. Crossman, ‘Our Job In Germany’, *New Statesman and Nation*, 8 September 1945. These were compiled in Victor Gollancz, *Europe and Germany: Today and Tomorrow* (London: Gollancz, 1945).

prioritised, seemingly above all else, the re-education of the German people as a means to bring about democracy and safeguard the peace.⁴⁹ It was a policy imbued with Lord Vansittart's conception of the 'German Problem', namely a historicist reading of Germany's culture as wholly defunct.⁵⁰ The German people, alleged to have been conditioned by undemocratic, authoritarian, militaristic, and 'Prussian' ideas, needed reforming – and what a better model than Britain itself, the home of modern democracy?

The 'science' of political messaging had built up a grand reputation in the course of the war, when it had become widely accepted that propaganda or 'political warfare' could effectively energise mass action and even change a nation's mind-set. In Britain, government media management was believed to have effectively engaged the 'home front', while it seemed as if Nazi propaganda had fashioned a mass movement with unprecedented levels of popular devotion.⁵¹ In postwar Germany, it was hoped that re-education could effectively undo this satiation in Nazism, instilling democratic virtues in the place of the so-called *Herrenvolk* creed, as well as rooting out longer standing traditions of authoritarianism, militarism, and 'Prussianism'.⁵² This was, as Nicholas Pronay has remarked, the most ambitious of propaganda projects, signifying a 'high watermark of belief' in the power of censorship, government media production, and the manipulation of information provision.⁵³

British occupiers, many of whom had experience as part of the Imperial Staff, were to control and manipulate the 'media of opinion formation'. This included newspapers and cultural productions and the 'agencies of attitude formation', most obviously the education system from Kindergarten through to Universität.⁵⁴ The CCG

⁴⁹ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 71.

⁵⁰ Pronay, 'Introduction', 16-18, 23.

⁵¹ Pronay, 'Introduction', 21.

⁵² Pronay, 'Introduction', 2.

⁵³ Pronay, 'Introduction', 23.

⁵⁴ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 72-3; Pronay, 'Introduction', 1.

(BE) licenced and censored a new era of German media, setting up publications including the now-famous *Der Spiegel*. British educationalists and civil servants were tasked with writing politically suitable textbooks and curriculums. In addition, the staff of schools, colleges, and universities were to be thoroughly vetted, with those deemed politically dangerous excluded from the profession. The policy even extended to the thousands of German POWs in Britain at the end of the war, with the programmes of instruction at Wilton Park a notable feature in the attempt to re-educate members of the Wehrmacht.⁵⁵

The policy of re-education was ambitious, an attempt to 'win the peace' through psychological means rather than exclusively the traditional territorial, financial, or military methods.⁵⁶ In the first months of the occupation it found widespread support across Britain, with even the *Manchester Guardian* criticising the decision of the newly-formed United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to exclude Germany from education relief.⁵⁷ 'That Germany should be re-educated as soon as possible' was felt to be the only subject 'on which Lord Vansittart agreed with the pacifists and the Russians with Mr. Bevin'. The paper's editorial from June 1945 highlighted the urgency of bringing about a democratic revival in Germany, describing this as a 'gigantic task' in a 'desert of political thought'.⁵⁸ In the *Times*, a letter from Robert Birley, headmaster of Charterhouse School and famed educationalist, was published on VE Day, expressing his optimism about the re-education of the German people.⁵⁹ This was, he suggested, an 'unavoidable duty' in the course of military administration, calling on the occupiers

⁵⁵ 'Re-education of Germany', photograph, *Manchester Guardian*, 22 March 1946.

⁵⁶ Pronay, 'Introduction', 27.

⁵⁷ 'Re-education', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 February 1946.

⁵⁸ 'Democracy in Germany: The Need – and the Means – of Bringing about a Revival', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 June 1945.

⁵⁹ Robert Birley, 'Re-educating Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 8 May 1945; 'Re-education in the British Zone: 1,000,000 German Children Back at School', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 August 1945.

to instil responsibility into a people that had allowed Hitler to become their leader, encourage pride in the noble German traditions of Goethe and liberalism, and to teach respect for 'the Slavs'. In February 1947, Birley would himself be appointed to lead the British re-education mission in Germany.⁶⁰

In October 1945, a *Pathé News* film entitled *Young Germany* featuring Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education, outlined the programme being undertaken by British officials.⁶¹ In the newsreel, Wilkinson narrated her experiences during a recent visit to Germany, where the legacy of Hitler's Germany was said to lie heavily upon the children of Europe. There was, she explained, a good deal of assurance to be found in the 'kind of education which we hope will combat the evil effect of Hitler's cradle snatching' whereby 'flag-wagging and military parades' were replaced with 'simple children's games common to all nations'. It wasn't often in history that 'a conqueror made his first job to educate the children of the conquered', but this was the wise path being taken by the British authorities. The 'training of these young minds in the ways of peace and justice' was a colossal task, but a vital one for the future security of Britain.

In July, *Picture Post* had featured their own in-depth article on re-education, asking 'What will the next lot of Germans be like?'.⁶² It explained that this was 'the greatest battle of all [...], the battle for the children of Germany', regarded as the 'key to future peace'. But the paper had also expressed concern that only a 'small and hard-worked' section of the occupation authorities were, at present, dealing with this 'truly immense task'. 'There is not much sign', it was suggested, 'that re-education is being appreciated as the overwhelmingly important operation it is', with

⁶⁰ 'A Welcome Appointment', editorial, *Times*, 13 February 1947; 'Re-education – R. Birley to Advise', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 February 1947.

⁶¹ *Young Germany – Narration by the Rt. Hon. Ellen Wilkinson – Minister of Education*, 18 October 1945, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1153.2, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

⁶² 'What Will the Next Lot of Germans Be Like?' *Picture Post*, 14 July 1945.

naïve faith being placed in the utility of British soldiers as beacons of peace and democracy:

Meanwhile the fair-haired children still play in the sun, and sentimentalists, seeing the British soldier with a German baby on his knee, can assure themselves that that is all that's needed. The soldier is Britain's best ambassador, he will re-educate the Germans in his spare time, as a side-line. That's what they were saying, you remember, in 1919...

In the spring of 1946, the Earl of Rosslyn, a veteran of the British Control Commission of 1919-29, wrote to the *Telegraph* to noted his own concerns that the Germans were still unrepentant.⁶³ There were, he argued, many who simply blamed the regime and, soured by Nazi indoctrination, believed that facts about Third Reich's crimes were simply Allied propaganda. In fact, the German people simply didn't understand democracy and the British were hard-pressed to impress it upon them overnight. These pessimistic sentiments about the future of Germany were shared by, amongst others, the Lord Chancellor.⁶⁴

Likewise, the mass-market press, particularly the *Daily Mirror*, continued to savour any opportunity to highlight the apparent lack of repentance or guilt amongst the German people and the resilience of faith in Nazism.⁶⁵ In April 1946, evidence of resurgent anti-Semitism, demonstrated by damage to Jewish property in Frankfurt and the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Offenbach, led the *Mirror* to suggest that 'Huns Don't Change'.⁶⁶ In November, Cassandra's column on the 'legacy of Kultur' had no mention of re-education, but rather a Germanophobic anecdote about the

⁶³ Earl of Rosslyn, 'Germans Still Unrepentant', letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1946.

⁶⁴ Leslie Mortimer, 'Will Germany Repent', letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1946.

⁶⁵ 'One Thug in Five Still Free', *Daily Mirror*, 11 August 1945; 'Swastika Again', *Daily Mirror*, 28 January 1946.

⁶⁶ 'Huns Don't Change', *Daily Mirror*, 8 April 1946.

alleged inability of Germans to appreciate the warm-hearted compassion of David Lean's *Brief Encounter*:

[it] is a sensitive and delicate film, which deals with a man and woman, both married to other persons. They had a brief romance without adultery and then separated, although still loving one another, because they felt it would be dishonourable to break up their families. The film was recently shown to Germans in Germany. It was received with derisive boos and catcalls. The moral scruples of the story were considered improbable to the point of utter ridiculousness. It is all part of the legacy that the philosopher Rosenberg, and the Minister of public enlightenment Goebbels, left to the German people.⁶⁷

There were reservations of a different kind emanating from a faction of liberal intellectuals who had been outspoken advocates for a 'soft peace' during the war. In the first eighteen months of the occupation, numerous letters from Victor Gollancz, Gilbert Murray, Bertrand Russell, and others appeared in the upmarket press, suggesting that the imposition of democracy and liberalism from the outside was imprudent and ineffective.⁶⁸ They suggested that the entire ethos of this policy was wrong, arguing that it was the Germans themselves who should oversee the re-education of their youngest and most impressionable minds.

While the Potsdam Agreement had outlined an official vision of the postwar peace, it had not managed to dispel the disagreements over the 'German Problem' which had plagued wartime Britain. As the British occupiers set about implementing their principal policy of re-educating the German people, their work met with a good deal of support in the mainstream media. Yet for those who had envisioned a radically different peace settlement, centred upon reconciliation and cooperation with 'Other Germany', there was little cause for celebration.

⁶⁷ William Connor, 'Cassandra – Legacy of Kultur', *Daily Mirror*, 23 November 1946.

⁶⁸ Wickham Steed, 'German Re-education', letter to the editor, *Times*, 8 October 1946; Victor Gollancz, Gilbert Murray, and Bertrand Russell, 'Conditions of Peace', letter to the editor, *Times*, 15 April 1947; Alwyn Parker, 'Conditions of Peace', letter to the editor, *Times*, 11 May 1945.

Denazification

Re-education was only one facet of an extensive programme of denazification, intended to root out the individuals and institutions who had maintained the Third Reich across all the four Zones of occupation. The range of British responses to denazification demonstrate the ongoing disagreements over the appropriate response to the 'German Problem'. The grand scale of the procedures to root out Nazism seemed to embody the notion of collective guilt that had been outlined by Lord Vansittart in *Black Record*. Consequently, for much of the British press and public, this exacting process of recrimination and punishment was regarded as a vital cornerstone of the peace settlement. Yet for those whose priority was the rehabilitation of 'Other Germany', denazification was regarded as an indefensible indictment of Britain's regrettable thirst for vengeance.

The International Military Tribunal (IMT), held at Nuremberg between November 1945 and September 1946, exemplified the lengths to which the British and their wartime Allies were going in order to identify and punish the Third Reich's most reprehensible criminals. The IMT saw the most infamous surviving representatives of Nazism interrogated by Allied prosecutors about their role in the crimes of the Third Reich and, in particular, alleged warmongering. The trial resulted in seven custodial sentences and twelve death sentences, while the SS, the Gestapo, the SD, the Reich Cabinet, and the Nazi Party leadership corps were all declared to be criminal organisations.

The IMT was covered in detail by the world's media, with daily coverage celebrating these indictments in all the British newspapers.⁶⁹ The British public's

⁶⁹ Caroline Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial: Mass Observation and British Media Responses to the Nuremberg Tribunal, 1945-1946' in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and*

response to this trial is the subject of much debate, with uncertainty over the popular comprehension of the Third Reich's crimes that emerged from the proceedings.⁷⁰ In the course of this historiographical discussion, there have been claims that disinterest and tedium quickly set in amongst the British public, with scholars often citing Rebecca West's famous description of the IMT as a 'citadel of boredom'.⁷¹ Yet there is convincing evidence that a majority in Britain actually retained, at the very least, a passing interest in the trial – which was widely accepted as a valuable venture.⁷² For one, various public opinion surveys suggest that the vast majority of interviewees were strongly in favour of the arraignment of leading Nazis.⁷³ In fact, while there was a consensus that these Nazis should be brought to justice, many bemoaned the time spent trying these 'obviously guilty men'.⁷⁴ There was also a good deal of media interest in the verdict and punishment, especially in newsreel films.⁷⁵ The significance of the trial as a landmark episode in the history of denazification is,

Representing War and Genocide, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 38.

⁷⁰ Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Tony Kushner 'Loose Connections? Britain and the 'Final Solution'', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 59; Michael Robert Marrus, *The Holocaust at Nuremberg: A Documentary History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 5, 41; For an overview, see Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial', 32.

⁷¹ Rebecca West's famous description of the IMT as a "citadel of boredom", quoted in David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed* (London: Heinemann, 1992), 163; Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial', 35; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 145; Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 77, 79.

⁷² Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial', 35, 41.

⁷³ Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial', 39, 44, 47; Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust*, 75, 79-80.

⁷⁴ Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial', 40-1; File report 2424A, 'Note on Nuremberg, September 1946, Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton.

⁷⁵ *Nuremberg*, 9 September 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1408.41, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *End of Fuehrers AKA Nuremberg Verdict*, 3 October 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1410.27, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

as such, readily apparent: no other event in the course of the occupation would so clearly demonstrate the work of the Allies to bring Nazis to justice.

Beyond Courtroom 600 of the Nuremberg Palace of Justice there was a more wide-ranging process of denazification underway, seeking to extirpate Nazism from society and root out those implicated in even the most minor way with the crimes of the Third Reich. This process included the destruction of physical artefacts of Nazism, the disbandment of organisations and institutions associated with the Nazi party, and, most importantly, the removal and disbarment of those deemed to be Nazis from positions of power and influence. It was no easy task, without a clear definition of exactly what it meant to be 'guilty'. It was generally accepted that the leading members of the Nazi Party, the Gestapo, and the SS were responsible for atrocities and war crimes and should be punished. But what about civil servants, political underlings, Wehrmacht commanders, soldiers, or lawyers? The questions of accountability in the Third Reich, which continue to this day, were a challenging and unavoidable reality for the occupying powers. Across the four Zones of occupation, the Allies diverged in their respective approaches to the extirpation of Nazism from Germany.

British occupiers, while somewhat less comprehensive in denazification efforts than their American counterparts, approached the task with an ambitious zeal. In the first place, the Royal Warrant trials were instigated alongside the international war crimes proceedings at Nuremberg. These hearings focused on substantive crimes, including those of the Holocaust, and broadened the scope of enquiry beyond the elites of the IMT. The Royal Warrant trials implicated some of the traditional power bases of German society in the crimes of Nazism, including

business leaders and army commanders.⁷⁶ By 1949, some 5,000 Germans had been put on trial, leading to over 500 death sentences.⁷⁷ This extended programme of war crimes prosecutions was utilised by the British authorities to further demonstrate the judicial arm of denazification at work. In the first months of the peace, with memories of the Holocaust still fresh in the mind of the British public, the response was enthusiastic. In August 1945, a *Gaumont-British* newsreel on the Bergen-Belsen trial made reference to Vansittart's wartime diatribes, claiming that 'nothing that Germany may do in the future can ever wipe out her revolting crimes of her past, to which this black record has brought new reality'.⁷⁸ That said, over time these hearings attracted less and less public and media interest.

But the work to eradicate Nazism went far beyond legal prosecutions, with official denazification being an exacting process in which *all* Germans were treated with suspicion. This built upon the notion put forth in *Black Record* that the German people were collectively guilty. The *Fragebogen*, a 131-part questionnaire used by the British and Americans to classify Germans in relation to their allegiance to Nazism, exemplified this conviction. In the British Zone, the survey was completed by millions of Germans, who were required to obtain a certificate of denazification, dubbed the *Persilscheine* or Persil ticket, as a prerequisite for taking up work in a large variety of professions. This process was administered through Denazification Panels and Review Boards, whereby those under investigation could be classified and penalised accordingly. Unsurprisingly, this programme caused friction between occupiers and occupied, who were increasingly incensed at bureaucratic

⁷⁶ Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 144-5; Donald Bloxham, 'British War Crimes Trial Policy in Germany, 1945-1957: Implementation and Collapse', *The Journal of British Studies* 42, no. 1 (January 2003): 105-6, doi:10.1086/342687.

⁷⁷ Judt, *Postwar*, 53.

⁷⁸ *Guards of the German Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp Tried in Court*, 27 August 1945, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU4093000080, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>.

inefficiencies and perceived injustices – a joke, common in the first years of the occupation, was that the 1,000-year Reich consisted of 12 years of Nazism and 988 years of denazification.⁷⁹

In the first weeks and months of the peace, much of the British press triumphantly reported on the work of the BMG to remove Nazi laws, dissolve Nazi organisations, and punish those deemed guilty.⁸⁰ The *Daily Mirror*, for instance, reported that the British Military Government, by ordering every man, woman, and child in Lüneburg to provide a set of clothes for the freed prisoners of Bergen-Belsen, was ‘starting to make the Hun pay’.⁸¹ As far as the popular press were concerned, the occupation had brought to light the true extent to which the German people were contaminated by the scourge of Nazism, further substantiating Vansittart’s ‘black record’ thesis. In May 1945, the *Daily Mirror* pointed the finger at a ‘Hun Baron’ who, given the chance, ‘will finance the next Fuehrer’ and avoid repeating the mistakes of Hitler.⁸² In early July, the *Daily Express* reported the concerns of Cologne’s new mayor, one ‘Konrad Adenhauer [sic]’, that Nazis were once again ‘openly healing’.⁸³ In December, Edwin Tetlow wrote an article in the *Daily Mail* entitled ‘Achtung! Swastikas Bloom Again in Germany’, alleging that ‘the German spirit’ was reviving once more.⁸⁴ Tetlow claimed that the murder of a British soldier and the appearance of Nazi graffiti were portents of a treacherous future. The British, it was concluded, needed to maintain their vigilance and uphold the denazification programme at all costs.

⁷⁹ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 108.

⁸⁰ For example, ‘We Dissolve Nazi Laws’, *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1945; Maurice Blake, ‘Purging of Germany’, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 14 June 1945.

⁸¹ ‘Starting to Make the Hun Pay – “Wardrobe” Levy Put on Germans’, *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1945.

⁸² ‘The Hun Baron Who is Against Nazis – Because They Failed’, *Daily Mirror*, 12 May 1945.

⁸³ ‘Cologne’s Mayor is Worried About the ‘Heils’’, *Daily Express*, 2 July 1945.

⁸⁴ Edwin Tetlow, ‘Achtung! Swastikas Bloom Again in Germany’, *Daily Mail*, 11 December 1945.

Yet as the novelty of punishing Nazis wore off, the media's interest in denazification also gradually subsided. In its place, a number of complaints and queries levelled at the BMG and their attempts to root out Nazism were raised in the British press. In October 1946, Tory MP David Gammans wrote to the *Times* to discuss 'denazification and its limits', suggesting that the cumbersome administration of the British authorities and the overly ambitious scale of the task had undermined its effectiveness.⁸⁵ The following year, Arthur Geoffrey Dickens suggested in his *Lübeck Diary* that denazification was a noble aim, but that its misapplication risked 'making real Nazis of people who were once only paper-Nazis'.⁸⁶

Victor Gollancz and the 'soft peace' lobby had consistently suggested that the denazification procedures were a flawed means of 'winning the peace' and symptomatic of the misguided approach of the Allies to the 'German Problem'. In a series of newspaper articles, Gollancz labelled the policy as an unjust and impractical form of 'totalitarian democracy', instilling crippling uncertainty amongst innocent people.⁸⁷ In 1947, he would outline his opposition to denazification in two books, *In Darkest Germany* and *Germany Revisited*, which recounted his trips to the British Zone.⁸⁸ This was, he alleged, a 'hideous process', destroying efficiency and poisoning the moral atmosphere by encouraging subterfuge and bribery: in short, 'it fails to achieve its avowed positions. And heaven knows how long the horror will go dragging

⁸⁵ L. D. Gammans, 'Denazification and its Limits', letter to the editor, *Times*, 12 October 1946.

⁸⁶ Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, *Lübeck Diary* (London: Gollancz, 1947), 325.

⁸⁷ Victor Gollancz, 'The Re-education of Germany: II - Totalitarian Democracy', *Manchester Guardian*, 3 December 1946; reprinted in Victor Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* (London: Gollancz, 1947), 102-3.

⁸⁸ Victor Gollancz, *Germany Revisited* (London: Gollancz, 1947).

on'.⁸⁹ It was, Gollancz continued, also proof of the troubling ways in which totalitarianism had seeped into the decaying political culture of the West.⁹⁰

In his opposition to denazification, Gollancz was joined by several long-term allies, including Lord Beveridge, who in his 1946 work *An Urgent Message from Germany* suggested that denazification was 'generating hate' and 'fit only for a totalitarian state'.⁹¹ George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, also visited the British Zone in late 1946, declaring in his report (written on behalf of a delegation of British churchmen) that denazification was 'one of the chief roots of German bitterness against Britain'.⁹² Bell suggested that the insecurity, corruption, and administrative inefficiency of the procedure was doing great harm to Anglo-German relations, while there was simply no justification for the tens of thousands held in detention centres without charge. There was, he concluded, little hope of reintegrating Germany 'into a peaceful and reconciled Europe' while 'this festering source of bitterness' was allowed to continue. In retrospect, that even such an obviously desirable goal as denazification proved divisive amongst British commentators speaks to the depth of the cultural and political rift that had emerged in the course of the wartime debate over the 'German Problem'.

⁸⁹ Gollancz, *Germany Revisited*, 24-5; Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany*, 118-9. There was, he argued, good reason to set a 'very early' end date to denazification in order to pursue a policy that would be less offensive to 'the spirit of democracy' and more conducive to Germany's economic recovery; William Beveridge, *An Urgent Message from Germany* (London: Pilot Press, 1946), 15-6.

⁹⁰ Gollancz, *Germany Revisited*, 25.

⁹¹ Beveridge, *An Urgent Message*, 15-6.

⁹² George Bell et al, *The Task of the Churches in Germany: a report from a delegation of British churchmen after a visit to the British Zone, October 16th-30th, 1946, presented to the Control Office for Germany and Austria*, (London: Sword of the Spirit, 1947), 17-18.

Demilitarisation

In a series of characteristically cantankerous letters on the aims of the occupation, Lord Vansittart suggested there was agreement across the political fault lines for at least one thing: the total disarmament of Germany.⁹³ There had, of course, been abortive attempts to stringently reduce the size of Germany's armed forces in the aftermath of the First World War. And for many commentators, the failure to ensure Germany's military impotency was the most urgent lesson for the post-1945 peace.⁹⁴ The objective of transforming Germany into a peaceable and democratic nation was to be founded upon the wholesale removal of the country's war potential and military power. It was also decided at Potsdam to disband the German armed forces, ban all groups and organisations with any military affiliation or application, and decentralise the police authorities.

Throughout the first year of the occupation, the British media, especially the upmarket broadsheets and the newsreels, eagerly reported on the work to destroy Germany's naval and air power, disband the Wehrmacht, and enforce 'industrial disarmament'.⁹⁵ The officially-sourced images of the seemingly irreparable damage

⁹³ Robert Vansittart, 'Germany After the War – Aims of Occupation', letter to the editor, *Times*, 11 May 1945.

⁹⁴ McCallum, *Public Opinion*,; Thomas H. Minshall, *On Disarming Germany* (London; New York: Hutchinson, 1945).

⁹⁵ 'The Security Board', editorial, *Times*, 18 January 1949; 'An International Authority for the Ruhr', *Times*, 29 December 1948; 'The Ruhr', editorial, *Times*, 12 November 1948; Leonard Ingrams, 'The Future of Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 17 January 1947; 'Germany's Fate', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1946; 'Fighting Chaos', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 1948; 'The Dismantling Policy in Germany: Allied Decisions and Explanations', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 October 1947; 'The Disarmament of Germany', photograph, *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1945; 'Disarming Germany Industrially', *Manchester Guardian*, 21 February 1946; 'Industrial Disarmament of Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 February 1946; 'Making Germany Safe and Useful', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 June 1948; 'Kiel: Graveyard of the German Navy', *Picture Post*, 6 October 1945; 'Saturday Will Be Disaster Day for Germans', *Daily Mirror*, 30 January 1946; *Newsbriefs – Hamburg Boat Pens Destroyed*, 29 October 1945, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1169.02, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *Operation Deadlight*, 3 January 1946, *Pathé News*,

inflicted upon the once-powerful German military were greeted with elation, as exemplified by *Movietone*'s film 'Hun Prisoners: How the Mighty have Fallen'.⁹⁶ The film's narration took a bombastic tone, emphasising that the Wehrmacht had 'butchered thousands' and now faced the iniquities of captivity. There was a particularly keen interest in the destruction of Germany's much-feared naval fleet, its obliteration at the hands of Allied engineers documented in great detail during the first months of the occupation. *Picture Post* and *Movietone* both highlighted the destruction wrought at Kiel, which now stood as 'the graveyard of the German navy' and was regarded as a symbol of Allied victory.⁹⁷

Yet some anxieties did endure: in February 1946, a *Movietone* film stressed the importance of 'suppressing Germany's warlike instincts' for many years to come, as in ten years 'some of us may begin to forget what German armaments have done to the world'.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the impact of these dramatic, powerful images of the once all-conquering German armed forces brought to their knees should not be

newsreel, Issue 1372.01, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *Heligoland Goes Up*, 24 October 1947, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1183.06, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *British Navy Sinks the Last of the U-Boats*, 10 December 1945, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410040022, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *Americans Destroy Nazi Ammunition Factory*, 14 February 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410060013, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *Demolition of German War Plants One Year After Victory in Europe VE Day*, 6 May 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410090030, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *German: Destruction of the Heligoland Fortifications in North Sea*, 24 April 1947, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410200021, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *People and Places in the News*, 4 February 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1374.07, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

⁹⁶ "Hun Prisoners" *How the Mighty Have Fallen*, 22 November 1945, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 46223, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

⁹⁷ *Kiel – Grave of German Fleet*, 21 January 1946 *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 46401, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

⁹⁸ *Inside Germany*, 14 February 1946, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 46494, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

understated. The policy of demilitarisation, building upon the feats of the wartime bombing campaign, was widely celebrated for, as a *Gaumont-British* newsreel proclaimed, effectively ‘drawing Germany’s teeth’.⁹⁹ The occupation was seen to have conceded Germany’s military prowess to the dustbin of history – the only outstanding threat was complacency.

‘A country that has been completely destroyed’

The work to ensure the permanent and complete disarmament of Germany was closely tied to controls over the country’s industrial production. The future of the German economy, long a subject of intense anxiety in Britain, was at the centre of Allied plans for the postwar settlement and widely regarded as vital to securing the peace. The great industrial heartlands of Germany were now under Allied, and specifically British, control. The question was, ultimately, who, if anyone, should reap the benefits of Germany’s economic strength?

In the summer of 1945, the spectre of Morgenthau was still felt strongly, with the *Daily Mirror* enthusiastically reporting that ‘the land of militarists’ was to be ‘made a land of tillers of the soil’.¹⁰⁰ The Potsdam Agreement had declared that Germany’s war potential was to be destroyed and that the German people should not maintain a standard of living higher than the European average.¹⁰¹ This demanded the break-up of major industrial concerns, the removal of industrial machinery and expertise, and close supervision over the German economy’s strictly

⁹⁹ *German Shipyards Demolished After WWII*, 6 June 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410100009, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>.

¹⁰⁰ ‘The Land of Militarists to be Made a Land of Tillers of the Soil’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 August 1945.

¹⁰¹ Wendy Carlin, ‘Economic Reconstruction in Western Germany, 1945-55: The Displacement of ‘Vegetative Control’, in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 46.

limited revival. Yet the precise instruments of economic control in Germany hardly mustered a great deal of press or public attention. The few newspaper reports on the subject were primarily exultant at the newfound supremacy of the British over Germany's much-feared war industries. The *Daily Mirror* noted with some joy that British occupiers had requisitioned the luxurious family palace of the famous Krupp dynasty.¹⁰²

Rather, in the first months of the occupation there was one overriding image emerging from the British Zone: the overwhelming scale of devastation that had been meted out across Germany. This narrative was encouraged by PR/ISC officials, who provided access to bombed-out ruins seen as exemplifying the uncompromising defeat of Nazi Germany. There was, these images implied, little chance that this war-ravaged nation could compete on the world market for a long time to come.

In 1946, Stephen Spender, following his tour around Germany, wrote that 'it was in Cologne that I realized what total destruction meant'.¹⁰³ The level of damage was, he continued, quite unparalleled and had created 'corpse-towns' which were a 'shape created by our century as the Gothic cathedral is the shape created by the Middle Ages'.¹⁰⁴ In fact, many of the first reports from postwar Germany were characterised by this sense of incredulity at the catastrophic state of the British Zone's towns and cities. This was as true in personal correspondence as in newspapers and books, with members of the CCG (BE) and BAOR writing to family and friends to express dismay at the state of this once commanding nation. Mary Bouman wrote to her parents in the spring of 1946 of her sympathy for 'poor old Hamburg', where the 'terrible sight' of ruins were 'on too vast a scale to cope with'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² 'Our Men Now Dine in Krupp Palace', *Daily Mirror*, 27 August 1945.

¹⁰³ Stephen Spender, *European Witness* (London: Hamilton, 1946), 21.

¹⁰⁴ Spender, *European Witness*, 22-4.

¹⁰⁵ Mary Bouman to her parents, 25 April 1946, Herford, Private Papers of Miss M. Bouman, Documents.16779, Imperial War Museum Archive, London.

The sense that Germany had been bombed into oblivion at the mercy of the victorious Allies came from more official sources too. Field Marshal Montgomery was amongst those quick to point out that their erstwhile enemy had been convincingly vanquished, describing Germany as 'a country that has been completely destroyed'.¹⁰⁶ But it was perhaps the photographs and newsreel films that truly brought home the scale of destruction in Germany. The *Movietone* newsreel 'Berlin – Carcass City' from September 1946 is a textbook example, describing Germany's capital as 'more or less dead', a 'corpse' which stood as a 'crestfallen memorial of the Hohenzollerns'.¹⁰⁷

The damage was not easily fixed: the ruins of the Ruhr and beyond would remain a feature of the German landscape for some time to come. Edna Wearmouth, despite arriving almost two years after the end of the war, was taken aback at the level of damage she witnessed in Cologne, where over 60% of the city had been destroyed.¹⁰⁸ Evidently sensing that words could only convey so much, she compiled a photo collage in order to truly capture its overwhelming scale.¹⁰⁹ Here, Edna purposefully juxtaposed her personal images of the ruins with an accompanying set of pictures, mainly shop-bought photographs and postcards, which depicted the city in its pre-war splendour.¹¹⁰

In fact, published accounts of postwar Germany that appeared in the final year of the occupation continued to dwell on the scale of destruction. Ethel Mannin,

¹⁰⁶ "'Britain Must Stay Strong," Says Monty', *Daily Mirror*, 26 September 1945.

¹⁰⁷ *Berlin – Carcass City*, 23 September 1946, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 47494, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

¹⁰⁸ Jeffry M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of the War: The Reconstruction of German Cities After World War II* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 126.

¹⁰⁹ On the use of personal photography as a source, see Elizabeth Harvey and Maiken Umbach, 'Introduction: Photography and Twentieth-Century German History', *Central European History* 48, no. 3 (2015): 287-299.

¹¹⁰ Edna Wearmouth, 'Köln on the Rhein', photograph album, June 1947, Private Papers of Miss E. Wearmouth, Documents.5413, Imperial War Museum Archive, London.

writing in her 1948 work *German Journey*, described the ‘colossal Krupps works’ in Essen as ‘a mass of twisted girders and piled-up masonry’.¹¹¹ There was, she suggested, still a sense of shock for any new visitor to Germany upon their initial realisation of the damage:

the mind seems to become dazed and you cannot take in any more desolation; you stare at the hill-high rubble and the hollow faces of houses and buildings and your mind says ‘ruins’ and ‘rubble’ with a kind of dull acceptance, as though it would be surprised to see anything else.¹¹²

In the same year, a report by British Churchwomen, *What We Saw in Germany*, noted that ‘the first cardinal fact of the situation’ was the ‘wholesale and terrific destruction’.¹¹³ *A Foreign Affair*, Billy Wilder’s popular feature film released in late 1948 and given permission to film on location, provided its audience with yet another sense of Germany’s enduring state of decimation.¹¹⁴

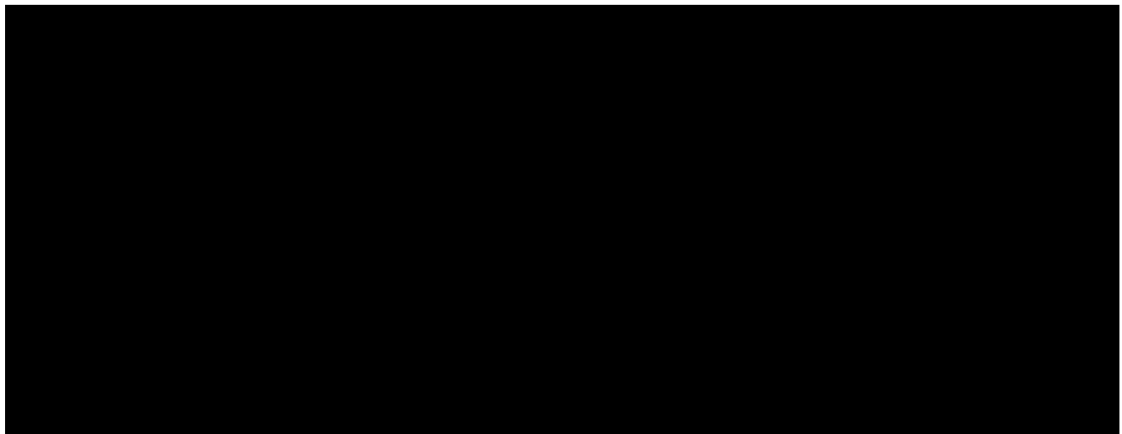


Illustration 3: Stills from *A Foreign Affair* (1948)

¹¹¹ Ethel Mannin, *German Journey* (London; New York: Jarrolds, 1948), 128.

¹¹² Mannin, *German Journey*, 128.

¹¹³ Henrietta Bell et al, *What We Saw in Germany: a report by British churchwomen to the Control Commission for Germany* (London: Sword of the Spirit, 1948), 10.

¹¹⁴ *A Foreign Affair*, film, directed by Billy Wilder, starring Marlene Dietrich (1948; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures).

As a result, the notion that Germany had been thoroughly and perhaps irretrievably destroyed in the course of the war took a fairly ubiquitous hold in postwar Britain. Germany's total obliteration was a powerful and enduring image, at once shocking and reassuring. The physical destruction of the country's infrastructure seemed to exemplify Britain's wartime success, especially the destructive power of the RAF. It was a state of affairs that would ostensibly preclude Germany from becoming a leading industrial or military power any time soon. There was a growing sense that Germany's war potential had been neutralised: it would be nothing short of a miracle if the country was to experience a rapid economic recovery in the near future.

The Western Option

The PR/ISC's endeavours to regulate the independent media, providing a positive portrayal of the Britain's efforts to implement the Potsdam Agreement, had evidently met with some success. The work towards re-education, denazification, and demilitarisation had inspired optimism that the 'German Problem' was being dealt with, even if press interest in the technicalities of occupation policy did gradually dissipate.¹¹⁵ All the more powerful were the images of destruction, which seemed to confirm the pacification of Germany as a military and economic threat for years to come. Yet these reports came with a consistent caveat: the attempt to reform the social, cultural, economic, and political character of Germany had a long way to go and the Allies must not get complacent. That said, not everyone was supportive of British policy in Germany: Victor Gollancz and the steadfast 'soft peace' lobby had voiced their concern at the allegedly vengeful ethos of these endeavours.

¹¹⁵ Croxson to Underwood, Publicity To Off-set, Recent Newspaper Articles Against Control Commission Personnel, 30 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

Potsdam was, they argued, imbued with an anti-German sentiment which had precluded Allied leaders from rational policymaking. For Gollancz and others, the peace could only be won through a process of Anglo-German reconciliation and rapprochement, rather than retribution.

But while these public disagreements intensified in the first two years after Potsdam, British policy in Germany was already undergoing substantial revision.¹¹⁶ The period from 1945 to 1947 saw the Labour administration reassess Britain's foreign obligations, responding to a series of crises which threatened to undermine the country's economic, international, and imperial standing.¹¹⁷ There were profound fears that the United States was reverting to its pre-war isolationism, coupled with Anglo-American tensions regarding the development of British atomic weapons.¹¹⁸ In addition, events in Europe had produced anxieties in Whitehall over the prospect of Soviet expansionism.¹¹⁹ But, above all, it was the escalating costs of Britain's overseas commitments amid crippling budgetary constraints which forced the hand of policymakers.¹²⁰ The war had been a huge drain on Britain's national wealth, turning the world's greatest creditor into its greatest debtor.¹²¹ These problems were exacerbated when American financial aid, which had propped up the flailing British economy in the course of the war, abruptly ended in August 1945. The termination of Lend-Lease necessitated a revision of state expenditure, not least in Germany where costs were spiralling beyond control.

The war had devastated the continent's agricultural production and trade infrastructure, leading to a worldwide food shortage. The provision of food became, as one member of the British occupation staff remarked, 'almost as international a

¹¹⁶ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 137.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 150.

¹¹⁹ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 53.

¹²⁰ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 53.

¹²¹ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 8.

means of understanding between the nations as music and the arts'.¹²² For the people of Europe, victors and vanquished, victims and perpetrators, hunger (of varying degrees) was an inescapable facet of life. The British Zone was particularly vulnerable, an arbitrary area that was historically dependent on food imports, dominated by heavy industry, and now severely impaired by months of British and American bombing raids: communication lines, infrastructure, and above all housing (of which as much as 45% had been destroyed) were also in an incredibly sorry state.¹²³ British occupiers confronted unanticipated difficulties, unable to tackle the interconnected problems of impaired industrial production, coal acquisition (already heavily impeded by reparations), steel production (truncated by the Level of Industry plan), transport, and food provision. This was a cyclical problem with no easy solution: alarming food shortages and destitution further reduced productivity and increased absenteeism, as workers scavenged the countryside for foodstuffs and black market trades.

It was increasingly apparent to British occupation officials that the decisions made in the summer of 1945 were impractical at best. The on-the-ground response was often one of hastily improvising a more pragmatic and reconstructive approach to the German economy.¹²⁴ But the origins of Germany's devastating levels of deprivation and food scarcity lay beyond the chaos of the British Zone. The ambiguous stipulations of Potsdam and growing inter-Allied hostility fashioned a crisis that seemingly threatened the peace and would ultimately help to usher in the Cold War.

¹²² Mary Bouman to her parents, 20 February 1946, Lübbecke, Bouman Papers.

¹²³ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 8.

¹²⁴ Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 326; Ian D. Turner, 'British Policy Towards German Industry, 1945-9: Reconstruction, Restriction or Exploitation', in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 79-80; Knowles, *Winning the Peace*.

At Potsdam, the requirement to treat Germany as a single economic unit, whereby industrial output from one Zone could be exchanged for food from another, had been made paramount by British negotiators. Yet there was no clear hierarchy of priorities amongst the various provisions of the Agreement, and the Soviets, whose wartime losses were unparalleled, took reparations payments to be the principal concern. They demanded an allocation of \$10 billion worth of reparations-in-kind must be fulfilled prior to any domestic trade of food from their own, largely agricultural, Zone of occupation.¹²⁵ Thus, while consumer goods and industrial products went from west to east, there was no reciprocal exchange of foodstuffs as anticipated. This was augmented by Soviet attempts to collectivise German farmland, breaking up Junker estates in their Zone of occupation. The result was a real fear of catastrophe in the British Zone, where pervasive homelessness and hunger, shattered transportation networks, and inadequate supplies of clothing soon threatened the outbreak of famine and disease.

In the first months and years of the peace, there were commonly reports of near-starvation, especially when rations in parts of the British Zone were cut to just 1,000 calories per day during the winter of 1945/6.¹²⁶ This perilous situation was augmented by an influx of refugees, as an estimated 15,000,000 'ethnic Germans' were forcibly relocated from eastern Prussia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere in eastern Europe.¹²⁷ As many as 8,000,000 made their way to towns and cities in

¹²⁵ Szanajda, *The Allies*, 49.

¹²⁶ 'Germans Face 'Catastrophe'', *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1946; 'Famine', *Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 1946; 'Germany: Monty Warns of Winter Illness', *Daily Mail*, 3 October 1945; 'Food Crisis in the Ruhr', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1947; 'Fears of Winter Creep Over Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 October 1947; Anne Deighton, 'Towards a 'Western' Strategy: the making of British policy towards Germany 1945-46' in *Britain and the First Cold War*, ed. Anne Deighton, (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990), 60.

¹²⁷ R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012).

western Germany, further exacerbating the crippling food and housing shortages. This was a result of the wartime agreements between the 'Big Three' over the Soviet sphere of influence and the territorial adjustments made in the east of Europe. The eastern part of Germany had been truncated, establishing the border with Poland established on the Oder-Neisse line. As the Red Army took over large swathes of territory, many thousands of Germans decided to flee, while others became victims of the so-called 'wild expulsions' in the first half of 1945.

Article XII of the Potsdam Agreement had called for a 'population transfer' of the German populations remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to be effected in 'an orderly and humane manner'.¹²⁸ But the iniquity of mass relocation was augmented when the Soviets and their allies implemented the legal evictions in an uncompromising fashion. There were an estimated 600,000 deaths, along with innumerable rapes, beatings, and other indignities – expellees were often given only a few hours, and in some cases minutes, to pack their belongings and leave.¹²⁹ Soon, millions upon millions of refugees, their few remaining possessions in hand, trawled westwards across the continent or loaded onto transport ships headed for ports in the British Zone.¹³⁰ There had been provisions for the accommodation of refugees in the four occupation Zones, yet the Soviets neglected their obligation to help. Likewise, the French authorities refused to acknowledge the provisions of Potsdam and prohibited the migration of expellees from the east to their Zone. As a result, the British and American Zones absorbed the vast majority of migrants, intensifying existing shortages of shelter, clothing, and, above all, food. They joined the millions

¹²⁸ It remains a controversial policy to this day, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 1999); Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹²⁹ Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany*, 136; Douglas, *Orderly and Humane*.

¹³⁰ In February 1946, Operation Swallow alone saw 1.5 million people enter the British Zone, see Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany*, 136.

of Displaced Persons (DPs) who remained in the British Zone, unable or unwilling to return home.

The refugee problem touched upon every aspect of military government.¹³¹ Temporary transit and refugee camps were set up, utilising available space in schools, barracks, and even former concentration camps. The extent of the housing shortage meant that many thousands of German expellees would remain in this improvised accommodation for months or even years to come.¹³² But it was the supply of food that presented the most urgent and challenging issue, with the British authorities in Germany increasingly dependent on food imports from North America just to maintain a meagre ration in the Zone.¹³³ In 1946, the British exchequer predicted the outlay to be an astonishing £80,000,000, but even this proved an underestimate: the bill reached £120,000,000 for the year, an imposition that the Chancellor, Hugh Dalton, felt amounted to 'paying reparations to Germany'.¹³⁴ The cost of these imports consumed Britain's dwindling supply of dollar reserves and even impacted upon British consumption at home, with the imposition of bread rationing in July 1946. Yet with growing concerns over Soviet expansionism, there was a growing sense that food relief for Germany was indispensable – there was, as Deputy Governor of the American Zone Lucius D. Clay remarked, no choice between being a communist on 1,500 calories or a believer in democracy on 1,000.¹³⁵

It was an unsustainable political situation, with the growing financial outlay in Germany seemingly threatening the integrity of Britain's position as a world

¹³¹ Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany*, 15.

¹³² Graham-Dixon, *The Allied Occupation of Germany*, 140.

¹³³ John E. Farquharson, *The Western Allies and the Politics of Food: Agrarian Management in Postwar Germany* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985); Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 144.

¹³⁴ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 154.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 281. Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*, 7.

power.¹³⁶ The Labour government recognised that only a balanced German economy, legitimately functioning as a single economic unit, could minimise Britain's outlay. Yet as inter-Allied disagreements intensified this seemed increasingly implausible: attempts to draw-up a more satisfactory joint import/export arrangement failed, while efforts to raise the threshold of permissible industrial output were also rebuffed.¹³⁷ The Foreign Office, previously unwilling to give up on the 'Big Three' framework, began to consider plans for an alternative approach to Germany, breaking away from the stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement.¹³⁸ This included the work of the Economic and Industrial Planning staff, who devised schemes for the controlled economy recovery of Germany, harnessing the industrial might of the Ruhr for Europe's recovery. In this, officials were following the line long-advocated by Britain's military chiefs and intelligence community.¹³⁹

The proposed 'Western option', outlined by the staunchly anti-communist Bevin at a cabinet meeting in early May 1946, aimed to offset the cost of food imports through increasing exports.¹⁴⁰ It proposed a more rapid transfer of power back to the Germans and the reconstruction of Germany's severely hamstrung economy. The danger of Soviet expansionism, Bevin suggested, had become 'as great as, and possibly even greater than, that of a revived Germany'.¹⁴¹ Yet anxieties over the

¹³⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 148; Farquharson, *The Western Allies*, 326; Ian D. Turner, 'British Policy Towards German Industry, 1945-9: Reconstruction, Restriction or Exploitation', in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 79; Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 194.

¹³⁷ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 55; Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 10.

¹³⁸ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 10; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 149.

¹³⁹ Peter Hennessy, *The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War* (London: Penguin, 2002), 8-19, xiv; Richard Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America, and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001), 43-63

¹⁴⁰ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 80.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Deighton, 'Towards a 'Western' Strategy', 64.

response of the Soviet Union and, most importantly, the unwillingness of American policymakers delayed any firm commitment on behalf of the cabinet.¹⁴² It was not until the summer of 1946 that British policymakers would reach something of a consensus, privately accepting the need for a new approach in Germany. In July, at the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers, Bevin declared Britain's intention to organise their Zone 'in such a manner that no further liability shall fall on the British taxpayer', unless four-power cooperation could be resumed.¹⁴³ In September, it was US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes who put forward a plan for the fusion of occupation Zones, readily taken up by the British authorities. Byrnes's subsequent Stuttgart Speech outlined America's intention to remain in Germany, as well as a restatement of official policy which repudiated the ethos of the Morgenthau Plan in favour of a more reconstructive approach.¹⁴⁴

There has been a great deal of historiographical debate over the precise role that Britain played as these events unfolded.¹⁴⁵ It is apparent that British soft-power played a significant role in the emergence of the Cold War, although this came primarily as a consequence of weakness and growing dependence on American military and financial support. But regardless of the precise permutations of these geopolitical exchanges, by the end of 1946 there can be no doubt that Anglo-American leaders were set on the path towards a 'Western option', albeit without any public rebuke of the Potsdam Agreement.

¹⁴² Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 80.; Deighton, 'Towards a 'Western' Strategy', 66.

¹⁴³ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 10; quoted in Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 83.

¹⁴⁴ Tom Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace: 1945 to the Present*, 2nd ed., (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 38.

¹⁴⁵ Watt, 'Rethinking the Cold War', 444-56; For an overview see Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 77-83; Reynolds, 'Britain and the Cold War', 501-3; Anne Deighton, ed., *Britain and the First Cold War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1990); Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*; Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', 121.

In the British Zone, the CCG (BE) began to alter its occupation strategy radically: in November 1946, control over local government, education, elections, and public health was handed back to the Germans, following on from the German-run denazification panels which had been in action since January.¹⁴⁶ This marked a major shift away from intensive re-education and close control, towards a more supervisory form of occupation – and ostensibly more in line with the long-term demands of Victor Gollancz’s ‘soft peace’ lobby. The Anglo-American Bizone, which came into existence in January 1947, ultimately failed to reduce British expenditure. Yet it heralded the beginning of a strategy of containment that would ultimately see Germany divided between East and West.¹⁴⁷

Save Europe Now

The evolution of the British policy away from the Potsdam Agreement had taken place away from the prying eyes of the press and public. In Britain, leading officials were worried that the rank-and-file of the Labour Party, not to mention public opinion more broadly, remained largely sympathetic to the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁸ This stemmed from wartime, when Soviet heroism in the fight against Nazism had been extolled across the mass media.¹⁴⁹ It had continued into peacetime and, in March 1946, Winston Churchill’s now-famous ‘Iron Curtain’ speech had actually met with considerable rebuke in much of the British press.¹⁵⁰ As a result, British policymakers were unprepared to countenance such an about-turn in the public

¹⁴⁶ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 76-7.; Bianka J. Adams, *From Crusade to Hazard: The Denazification of Bremen Germany* (Lanham, Md.; Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 48.

¹⁴⁷ Deighton, ‘Towards a ‘Western’ Strategy’, 58.

¹⁴⁸ Deighton, ‘Towards a ‘Western’ Strategy’, 66.

¹⁴⁹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 147.

¹⁵⁰ Alan Foster, ‘The British Press and the Coming of the Cold War’, in *Britain and the First Cold War*, ed. Anne Deighton (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990), 13, 29.

contours of official policy.¹⁵¹ In the coming years, they would maintain a public commitment to Potsdam, seeking to ensure that the Soviet Union was ultimately to take responsibility for the breakdown of the 'Grand Alliance'.¹⁵² There was, moreover, to be no significant alteration of the CCG (BE)'s public relations strategy, with the PR/ISC continuing to uphold a narrative faithful to the Potsdam Agreement for months and even years after this had ceased to be official policy. It marked the beginnings of a growing disconnect between the public and *de facto* iterations of official policy in the course of the Cold War.

In lieu of precise information about the evolving geopolitical outlook of British policymakers, the British media and public came to address the humanitarian crisis within the context of the 'German Problem'. The growing evidence of widespread distress, malnutrition, and mass dislocation was an issue which struck at the heart of the moral and practical dilemmas underpinning the Allied occupation. There were even fears, with the emergence of strikes in the Ruhr, that German workers might succumb to communism. As a result, it further reinvigorated discussions over the appropriate treatment of a former enemy people and the most effective means of 'winning the peace'.

In the midst of the refugee crisis in Germany, the vociferous strand of liberal and left-wing opinion which had lobbied for a 'soft peace' since the beginning of the war found itself once more at the centre of the public debate.¹⁵³ Victor Gollancz would write various newspaper articles as well as another book, *Our Threatened Values*, in which he insisted that the German refugees were victims of circumstance, defenceless against the totalitarian Nazi regime and now callously and unfairly expelled from eastern Europe.¹⁵⁴ Gollancz had grown increasingly concerned that

¹⁵¹ Deighton, 'Towards a 'Western' Strategy', 69.

¹⁵² Deighton, 'Towards a 'Western' Strategy', 58.

¹⁵³ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 119 describes them as the 'bleeding hearts'.

¹⁵⁴ Victor Gollancz, *Our Threatened Values*, (London: Gollancz, 1946).

Europe had stared too long into the abyss of moral depravity, becoming tainted with the traits of Nazism.¹⁵⁵ It was, he felt, the responsibility of Britain to lead the way in overseeing the continent's moral regeneration, fostering moral virtue through actions to help their defeated enemy.¹⁵⁶

In September 1945, Gollancz made a public appeal to the British government, sending a letter, co-signed by Bertrand Russell, George Bell, and Gilbert Murray amongst others, to a number of local and national newspapers.¹⁵⁷ It was, they argued, 'not in accordance with the traditions of this country to allow children - even the children of ex-enemies - to starve', suggesting a cut to British rations in order to 'save' Europe.¹⁵⁸ In the autumn, Gollancz set up the public pressure group Save Europe Now (SEN) to further his cause, organising a series of rallies and public campaigns to bring pressure on the government. As Matthew Frank's work on SEN has shown, the organisation sought to align public *and* political opinion behind a more proactive response to the problem of hunger in central Europe.¹⁵⁹

SEN appealed to its supporters to send in postcards, illustrating their willingness to give up a share of their own rations and help the beleaguered Germans: over 20,000 were received in the first week, 60,000 by late December and more than 100,000 by spring 1946.¹⁶⁰ The positive reaction prompted Gollancz and his associates to launch a second appeal, calling on the government to relax restrictions on the passage of goods to Germany and arrange for a voluntary scheme of ration cuts. It was hoped that clothes and food could be donated locally, forwarded

¹⁵⁵ Frank, 'The New Morality', 236.

¹⁵⁶ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 423.

¹⁵⁷ Frank, 'The New Morality', 239.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Frank, 'The New Morality', 240.

¹⁵⁹ Frank, 'The New Morality'.

¹⁶⁰ Frank, 'The New Morality', 240; Victor Gollancz (Chairman) and Eleanor F. Rathbone (Vice-Chairman), 'Save Europe Now', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 22 December 1945; Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns, 1945-65* (London: Allison and Busby, 1971), 17.

to Germany or elsewhere in Europe through a government agency or a charitable organisation.¹⁶¹ In early October, Gollancz organised a public meeting at Conway Hall in London, inviting all Liberal and Labour MPs along with a number of leading Anglicans, members of the media, and various other dignitaries.¹⁶² The forty-or-so Labour backbenchers, newspaper editors, bishops, and assorted members of the literati (including T. S. Eliot and George Orwell) who filled the venue reiterated demands for a voluntary scheme of ration cuts. There were further meetings across the country in the coming weeks, including one at the Royal Albert Hall.

The resolutions of the Conway Hall meeting included an appeal to the British government to negotiate an end to expulsions from Eastern Europe until an inter-Allied policy was agreed, a common policy in the western Zones for the reception of refugees, and the release of Britain's food reserves.¹⁶³ Yet SEN's demands went beyond the refugee crisis, extending to include a call for increased production in the Ruhr, the mobilisation of all available vehicles to break the transport bottleneck, and the creation of a Supreme Economic Council to oversee long-term reconstruction across Europe.¹⁶⁴ These campaign goals were reiterated in correspondence with leading politicians, including Prime Minister Attlee and Food Minister Ben Smith.¹⁶⁵ The overriding aim of Save Europe Now was, as Gollancz's biographer notes, to push the climate of public and political opinion towards 'more generous treatment of the Germans'.¹⁶⁶

These efforts can be said to have focused public and political attention on the refugee crisis and the British Zone of Germany.¹⁶⁷ The campaign led to significant

¹⁶¹ Frank, 'The New Morality', 240.

¹⁶² Frank, 'The New Morality', 243.

¹⁶³ Frank, 'The New Morality', 243-4.; Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 414.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 415.

¹⁶⁵ Frank, 'The New Morality', 249-50.

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *Victor Gollancz*, 449.

¹⁶⁷ Farquharson, "'Emotional but influential'", 514; Frank, 'The New Morality', 242-3.

parliamentary interest, not only from backbench MPs but also in a well-attended Commons debate on the issue in October 1945.¹⁶⁸ In December 1946, the British government eventually ceded to the most symbolic of the group's demands, allowing food packages to be sent to the continent and over the next two years more than 35,000 relief parcels would be delivered.¹⁶⁹ The group's initial focus on the refugee crisis subsequently waned, in part because the humanitarian distress had receded amid the increased allocation of imported foodstuffs and as winter became spring.¹⁷⁰ Yet SEN's lobbying efforts continued throughout the 1940s, with the organisation petitioning both the public and the government to support the cause of relief and reconstruction in central Europe and, in particular, occupied Germany. Gollancz and his supporters also turned their attention to additional campaigns, including demands for the repatriation of German POWs.¹⁷¹

They Deserve It, Don't They?

In the historiography of postwar Anglo-German relations, numerous scholars including D. C. Watt and John Farquharson have pointed to Save Europe Now as evidence of a shift in British feeling towards Germany. This lobby group, it is suggested, was relatively effective, successfully translating a now widely-felt sympathy towards the plight of the German people into a means for (limited) political change. There was, according to Watt, a rush of pity and sympathy towards the plight of the Germans.¹⁷² Likewise, Farquharson argues that SEN 'may well have helped two nations hostile to one another almost by definition to have picked up the pieces, not

¹⁶⁸ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 414 (1945), 26 October 1945, Col. 2351-454.

¹⁶⁹ 'Packing Parcels for Europe', photograph, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 December 1946.

¹⁷⁰ Frank, 'The New Morality', 250.

¹⁷¹ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 448-50.

¹⁷² Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 119.

just during the occupation era but subsequently as well'.¹⁷³ Yet a closer assessment of British responses to the humanitarian crisis in Germany suggests that the influence of SEN, and its apparent reflection of a shift in public opinion in line with Britain's changing policy position, has been overplayed. A 'myth of magnanimity' has obscured the widespread and deep-rooted antipathy and ambivalence towards the fate of the Germans that persisted in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹⁷⁴

There was, without doubt, a substantial amount of backing for the work of SEN, its well-attended meetings and successful media campaigns are proof enough of that. There was also a good deal of sympathy for the humanitarian ethos of the campaign in the most liberal organs of the press, particularly the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁷⁵ But by far the most common response to the humanitarian crisis, and Gollancz's campaign in particular, was one of ambivalence. While the group's activities were publicised (and supported) in the pages of the *Times*, elements of the regional press, and, most frequently, the *Manchester Guardian*, there was next to no coverage of SEN in the country's most popular newspapers, including the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mirror*, and *Picture Post*.

In the mass-market media, a grudging acceptance that limited humanitarian relief for Germany was necessary was justified entirely in terms of British self-interest.¹⁷⁶ A number of reports in the *Daily Mail* suggested it would be impossible to 'reform hearts' without 'reasonably full' stomachs, anxious that a chasm of economic ruin and famine would drag down the rest of Europe.¹⁷⁷ In October 1945, Bernard Buckham's *Daily Mirror* column, entitled 'Feed the Brutes?', implored that

¹⁷³ Farquharson, "'Emotional but influential'", 514.

¹⁷⁴ Weight, *Patriots*, 109.

¹⁷⁵ 'Germany', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1946.

¹⁷⁶ Frank, 'The New Morality', 242.

¹⁷⁷ '10,000,000 Germans May Starve', *Daily Mail*, 8 March 1946; 'Germany – The Price', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 5 December 1946; Frank Owen, 'Good Morning - Shall We Let Germany Drag Us Down?', *Daily Mail*, 18 October 1946.'

there should be 'no sympathy for the German people, or for the victims of those mass evacuations which have caused this nightmare of suffering, disease and death'.¹⁷⁸ Yet at the same time, self-interest necessitated limited intervention along the lines of the Potsdam Agreement:

It is not any feeling of compassion which prompts us to emphasise the necessity of dealing with the situation. It is the practical matter that makes action imperative [...]. The problem is to feed and shelter these refugee hordes, and set them to work [...]. The longer Europe is allowed to sink into the bog, the longer it will take to raise up – the longer the occupation will have to go on. Whatever happens we stand by the Potsdam decision. The standard of living of the Germans shall nowhere be higher than that of their European neighbours. The Teutonic paunch must disappear. It will be a symbol.

This lack of interest in the plight of the German people was recognised by a number of contemporary commentators and most skilfully synthesised in satirist David Low's cartoon for the *London Evening Standard* in November 1945.¹⁷⁹ The cartoon showed a middle-aged, middle-class couple sitting down at breakfast, the husband reading a newspaper with the headline 'Winter in Central Europe'. Ghostly, stooped, and neglected figures, representing Europe's wandering millions, surrounding them at the table. They included a skeletal figure with the face of death and a banner stating that 'Disease Knows No Frontiers'. The couple, however, sit oblivious to the scene around them: 'Why should we fuss about the Germans? They deserve it, don't they?'.

But Low wasn't alone: Wilfred Byford-Jones, writing in 1947, also suggested that the British had embraced a spirit of 'let them suffer [as] they have made others suffer'.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, Lord Beveridge sought to bring the threat of humanitarian catastrophe to the attention of his apparently indifferent compatriots in his 1946

¹⁷⁸ BBB [Bernard Buckham], 'Feed the Brutes?', *Daily Mirror*, 5 October 1945.

¹⁷⁹ David Low, 'Shall We Feed the Germans?', cartoon, *London Evening Standard*, 5 November 1945; Frank, 'The New Morality', 247-8.

¹⁸⁰ Wilfred Byford-Jones, *Berlin Twilight*, (London; New York: Hutchinson, 1947), 144.

work *An Urgent Message from Germany*.¹⁸¹ There was even official acknowledgement of widespread ambivalence and cynicism in the *Pathé News* film *Germany's Food – The Truth*, made with the assistance of the occupation authorities.¹⁸² Its opening scene, set in a British bakery, acknowledged the prevalence of anti-German attitudes across Britain: one customer exclaimed that she was 'tired of this rationing', especially as 'some of our food is going to feed those fat Germans'. A shopping companion was uncertain, her son having told her that 'they're starving over there', before the baker himself interjects: 'Why worry if the Germans are short of food? What about us?'.¹⁸³ This newsreel was one of the only noteworthy attempts by the PR/ISC to intercede in the media reporting of the humanitarian crisis. Yet while it sought to persuade British audiences that this issue was worthy of their concern, it too remained distinctly ambivalent towards the German people and their plight.

Those reports on Save Europe Now which did appear, in both the national and regional press, were by no means always approving of the group's work. For some, it was a practical question: there was uncertainty as to whether the voluntary provision of food packages could have any real impact upon the crisis in central Europe.¹⁸⁴ Yet there were also critical voices, critiquing the work of Gollancz and his followers as moralistic and unwarranted.¹⁸⁵ In February 1946, a letter from P. G. Rose appeared in the *Times*:

The "Save Europe Now" Committee [...] tend to miss the point of the average citizen's grievance, [namely that] this little island is very much part of Europe and

¹⁸¹ Beveridge, *An Urgent Message*.

¹⁸² *Germany's Food – The Truth*, 29 July 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1406.06, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

¹⁸³ The film also featured an extensive interview with Military Governor Sholto Douglas, who acknowledged the uncertainty across Britain regarding the facts of the situation in Germany.

¹⁸⁴ Frank, 'The New Morality', 241.

¹⁸⁵ Frank, 'The New Morality', 236.

has its own belt sharply pulled in at the waistline, and could do with a bit of “saving” itself.¹⁸⁶

Another letter in the *Times*, and syndicated in a number of regional publications, came from a British doctor who demanded that all the sponsors of SEN certify that they live entirely on their rations, never supplementing them with meals in hotels or restaurants.¹⁸⁷ In the regional press, some even harsher opinions on the humanitarian crisis were voiced. A correspondent wrote to the *Sussex Agricultural Express* under the alias Lewes Rouser, declaring that ‘the only good Germans are dead ones’, suggesting that the German people should be allowed to starve to death – inspiring the outrage of some readers.¹⁸⁸ In Cornwall, Rev C. H. S. Buckley spoke out against SEN during a Sunday service at his Gulval church, arguing that the British were not being told about the truth about rations.¹⁸⁹ The British people ‘who had carried the war and been most instrumental in bringing it to a successful conclusions’, had also ‘been brought to the very edge of health safety’. It was no use feeding the Germans, who were likely to starve anyway, but rather those who had endured the war in Britain, Belgium, Holland, and Norway and were entitled to ‘the just reward of their deeds’.

In February 1946, Selkirk Panton echoed these anti-German sentiments In the *Daily Express*: ‘They blame us (as usual) for their troubles...’ ran the paper’s front-page headline, lamenting, ‘Germany, the problem child Hitler dumped on our front

¹⁸⁶ P. G. Rose, ‘Food Supplies’, letter to the editor, *Times*, 22 February 1946.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Proof of the Pudding’, *Clitheroe Advertiser and Times*, 21 June 1946.

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth Rawlings, ‘What Readers Say – “Save Europe Now”’, letter to the editor, *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 22 March 1946.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Gulval Vicar’s Views’, *Cornishman*, 18 October 1945. There were similar sentiments in George Bell’s own diocese, see V. F. A. Lunn, ‘Correspondence’, letter to the editor, *Chichester Observer*, 6 October 1945, who had ‘far greater consideration for the wild birds, than the inhuman and brutal Huns’; N. D. Mason and E. Mason, ‘Correspondence’, letter to the editor, *Chichester Observer*, 6 October 1945, who condemned Bishop Bell’s pro-German tendencies.

door step, [who] is now hitting us below the belt'.¹⁹⁰ The German people, 'feeling sorry for themselves' and disregarding their own collective guilt, had 'learnt nothing from the war and their defeat' and were now pining for the good old times: 'this incalculable people is already mentally ready for another war tomorrow'. Panton resented that after six years 'at our throats' and nine months 'at our feet', the German was now 'at our breakfast table, clamouring for bread'.

This was a grievance which found an even broader popular resonance when, in July 1946, the British government announced the introduction of bread rationing – something that had been assiduously avoided during both world wars. This measure, in conjunction with the costly imports of food from North America, was a means of easing the distress being felt by the German people. In many ways, it was a policy which acquiesced to the SEN's demands for more government action and sacrifices. But bread rationing was greeted with widespread outrage, rather than any sign of a consensus in support of Gollancz's plans for giving up rations in solidarity with the German people.

The policy was vehemently opposed in the House of Commons, where leader of the opposition Winston Churchill, sensing a chance to win one over on the government, described it as 'one of the gravest announcements that I have ever heard made in the House in the time of peace'.¹⁹¹ In the *Daily Mail*, bread rationing was condemned as 'the most hated measure ever to have been presented to the people of this country'.¹⁹² There were complaints from the British Housewives League who, in a *Pathé News* film, proclaimed to be in 'outright revolt' against the

¹⁹⁰ Selkirk Panton, 'They Blame Us (as usual) For Their Troubles...', *Daily Express*, 28 February 1946.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Ina. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 216.

¹⁹² '4-Day Margin in Our Zone', *Daily Mail*, 3 July 1946.

bread ration.¹⁹³ Even the *Manchester Guardian*, though broadly sympathetic to the government's decision, acknowledged that this was a heavy burden on the British people:

The decision to ration bread is an historic one for this country. We were near to rationing in the spring of 1918; the plan was ready and the spares in the ration card prepared. We came near to it during the late war, especially when the submarine attacks were at their worst. It is profound irony that it should be in the year of peace and recovery that we have to accept this new hardship.¹⁹⁴

At the furthest extreme of the debate, the arch-Germanophobe and wartime campaigner Eleonora Tennant, took direct action: she and two associates strode around Westminster, wearing a sandwich poster condemning the M.P.s who voted for bread rationing as 'Criminals, Dictators, Contemptible, and Public Menaces'.¹⁹⁵ The heated public response to bread rationing ultimately warned the government off from any further imposition on the ration book, despite the ongoing protestations of Gollancz and his supporters.¹⁹⁶ It was, in short, a public relations disaster, only serving to intensify anti-German sentiments across Britain.

Conclusion

In the summer of 1945, the Potsdam Agreement had outlined a relatively stringent peace settlement, grounded upon the prospect of ongoing cooperation between the 'Big Three'. Yet within a year, inter-Allied hostility, coupled with unprecedented practical problems in postwar Europe, seemed to have rendered Potsdam defunct. For Britain, put in a crippling financial situation by the war and with

¹⁹³ *July 21st*, 1 July 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1404.04, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

¹⁹⁴ 'Bread Rationing', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 28 June 1946.

¹⁹⁵ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 425 (1946), 18 July 1946, Col. 1386-93; Anne Deveson, 'She Left London luxury to Pioneer a Farm', obituary (Eleonora Tennant), *Australian Women's Weekly*, 12 February 1964.

¹⁹⁶ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 18.

the costs of occupation snowballing, the revival of western Germany's economy became increasingly unavoidable. By the summer of 1946, Anglo-American leaders were countenancing plans for a less restrictive and lengthy programme of reform in their occupation Zones, lifting strict economic controls and handing power back to the Germans. It was a clear shift away from the plans agreed at the end of the war, with British and American policymakers now seemingly conceding that 'German' did not necessarily mean 'Nazi'.

This evolution of British policy in Germany had, however, hardly figured in media portrayals of the occupation, where attention remain fixed on the 'German Problem' as it was understood at the end of the war. In the first months of the peace, Potsdam's programme of retribution and reform was lauded in much of the British press. This was, in part, the result of strict controls over the media put in place by the Public Relations/Information Services Control Group of the CCG (BE).

The disagreements of wartime also remained, with Victor Gollancz leading the charge in support of a more reconciliatory and reconstructive policy in Germany. This would come to a head in the final months of 1945, when the risk of humanitarian crisis first emerged. But Gollancz's Save Europe Now pressure group has been misattributed as a symbol of the British media and public's softening stance towards Germany. As Matthew Frank has argued, this moral crusade was as much about self-image as anything else: leading campaigners consistently invoked the 'spirit of Dunkirk' and the notion of 'British values'.¹⁹⁷ Their efforts to engage public and political support for humanitarian aid had allowed campaigners to hold a mirror up to themselves and, on the whole, they liked what they saw.¹⁹⁸ It was, however, a relatively marginal campaign, primarily attracting the attention of Gollancz's long-standing core of liberal and left-wing supporters.

¹⁹⁷ Frank, 'The New Morality', 244-5.

¹⁹⁸ Frank, 'The New Morality', 253-5.

In fact, the most common response to the chaos and distress in postwar Germany was one of ambivalence, underpinned by the sense that the Germans had brought it upon themselves. The high-point of public and media resentment came in July 1946 with the announcement of bread rationing – an iniquity that seemed to many to be unbecoming of a victor. It was quite clear that great swathes of the British media and public remained highly sceptical of anything resembling rapprochement towards their wartime enemy, even in the face of widespread suffering. There was, in other words, little appetite for any significant alteration of the ‘hard peace’ outlined at Potsdam. If Lord Vansittart had, by-and-large, withdrawn from the public arena, the anti-German ethos of his *Black Record* still held a palpable influence upon British perceptions of Germany under occupation.

Chapter Three

Losing the Peace

'I tell you that it is a Frankenstein we are creating...'

Revd Geoffrey Druitt, Assistant Chaplain-General of the British Army on the Rhine, 9 June 1946, Garrison Church of St George, Charlottenburg, Berlin.¹

The thousands of men and women in the British Army of the Rhine and the Control Commission for Germany (British Element) now reigned supreme over the 'Master Race', living and working alongside a 'strange enemy people'.² And their experiences in postwar Germany inevitably prompted the curiosity of the watching mass media, generally more amenable to human interest stories than the intricacies of military government policy. But the significance attributed to the behaviour of the British occupiers went far beyond novelty. These war-weary soldiers, seasoned colonial administrators, and fresh-faced civil servants became representatives of Britain on the world stage, expected to take on the mantle of those who had won the war and uphold the country's prestige. They were to interpret and enact the important work towards re-education, denazification, demilitarisation, democratisation and much more besides. In short, it was the public image of British representatives in Germany, who had the winning of the peace placed firmly in their hands, that would ultimately come to define popular perceptions of the occupation.

Many of the existing historical studies of the occupation have portrayed the British occupiers in a glowing light, congratulating their hard work in aiding the reconstruction of western Germany. D. C. Watt suggested that the well-organised

¹ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 113.

² Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 134.

and dedicated members of the Control Commission exemplified the 'British genius for improvisation under stress'.³ Likewise, Anthony Nicholls contended that 'common sense prevailed', with the British occupiers discarding old myths about Germany in their endeavours to rebuild this war-torn nation.⁴ As Jessica Reinisch has pointed out, these sanguine portrayals of the occupation staff originated from the various memoirs and autobiographies penned by Control Commission veterans.⁵ Field Marshal Montgomery, for instance, wrote of the 'single minded devotion' and 'skill, good humour and common sense' of the Control Commission staff.⁶ Noel Annan reflected in his memoir that the British occupiers, unlike their American counterparts, had found it no trouble to follow strict non-fraternisation orders given their antipathy to the German people.⁷ These hagiographic interpretations of the British in Germany form part of a broader mythology regarding the occupation, retroactively characterising it as a 'miracle' in the context of the Cold War.⁸

Yet the public image of the British occupation staff that emerged in the late 1940s was anything but complimentary. This was briefly acknowledged by D. C. Watt, who suggested that the British press had 'no words poor enough' for Control Commission personnel.⁹ But the full extent of this unforgiving media and public scrutiny, as well as its profound implications for the occupation and the Anglo-German relationship, is still to be explored.

³ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 70, 83.

⁴ Anthony J. Nicholls, 'The German "National Character" in British Perspective', in *Conditions of Surrender: Britons and Germans Witness the End of the War*, ed. Ulrike Jordan (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 7.

⁵ Reinisch, *The Perils of Peace*, 7-9.

⁶ Quoted in Reinisch, *The Perils of Peace*, 7.

⁷ Noel Annan, *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 147.

⁸ Balfour and Mair, *Four Power Control*, 63; Robertson, 'A Miracle?'; Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*.

⁹ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 83, 119.

The following chapter reconstructs the public portrayals of Britain's occupation personnel as they appeared in the press, newsreels, contemporary books and pamphlets, feature films, private correspondence, and official documentation. It shows how, with initial official attempts to control and regulate media reporting found increasingly wanting, a picture of the British occupiers as corrupt and badly-behaved dilettantes soon entered into the popular consciousness. The lurid tales of sex, drunkenness, money-laundering, black-marketeering, and exuberant luxury were eye-catching and newsworthy. These scandalous claims prompted censure from the general public, church leaders, and politicians, with one MP suggesting that there were 'all too many of the wrong people, whose one aim in their life in Germany is to have as good a time as possible'.¹⁰ Likewise, the mass-market press wrote exposés and incensed editorials, calling into question the effectiveness of the work being undertaken in Germany. These revelations weakened any claims on successfully 'winning the peace' and, even more challengingly, prompted suggestions of Britain's decline as a nation.

'Heaven forbid that mass journalism has come to stay!'

While the Public Relations/Information Services Control Group had sought to ensure a carefully orchestrated image of the British occupation made its way back to Britain, there were clear limitations to their endeavours. For one, the attempt to maintain close control over news content became more and more unacceptable to journalists and editors, ostensibly infringing upon what one CCG (BE) official described as the inviolable 'British belief in "freedom on information"'.¹¹ There was

¹⁰ Major Bramall MP quoted in Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 331.

¹¹ Telegram Underwood to Chief ISD, Berlin, 4 May 1948, FO 946/22 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Diplomatic and political: British information services in Germany, National Archives, London.

a growing conviction amongst members of the press corps that their journalistic freedoms were due reinstatement now the war was over. Robert Cooper, a *Times* correspondent, privately conveyed his displeasure at 'an increasing tendency discernible on the part of the military here to funnel everything through PR channels. Heaven forbid that mass journalism has come to stay!'¹²

As early as August 1945, PR/ISC officials were anxious that correspondents were becoming disgruntled that 'the flow of information to the Press from the British Zone is being impeded by barriers of secrecy, unnecessary censorship and unofficial suppression of news'.¹³ This, it was feared, risked the publication of articles which will cause 'misunderstandings at home'. These concerns came to head at the end of the year, when several journalists publicly protested a regulation requiring the anonymity of all quotations from Military Government officials. This stipulation was a relic of wartime, when military security had necessitated that, even when giving press conferences, officials must not be named.¹⁴ In November 1945, Maurice Pagence of the *Daily Herald* warned in an article that 'from now on the British public is to be spoon-fed with its news from Germany [...] at the whim and inclinations of men who know nothing whatever of news requirements of Press and public.'¹⁵ The article prompted his fellow journalists to pen a 'strongly worded petition' addressed

¹² Quoted in Robrecht, 'British Press Correspondents', 129.

¹³ Secretariat CCG to HQ 21st Army Group, memorandum 'Mil Gov Publicity in Allied Press', August 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

¹⁴ Minutes, 1946, FO 945/538, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London; Memo on Quotation by Name of Senior Offices in the Press, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

¹⁵ Maurice Pagence, *Daily Herald*, 16 November 1945.

to the Deputy Military Governor requesting the relaxation of the anonymity rule.¹⁶ There were further complaints in the press, with the *Manchester Guardian* referencing an 'extraordinary attempt by British officials to impose a kind of censorship on the Allied press'.¹⁷ In the *Yorkshire Post*, Joe Illingworth suggested that the 'perpetuation of the absurdity by which all British statements on events here must be attributed to "senior British officials"', amounting in his view to 'an attempted re-imposition of censorship and a denial of the rights of a free press'.¹⁸

There was a growing acceptance in the PR/ISC that some modifications to their media management strategy were unavoidable. It was increasingly clear that such strict regulations were not merely ineffective but counterproductive, inciting critical reporting rather than impeding it. Brigadier Treadwell, the CCG (BE)'s Director-General of Public Relations, remarked with some concern that a packed press conference on plans for the level of German industry in February 1946 had resulted in almost no newspaper coverage of the issue: 'I am afraid,' he concluded, 'that the non-quotation rule has a good deal to do with it'.¹⁹ George Houghton agreed that this rule had become an 'unnecessary press irritant', arguing that 'the danger of officers and senior officials being quoted by name only arises when they say the

¹⁶ Minute – Houghton, 18 March 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London.

¹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1946.

¹⁸ Joe Illingworth, *Yorkshire Post*, 12 March 1946.

¹⁹ Letter Brigadier Treadwell to Group Captain Houghton, 4 February 1946, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

wrong thing'.²⁰ The regulation was revoked a few months later, albeit with the proviso that 'responsible people only are allowed to talk to the press'.²¹

But with the oversight of PR/ISC officials imperfect at best, there were more intractable challenges to confront. There was simply no way, with a staff of only a few hundred, that they could hope to control all information available to the press.²² In addition, the efforts of the PR/ISC to control media reports were impeded by disgruntled members of the CCG (BE) and BAOR, who repeatedly contravened rules prohibiting the provision of information to the media.

In the first months of the occupation, the renewed editorial autonomy of newspaper editors and journalists, freed from the moral imperatives and censorial constraints of wartime, began to rear its head. The PR/ISC's public relations scheme, an obtuse remnant of wartime regulation, came up against the intransigence of the press corps. And it quickly became clear that there was little to stop rogue journalists from travelling incognito, seeking out stories away from the supervision of British officials. Reporters, increasingly sceptical of official sources, pursued more obviously newsworthy content, often with an emphasis on the less sanguine aspects of life in postwar Germany. In the late summer of 1945, a controversy over non-fraternisation

²⁰ Minute – Houghton, 18 March 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London; Minute, 25 March 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London; Letter Street to Robertson, 29 March 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London;

²¹ Minute, 12 September 1946, FO 945/538 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "On the Record" Press Conferences, National Archives, London.

²² Letter from Norman Clarke Chairman of British Zone Correspondents Association to Sholto Douglas and attached memorandum, 1947, FO 946/47 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, German and Austrian Publicity: British Zone Correspondents' Association, National Archives, London.

became a major public sensation. It was the first in a series of scandals that exemplified the inability of the PR/ISC to effectively straitjacket press reporting from postwar Germany.

The Old Army Game

While the planning for the postwar occupation had been engrossed with grand ideas – re-education, demilitarisation, and denazification, to name but a few – it had not escaped the attention of British officials that any such enterprise would rely, first and foremost, on its personnel. In the final months of the war, the thousands of British men and women assigned to the CCG (BE) and Civil Affairs staff of the BAOR had been provided with instruction in technical matters and acceptable standards of conduct.²³ This included a variety of directives and handbooks such as the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force's 'Handbook for Military Government in Germany', the British 'Germany Handbook', and the 'Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany', all of which intended to outline the basic tenets of Military Government to advancing troops and civilian staff alike.

In April 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff's Directive 551 warned that 'the conduct of affairs vis-à-vis the civil population' in Germany would be 'totally different' than in 'liberated, friendly territories'.²⁴ The military government administration, it was decreed, 'shall be firm' and 'fraternization between Allied troops and German officials and population' was to be 'strongly discouraged'. It was the duty of the occupiers to 'impose the will of the Supreme Commander upon the German people', not become their friends. Likewise, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 1067, issued in April 1945, explained that Germany was to be treated 'as a defeated nation' and that occupiers were to be 'just but firm and aloof'. As British troops

²³ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 5-7.

²⁴ Marshall, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*, 6.

entered Germany, Field Marshal Montgomery sent an even more unequivocal message to the men of the 21st Army Group:

You must keep clear of Germans – man, woman and child – unless you meet them in the course of duty. You must not walk with them or shake hands or visit their homes. You must not play games with them or share any social event with them. In short, you must not fraternise with the Germans at all.²⁵

The rationale behind this policy of non-fraternisation was clearly seeped in the ‘hard peace’ ethos promulgated by Vansittart in the course of the war.²⁶ It ratified in concrete form the notion that the German people were not to be trusted and should *all* be treated with suspicion.²⁷ These fears were intensified when the prospect of so-called ‘werewolf’ attacks was raised, whereby clandestine groups of embittered Nazis were said to be planning attacks on the Allied authorities through all possible means, including subterfuge and flirtation.²⁸

Yet while non-fraternisation ostensibly covered all types of interaction with the local population, it boiled down, in the minds of many, to one thing: sex. It was abundantly clear from the very beginning of the occupation that all manner of sexual relations between occupiers and occupied would be a significant facet of life in the ruins of postwar Germany. In the first weeks and months, there were numerous cases of rape and sexual assault perpetrated against German women by Allied soldiers of all four occupying powers.²⁹ In addition, amid food shortages and destitution, the

²⁵ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 40.

²⁶ Barbara Smith, ‘The Rules of Engagement: German Women and British Occupiers, 1945–1949’ (PhD diss., Wilfrid Laurier University, 2009); John Robert Stark, ‘The Overlooked Majority: German Women in the Four Zones of Occupied Germany, 1945–1949, a Comparative Study’ (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2003).

²⁷ Knowles, *Winning the Peace*, 162–5.

²⁸ Perry Biddiscombe, *Werewolf! The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944–1946* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Perry Biddiscombe, *The Last Nazis: SS Werewolf Guerrilla Resistance in Europe 1944–1947* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000).

²⁹ ‘RAF Airman Charged with Rape’, *Manchester Guardian*, 28 August 1946; ‘Tommy’ is Curious – That’s Why He Talks’, *Daily Mirror*, 14 July 1945; Sean Longden, *To the Victor the Spoils: Soldiers’ Lives from D-Day to VE-Day* (London: Robinson, 2007). In Soviet Zone, see

exchange of sex became a means of survival for many women. This period saw a marked increase in prostitution, as well as less formal liaisons taking place in what has been described as a 'grey zone' whereby gifts of food or cigarettes (the *de facto* currency of postwar Germany) were expected in return for sexual intimacy.³⁰

The four years of Allied occupation witnessed a whole range of intimate relationships between occupiers and occupied, from casual sex to lifelong commitments. This is abundantly clear in the personal memoirs and private correspondence of British personnel.³¹ In her unpublished memoir, Edna Wearmouth, a young woman who served as a clerk with the British Control Commission, gives us a sense of the lurid tales and sexualised atmosphere that she had encountered during her time in Germany:

I was getting less innocent by the day. In the office, especially since the arrival of beautiful Enid, Bert was chagrined to find that neither of us fell for his hunky handsomeness and he took a daily delight in trying to shock us by regaling us with tales of his sexual exploits and his various German mistresses who, he said, fell at his feet [...]. He was a walking Kama Sutra.³²

Nevertheless, in the first months of the occupation many of the nation's leading newspapers had conveyed their pride and delight that well-behaved British troops were purportedly displaying the reserve and aloofness befitting a victor. There was, in fact, a great deal of support in the popular press for the official position on 'fratting'. In the *Daily Mail*, a full page spread acclaimed Montgomery's admonition

Mikkel Dack, 'Crimes Committed by Soviet Soldiers Against German Civilians, 1944-1945: A Historiographical Analysis', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10, no. 4 (July 2008), <http://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/75>; Anonyma, *Eine Frau in Berlin: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945*, first edition published 1953, (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2003); Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*.

³⁰ Inge Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral Relations: British Soldiers and German Women', in *Gendering Migration: Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-War Britain*, eds. Louise Ryan and Wendy Webster (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 56.

³¹ Knowles, *Winning the Peace*, 121-4, 164-8, 181.

³² Edna Wallace (née Wearmouth), 'Bound for Germany' (unpublished manuscript, undated), Wearmouth Papers.

of the German people to 'feel guilt for the World War' and his resolution not to fall into the same trap as in 1919: 'Enemy Told: This Is Why We Ignore You' ran their triumphant headline.³³ On 23 May 1945, the *Manchester Guardian* published a report on 'Hamburg's Divided Beaches', detailing how the shores of the Außenalster had been split between British and Germans in accordance with 'the non-fraternisation principle'.³⁴ The German girls could 'splash about happily' in their 'summer frocks and bathing dresses', while the British soldiers could 'bathe without distraction'. A British colonel remarked that the Germans would save themselves a great deal of embarrassment if they were to stop trying to fraternise, for 'no Englishman shakes hands with a foul fighter'. A few days later the *Daily Mirror* approvingly published a photograph of three British soldiers who, perched beside the Elbe, had been joined by two German women.³⁵ The caption was overjoyed that 'our men' hadn't 'forgotten the tricks of the Hun' and when these 'two Nazi girls, however pretty, sidle up to their part of the wall they just turn their disgusted backs'. Their stern attitude was part of the 'no-fraternising' order, which 'our boys carry out [...] in a spirit of personal approval'.³⁶

³³ 'Enemy Told: This is Why We Ignore You', *Daily Mail*, 11 June 1945.

³⁴ 'Hamburg's Divided Beaches', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1945.

³⁵ 'Definitely Wallflowers', photograph, *Daily Mirror*, 28 May 1945.

³⁶ The same photo was also published in *The Daily Mail*, alongside another image showing the roped-off British-only area of a Hamburg beach. British soldiers, the caption explained, were strictly obeying non-fraternisation orders, see 'Non-fraternisation in 2 Scenes', photograph, *Daily Mail*, 28 May 1945.

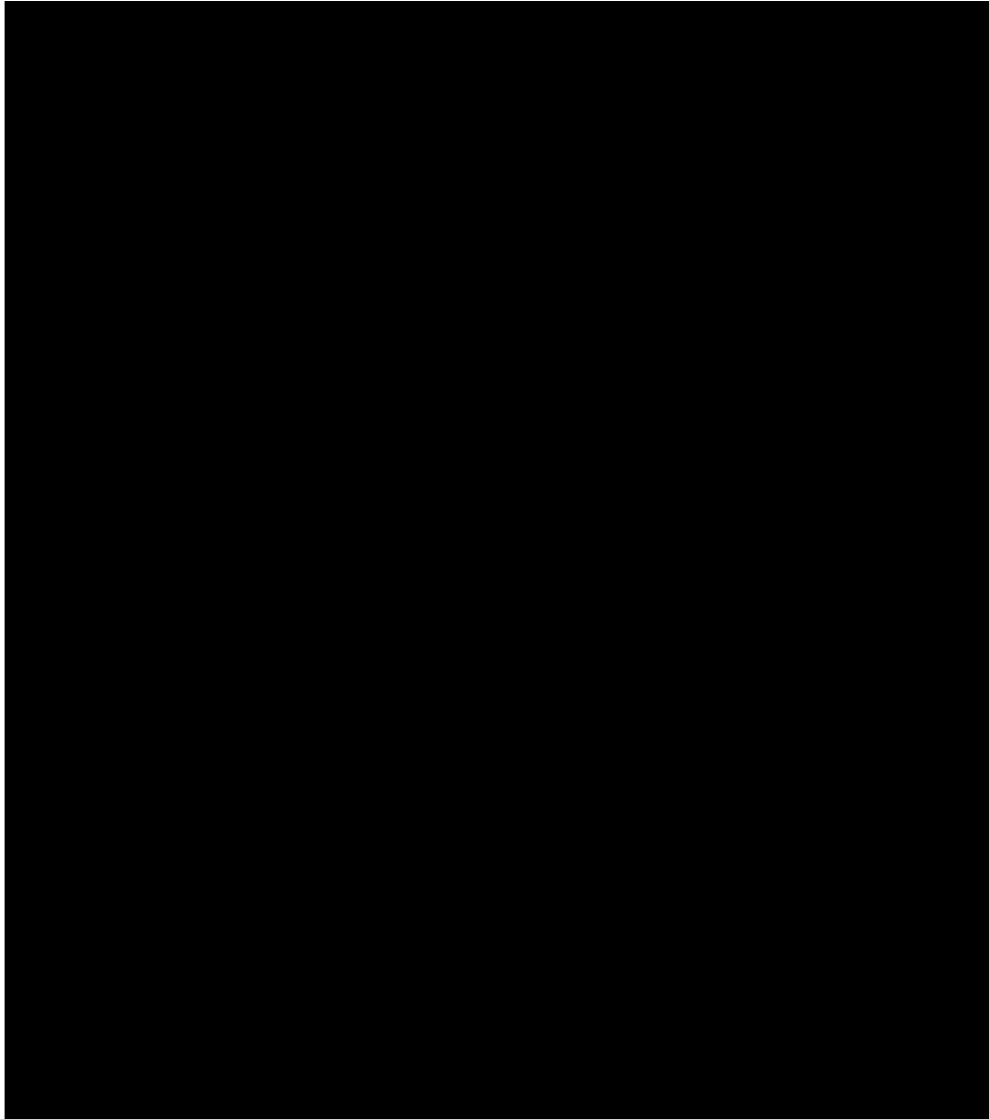


Illustration 4: 'Definitely Wallflowers', *Daily Mirror*, 28 May 1945

But occupation officials and journalists alike soon realised that the strict non-fraternisation rules were, in actual fact, being flouted across the board – and it wasn't long before the newspapers were hot on the heels of a good story. As Susan Carruthers notes in her study of the American Zone of occupation, 'the "unspeakable" was also highly marketable'.³⁷ In other words, sex sells: to domestic

³⁷ Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 115.

audiences, the shocking exploits of British personnel were at once titillating and horrifying, all the more so given the depth of residual anti-German feeling in Britain.

In June 1945, numerous newspaper articles appeared documenting various amorous interactions between British troops and German civilians. 'Fratting is Rife in the Reich', declared the *Liverpool Daily Post*, suggesting that the 'old army game' of 'boy meets girl' was a growing phenomenon 'regardless of Allied military edicts'.³⁸ The coming months would see the pages of the national and regional press filled with salacious tales of dangerous liaisons in occupied enemy territory. There were, in the first instance, a steady stream of official reprimands and charges handed out to British soldiers who had contravened the rules.³⁹ On 5 July, for instance, the *Daily Telegraph* reported the court-martial of thirty-seven-year-old Lt. Charles Whenham, who had pleaded guilty to fraternising with a German woman he had encountered while out walking.⁴⁰ The woman, aged twenty-three, allegedly spoke to him in German to which the accused responded 'mainly by signs', resulting in the pair walking to the nearby woods 'where intimacy took place'. The court was asked to show leniency on the grounds that his record was hitherto unblemished, his offence was the result of 'sudden temptation', and that 'the accused has had his punishment of having to explain affairs to his wife'. As a result, Whenham was only deprived of a promotion and severely reprimanded, but cases such as this were rife and served to sully the reputation of the British forces writ large.

The popular newspaper cartoonists were soon lambasting the apparent futility of the non-fraternisation policy. In the *Daily Express*, it was joked that school

³⁸ Daniel Deluce, 'Fratting is Rife in the Reich', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 June 1945.

³⁹ 'Two BLA Officers Accused', *Daily Mail*, 15 June 1945; 'Black Market' Trial for 3 Officers', *Daily Mirror*, 29 December 1945; 'Officer Charged With Fraternization', *Times*, 5 July 1945; 'Fraternisation Sentence', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1945.

⁴⁰ 'Fraternisation Court-Martial', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1945.

boys in Britain, determined not to 'let our brave boys in Berlin down', were busily engaging in a spot of fraternisation themselves.⁴¹

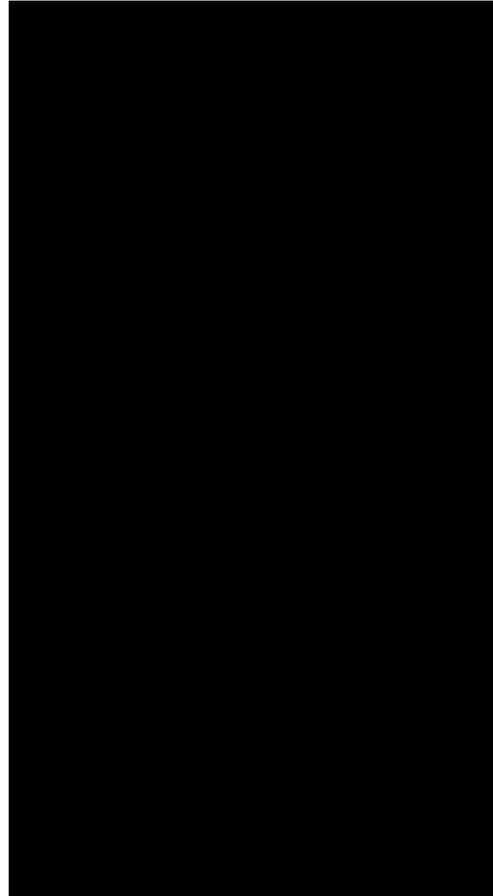


Illustration 5: 'Pocket Cartoon', *Daily Express*, 10 July 1945

The *Daily Mail* published a cartoon on fraternisation in the Zone of occupation, albeit with a distinctly more anti-German bent: its unflattering Himmler-esque depiction of a German woman, mocked by two passing Tommies for causing 'casualties', was symptomatic of a growing fascination in the mass-market press with a caricature of the foreign female form.⁴²

⁴¹ 'Pocket Cartoon', cartoon, *Daily Express*, 10 July 1945.

⁴² Neb, 'Cartoon', cartoon, *Daily Mail*, 16 July 1945.



Illustration 6: 'Cartoon', *Daily Mail*, 16 July 1945

In addition, numerous photographs appeared in the mass-market press depicting 'fratting' in action, causing yet more public outrage. Most of these images were relatively modest, such as the *Daily Mail*'s photograph of British soldiers talking with smiling German women, which appeared with the caption 'so this is fraternisation!'.⁴³ Yet there were also more salacious images, such as *Picture Post*'s photograph of two scantily-clad bodies enmeshed on a beach, emblematic of the suggestive tone that characterised much of this press coverage.⁴⁴ Likewise, on 19 July 1945, the front page of the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* featured two photos exhibiting

⁴³ 'Picture Gallery - So This is Fraternisation!', photograph, *Daily Mail*, 17 July 1945.

⁴⁴ 'The Greatest Year in History', *Picture Post*, 5 January 1946.

the ubiquity of fraternisation in Germany, including one euphemistic portrayal of British soldiers walking arm-in-arm with German women 'down a shady lane'.⁴⁵

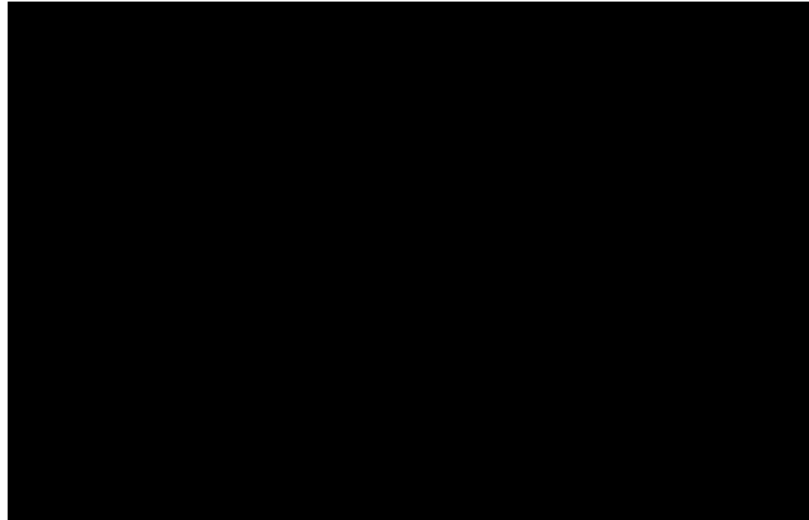


Illustration 7: 'Picture Gallery - So This is Fraternisation!', *Daily Mail*, 17 July 1945
(original photograph, Imperial War Museum Archive)

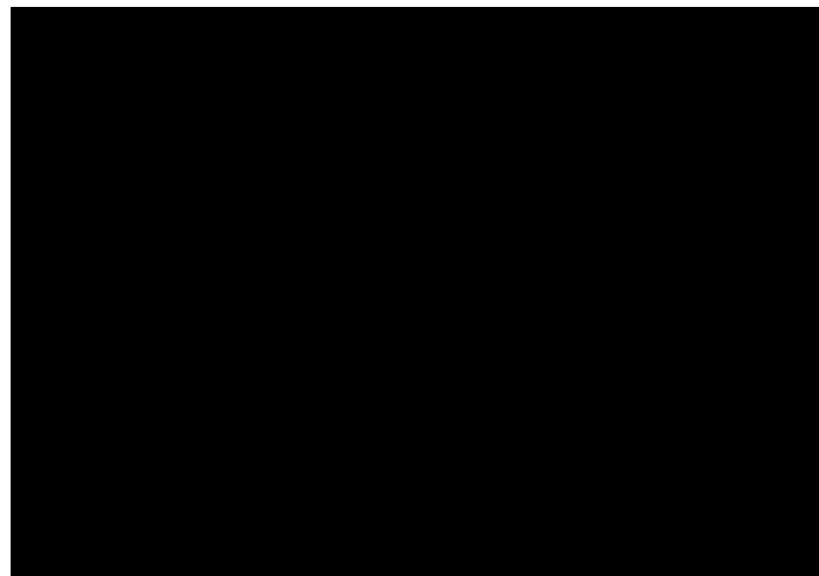


Illustration 8: 'Fraternisation with Germans begins', *Picture Post*, 5 January 1946

⁴⁵ "'...Down a Shady Lane...'", *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 July 1945.

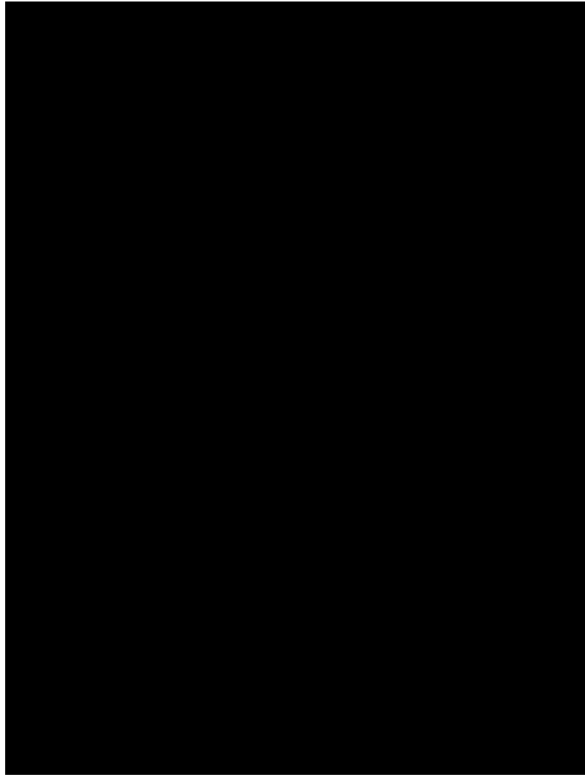


Illustration 9: ““...Down a Shady Lane...””, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 19 July 1945.

The proliferation of stories and photographs in the local and national press raised the ire of many. In July, Henry Maxwell wrote to the *Times* to declare that ‘the photographs in the Press of British troops “fraternizing” with half-naked smiling German girls’ were ‘somewhat astonishing’.⁴⁶ They stood in stark contrast, he suggested, to the shaven heads of those women adjudged to have been too intimate with Germans in the liberated countries of Europe. These images, Maxwell concluded, would damage any attempt to ‘promote that understanding of and faith in Britain which is so desperately needful if Europe is to rise once more from the abyss’. In January 1946, the Marchioness of Huntly would remark in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* that she had ‘never found a word which produced, both with the

⁴⁶ Henry Maxwell, ‘Fraternalisation’, letter to the editor, *Times*, 24 July 1945.

public at home and with the British Army in Germany, so heated a response as the word fraternisation'.⁴⁷

There were those who sought to temper the growing public outrage at the evidence of illegitimate 'fratting' with the Germans. Rhona Churchill wrote at length in the *Daily Mail* about how this was a problem shared across all the occupation Zones, rather than anything peculiar to British troops – 'boys will be boys' was the message.⁴⁸ She insinuated that it was an almost inevitable outcome of the peculiar situation of postwar Europe, where the average Allied soldier, battle-scarred and homesick 'for his mother, his girl, and for the children he never found time to raise', was 'the loneliest guy in the world' with 'human reactions'. In the *Daily Mirror*, George McCarthy took a slightly different line, emphasising that 'Tommy is curious' and just wants to 'to discover what kind of people they are' and 'to find out, if they can, why these apparently sane men and women follower Hitler into doom and disaster'.⁴⁹ It was a mistake, he continued, to 'overemphasise the man-woman aspect of the case', assuring readers that British soldiers were certainly not dealing in the 'kiss-and-make-up sentiment' which the word 'fraternisation' might imply. In the *People*, it was brazenly suggested that British women shouldered much of the blame, as their fraternisation with the 'yanks' and 'wops' currently residing in Britain had damaged the morale of Britain's 'heroes abroad'.⁵⁰

Members of the occupation army were also quick to defend themselves publicly, contending that they were guilty of little beyond good-natured friendliness or that complaints from the public were 'narrow-minded'.⁵¹ In the *Daily Mirror*, an

⁴⁷ 'Fratting? I'd Rather Have Beef', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 10 January 1946.

⁴⁸ '£14 fine for Fratting', *Daily Mail*, 1 June 1945.

⁴⁹ "'Tommy' is Curious – That's Why He Talks', *Daily Mirror*, 14 July 1945.

⁵⁰ 'Heroes Abroad Send Heartbreak Letters Home – 'Stop Our Wives Fraternising', 'Girls Queue Up To Go Out With Wops', *People*, 29 July 1945.

⁵¹ E. Kirby, 'Fraternisation', letter to the editor, *Birmingham Mail*, 30 July 1945; 'Allied Help for Germans in Emergency Only', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 July 1945; 'Wives Doubts About

anonymous member of the British occupation forces wrote a lengthy article, suggesting that he and his colleagues didn't want 'to mix with German girls' but simply to teach them the ways of democracy:

This is Germany – I've seen it and I want to get out of it. The people seem to be laughing at us and some of them do. Some want to talk to us, children take our hands and talk German to us. People pretend not to notice us and then give us a sly glance. Curtains are pushed back and heads are turned. Police salute us and some spit on the ground (but, of course, not to appear deliberate). My finger itches on the trigger of my rifle as I walk through the streets and, at times, I wish they would be openly hostile so that we could have another showdown. The war is over – but another war has begun between the Army of Occupation – us – and the German civvies. This situation surely cannot keep up. How will these Germans get to know our way of thinking if we do not fraternise?⁵²

In addition, the men of the BAOR and CCG (BE) were quick to lay the blame on German women for their allegedly flirtatious behaviour. This appealed to Germanophobic stereotypes and incorporated contemporary (and misogynist) understandings of sexuality. But it was an excuse that British officials were all too happy to endorse, accepting it as a defence in disciplinary proceedings: in the aforementioned trial of Lt. Whenham, for instance, 'intimacy' was said to have been initiated by the woman in question.⁵³ Likewise, Field Marshal Montgomery publicly claimed that the female inhabitants of the British Zone were practising a 'new form of German sabotage by wearing fewer and fewer clothes'.⁵⁴

The British media also embraced the notion that German women were to blame, with Evadne Price, war correspondent for *The People*, writing a stern defence of the non-fraternisation policy with the subheading 'we must hate – or lose the

"Frat" – Soldiers' Protest Meetings – Prefer Cricket - or Beer', *Dundee Courier*, 28 July 1945; 'Frat Protest by Troops', *Daily Express*, 28 July 1945; 'BLA Troops Protest', *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1945.

⁵² 'It's "Eyes Front" – and No Whistling', *Daily Mirror*, 7 July 1945.

⁵³ 'Fraternisation Court-Martial', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1945.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 115.

peace'.⁵⁵ The article suggested that 'these Boche women' had stood 'a hundred per cent behind Adolf Hitler'. They exuded 'feminine appeal', with their smiles, silk stockings, short skirts, and expensive make-up, and were now attempting to fool the Allied troops into a false sense of security. A few months later, Price proclaimed herself to be 'campaigning against the German woman', whose hysterical loyalty to the Wehrmacht was said to be unremitting.⁵⁶ The notion that the Nazis, and especially Adolf Hitler himself, had emanated a perverse sexual appeal to German women was an increasingly common trope of British reporting in this period. In June 1945, both the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Mail* carried an article lambasting the 'women auxiliaries of the Wehrmacht' for being 'red-hot anti-British'.⁵⁷ The story, evidently put out by PR/ISC officials, claimed that while British troops were 'putting up "a good show" in observing the ban', the 'scantily clothed' German girls were 'carrying out an organised plan to break it'.

But this imbroglio could not be so easily cast off simply as the result of entrapment or naïveté. In the first place, many in Britain felt that any close association with the Germans was wholly unacceptable. In the *Daily Mail*, satirist Maurice Lane Norcott slyly wondered whether the silk stockings of your average Fräulein had been 'imported from France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or Greece' while under Nazi occupation.⁵⁸ The *Western Daily Press* quoted a former inmate at Ravensbrück concentration camp,

⁵⁵ Evadne Price, 'We Must Hate or Lose the Peace – German Women Fooling the Troops', *People*, 18 March 1945; This explanation was also common in the American public discourse on fraternisation, see Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 114.

⁵⁶ Evadne Price, 'Here's the Truth About This Fraternisation Problem – Thousand People Write to Tell Evadne Price', *People*, 18 November 1945.

⁵⁷ "'Frat" Lure', *Daily Mirror*, 22 June 1945; 'German Staff to be Exiled', *Daily Mail*, 22 June 1945.

⁵⁸ Lane Norcott, *Daily Mail*, 17 July 1945.

who condemned fraternisation as ‘terrible’ and warned that German women ‘will make a sixth column’.⁵⁹

Moreover, the conduct of some soldiers was all too scandalous to be cast off as youthful exuberance. In August 1945, for instance, a forty-three-year-old Major in the Royal Tank Regiment, married and the father to three young children, was found guilty of fraternising with a German woman by a Court Martial.⁶⁰ There were dozens of similar stories, seemingly exposing a culture of immorality and debauchery in the occupation Zone that was incompatible with popular expectations of ‘winning the peace’ and seemingly risked undermining Britain’s prestige on the world stage. These revelations about fraternisation contrasted, most obviously, with the increasingly sacrosanct memories of the war. Tellingly, there was widespread coverage of the statement provided by Divisional Officer J. M. Kelly, leader of the 500 members of the National Fire Service who had been working temporarily alongside British troops in Germany.⁶¹ The firemen were, he suggested, ‘in no humour to fraternise with Germans’ since they had all ‘done duty during the blitz’. Likewise, Monty assured journalists that his fabled ‘Desert Rats’, celebrated veterans of the war, had ‘no interest in fraternising’.⁶² Montague Calman, himself a member of the occupation forces, wrote to his local newspaper and declared his emphatic rejection of any form of fraternisation: ‘while London, Coventry, Canterbury and other cities still contain the memorials of Nazi “military” bombing [...]. We [should] refuse to even acknowledge the German as a human being, as is defined in any self-respecting dictionary!!’.⁶³ In July 1945, the *Liverpool Echo* featured a letter from ‘Three

⁵⁹ ‘Horror Camps – “Fraternising is Terrible”’, *Western Daily Press*, 14 July 1945.

⁶⁰ ‘Major Guilty of Fraternising’, *Sunday Post*, 12 August 1945.

⁶¹ ‘Blitz Veterans Did Not Fraternise’, *Birmingham Mail*, 16 July 1945; ‘In No Mood to Fraternise’, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 17 July 1945.

⁶² ‘Desert Rats Won’t Fraternise’, *Daily Express*, 25 June 1945.

⁶³ Montague Calman, ‘A Tommy Says No Frat’, letter to the editor, *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 30 June 1945.

Bewildered Young Ladies' who felt that fraternisation proved 'the original object of this war is being forgotten and many lives have been lost in vain'.⁶⁴

The wives and girlfriends of British servicemen had a more personal cause for concern, something they made abundantly clear to their partners in Germany. Members of the 549 company of the Royal Engineers protested at the 'accusing and critical letters from their wives and sweethearts' they had received in the wake of the furore over fraternisation.⁶⁵ But British women also made more public appeals, with the *Lancashire Evening Post* publishing a letter from 'an interested and affected party' who wanted to 'draw attention to the feelings of wives here at home on the subject of "fratting"'.⁶⁶ 'It is quite the time our men had an opportunity of "fratting" with their own wives', she wrote, before emphatically signing her letter "'WATCHING", Preston'. The righteous indignation of wives and girlfriends would have a powerful impact upon public opinion, playing upon popular expectations of domesticity and morality.⁶⁷ In late July, Bristol resident Miss M. Cutts wrote a letter to the *People*, suggesting that the men found guilty of such misdeeds should be barred from ever returning to England:

I am not affected personally by the question [...], [but] it made me see red when I saw those letters you published of English wives whose husbands preferred German sluts!⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Three Bewildered Young Ladies, letter to the editor, 'On Fraternisation', *Liverpool Echo*, 13 July 1945.

⁶⁵ 'Allied Help for Germans in Emergency Only', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 July 1945; 'Wives Doubts About "Frat" – Soldiers' Protest Meetings – Prefer Cricket - or Beer', *Dundee Courier*, 28 July 1945; 'Frat Protest by Troops', *Daily Express*, 28 July 1945; 'BLA Troops Protest', *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1945.

⁶⁶ WATCHING, 'Fraternisation', letter to the editor, *Lancashire Evening Post*, 24 July 1945.

⁶⁷ Indignant, 'Letters', letter to the editor, *Daily Mail*, 31 July 1945.

⁶⁸ M. Cutts, letter to the editor, *People*, 29 July 1945.

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In the eyes of much of the press, the non-fraternisation ruling had been made redundant through widespread disobedience.⁶⁹ As early as May 1945, Joe Illingworth had written in the *Liverpool Daily Post* to suggest that 'fratting can't be stopped' and would only get worse if things remained as they were.⁷⁰ The following month, the *Daily Mail* published an editorial on this 'acute international problem': while its rationale to 'kill any possible attempt by the Nazi elements to make use of the Allied Forces in keeping their doctrines alive' was commendable, in the long-run the policy was unworkable.⁷¹ In the *Times*, it was argued that the ban was unenforceable, but accepted there were serious drawbacks to any alteration:

It would probably distress a large number of women at home. They will never believe that fraternization means much besides association with German girls, and they will certainly be right. There is also the question of atrocities to be considered. German acquiescence in the system was complete, and even now the horrors of the camps [...] are not reprobated as they ought to be. But it seems clear that the anti-fraternisation policy will inevitably be modified under what may be described as biological pressure, if under no other.⁷²

The British authorities in Germany had themselves grown concerned at the increasing levels of insubordination, as well as the negative publicity that had stemmed from the non-fraternisation controversy.⁷³ In the face of a growing furore, the rules on contact with the local population were altered and, on 12 June 1945, Montgomery issued a new message to his troops, stating that while 'we cannot let up on this policy [...] these orders need no longer apply to small children'.⁷⁴ A month

⁶⁹ This was also suggested in Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Lid Lifts* (London: Gollancz, 1945), 84-5.

⁷⁰ Joe Illingworth, 'Fraternisation Can't Be Stopped', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 23 May 1945.

⁷¹ 'Fratting', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 4 June 1945.

⁷² 'Fraternization in Germany', *Times*, 9 July 1945.

⁷³ See 'Notes on the Present Situation', 6 July 1945, in H. J. Yasamee and Great Britain Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, vol. 1, *Conference at Potsdam, July-August 1945* (London: H.M.S.O., 1984), 71.

⁷⁴ 'Troops May Speak to Little Germans', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 June 1945.

later, a new revision was publicised, allowing for 'conversation with adult Germans in the streets and in public places'. These changes were covered extensively in the British media, including newsreel reports from *British Pathé*, *British Movietone*, and *Gaumont-British News*.⁷⁵ Finally, on 25 September, in conjunction with the other occupying powers, it was agreed that the non-fraternisation rules would be fully relaxed, other than maintaining the ban on billeting with Germans and inter-marriage. In July of the following year, the restrictions on marriages between British servicemen and 'alien women, other than Japanese' were also lifted, momentarily reviving the media's interest in the topic.⁷⁶ Between 1947 and 1950, even while exacting stipulations including a medical exam for German women remained, there were an estimated 10,000 Anglo-German marriages.⁷⁷

In the British press, these changes met with some approval, including a *Manchester Guardian* editorial suggesting that upon reflection the 'defeat' of this unworkable policy, which stood 'as an example of how not to go about the occupation of a conquered country', was for the best:⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Fraternising Wins the Day*, 2 August 1945, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGX409300122, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *Fraternising - Frat Ban On - Frat Ban Off...*, 2 August 1945, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1161.01, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *Berlin Today*, 2 August 1945, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 45960, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

⁷⁶ 'Marriages to German Girls', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 August 1946; 'Waiting List for German Brides', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 September 1946; 'In Brief', *Daily Mirror*, 10 December 1946.

⁷⁷ FO 1030/174 Control Commission for Germany (British Element): Various Private Office Papers and Administration and Local Government Branch Files, Marriages with Ex-enemy Nationals, National Archives, London. Soldiers were required to ascertain permission from a senior commander and then take a six-month leave subsequent to their application to marry in order 'to weigh up the step he is about to take'. German women were subject to 'security examination', medical examination, and required a 'certificate of good character' from an Oberbürgermeister or equivalent official, see Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, 163; Weber-Newth, 'Bilateral Relations', 53-70.

⁷⁸ 'Common Sense Prevails', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1945.

After years of hard fighting the soldiers should not be asked to turn themselves into celibate missionaries [...]. To say that the Germans have won their first victory of the occupation is short-sighted and untrue. If there has been any victory it is a victory for common sense and for the warm humanity of British and American soldiers.

Yet the shift in official policy did not immediately resolve the controversy, as is evident from the numerous critical letters and articles that were published in the following months. Rather, the relaxation of the ban seemed, to some, to have merely given official sanction to 'fratting', as intimated by the jubilant reaction of British personnel in Germany. BAOR soldiers, the *Mirror*, *Mail*, and *Telegraph* all reported, 'threw their caps in the air and behaved just as though their favourite football team had won the cup [...], wasting no time in acting on the announcement'.⁷⁹ The questions of morality and national prestige that had arisen during the scandal over fraternisation were far from dispelled.

The furore dragged on, with commentators debating whether the relaxation of the policy was indeed a positive change. In July, Lord Vansittart suggested in a broadcast for the American Broadcasting Company that the easing-up of non-fraternisation rules was 'Nazi victory number one'. His speech, covered in the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail*, suggested the Allied climb-down was evidence of weakness and indecisiveness which risked a repeat of failures of the last peace.⁸⁰ In addition, letters from enraged wives and girlfriends continued to appear in the newspapers: in late August, Gertrude B. Cook wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* to reiterate her husband's concerns that the new laws tended 'to throw soldiers into the wrong

⁷⁹ To begin with these latter modifications produced a good deal of confusion and amusement in occupied Germany, which was retold in the British press, see 'Berlin 'Frat' Chaos', *Daily Mirror*, 16 July 1945; 'Heard the 9 O'C News – And Fraternised', *Daily Mail*, 16 July 1945; 'Muddle in Relaxing Ban Causes Berlin Comedy', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1945.

⁸⁰ 'Nazi Victory Number One', *Daily Mail*, 18 July 1945; 'Fratting a Nazi Victory, He Thinks', *Daily Mirror*, 18 July 1945.

element of the German people', namely the 'lower side' of German girls who go out 'clicking' in streets and cafes.⁸¹

The Good Name of England

The scandal over non-fraternisation had left an indelible mark on the reputation of the British occupation forces. In the first instance, this scandal had demonstrated a level of ill-discipline that did not auger well for the ultimate success of the occupation. But it was the threat to Britain's national prestige and collective identity as a morally righteous people that had awakened the greatest response. There were those who had sought to temper popular anxieties, criticising the impracticality of a total separation between occupiers and occupied. Yet for many, the carnal image of unruly British men tempted by coquettish foreign women ran contrary to expectations of a 'hard peace' and shamelessly contravened Britain's mid-century sense of decency. This was fortified by an antagonistic conception of the German people, and particularly German women, as unrepentant Nazis and inheritors of collective guilt – fraternising with the enemy was an insult to the war's many victims. While the scandal was itself relatively short-lived, with media interest quickly receding after 1945, it had established an enduring association between occupation and fraternisation.⁸²

In the coming years, media and artistic portrayals of the occupation would routinely refer to fraternisation and sexual liaisons in Germany. There was, for instance, grave concern over the sexual health of the occupation forces, first outlined in a *Daily Mail* article of July 1946 which warned that the 'old enemy' of venereal

⁸¹ Gertrude B. Cook, 'Fraternisation', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 August 1945.

⁸² This was true in American too, see Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 279.

disease was rife in amongst British troops.⁸³ Most famously, *A Foreign Affair*, Billy Wilder's 1948 black comedy starring Marlene Dietrich, emphasised the pervasiveness of 'fratting' amongst Allied troops.⁸⁴ The film, released to much acclaim in the UK, follows Congresswoman Phoebe Frost as she investigates, and gets caught up in, the 'moral malaria' of 'fratting' afflicting American troops in Berlin.

The lasting impact of fraternisation upon British conceptions of the occupation is particularly clear in the numerous letters of complaint sent to government officials in this period.⁸⁵ Many of these broached the contentious topic of sex and relationships between occupiers and occupied in postwar Germany. In July 1947, E. S. Biddough wrote to Lord Pakenham, who had recently replaced John Hynd as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.⁸⁶ She criticised a new policy, allowing for lifts to be given to German women and thus giving them 'every advantage [...] to make trouble between married couples, which has happened in many cases already'.⁸⁷ Likewise, in May 1948, Mr. J. H. Webster wrote to the Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, imploring Attlee to visit the British Zone as soon as possible. He ought to 'put right at once things which are doing the British Government harm and unfortunately the good name of England':

Young men training in Germany too often associate with & frequently marry German prostitutes. The women do it to get food and other comforts. These same men bring the loose women to the British Clubs etc and positively jostle

⁸³ 'An Old Enemy Saps the New Army', *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1946.

⁸⁴ *A Foreign Affair*, film, directed by Billy Wilder, starring Marlene Dietrich (1948; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures); Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 279.

⁸⁵ FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

⁸⁶ Letter E. S. Biddough to Lord Pakenham, 21 July 1947, Vol XI, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

⁸⁷ The officials of the Foreign Office who received this complaint were exasperated, noting that the change in policy was actually to prohibit German 'wayfarers' from being given lifts.

out of the way British officers and their wives, which causes disgust and contempt for Britain in German eyes.⁸⁸

As late as January 1949, Eve Graham wrote to the Prime Minister directly, pleading with him to encourage more strict treatment of the men engaging in illicit affairs:

German women are going their best to break up English families. Forces men have facilities here they could not possibly get in England and I fear that there are many unhappy wives in the British Zone unfortunately [...], [with] no redress as the men do not leave their positions for immoral conduct.⁸⁹

Domesticating the Occupation

While the decision to relax non-fraternisation regulations had helped to alleviate the public commotion, there was a growing sense amongst British officials in Germany that more needed to be done to resurrect their occupation army's already-compromised public image. To this end, it was reasoned that the relocation of the wives and children of men serving in the BAOR and CCG (BE) was an advisable strategy. They would, in short, act as a restraint against the most distasteful facets of occupation life and secure the British forces against further public scandals. Yet in the British case, the endeavour to bring over the families of service personnel engendered various complications and controversies and ultimately managed to further diminish the reputation of the British occupiers.

The sentimental case for reuniting service families, many of whom had been separated for several years, was readily apparent. As early as November 1945, letters appeared in the national press asking when the 'wretched Army wife' will 'cease to

⁸⁸ Letter J. H. Webster to Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, 10 May 1948, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

⁸⁹ Letter Eve Graham to Prime Minister Attlee, 10 January 1949, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

be looked on as her husband's "excess luggage" to be left lying about indefinitely'.⁹⁰ There were also more pragmatic justifications, with British authorities hoping that the relocation of British families would make the occupation more of a desirable posting. This, in turn, would encourage conscientious, hard-working individuals to join the BAOR and CCG (BE) and prompt those already in Germany to stay on.⁹¹ It was also believed that the appeasement of service wives would help to offset any potential 'bring the boys back home' sentiment, even if this was still on the periphery of British responses to the occupation.⁹²

But at its core, the relocation of wives and families was intended to introduce a much-needed moralising force to the British Zone. Throughout the fraternisation furore, media commentators had repeatedly raised the prospect of sending wives and families to Germany as a restraint on the ostensibly corruptible men of the BAOR and CCG (BE).⁹³ It was a proposal, as Susan Carruthers has argued in relation to the American Zone, intended to domesticate the occupation and nullify perceived threats to national prestige.⁹⁴ In August 1946, the *Yorkshire Post* quoted an army padre, suggesting that British women would bring 'contentment' amongst the men, helping 'to form a centre of public opinion within the units' and 'generally exercise a steadying influence'.⁹⁵ This extended to the work of the occupation itself, with wives and families, as models of domesticity, envisaged as ambassadors of the 'British way of life' who could make a telling difference to the ultimate success of the occupation.

⁹⁰ B.A.O.R. Wife, 'Soldiers' Wives', letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1945; C. B. Acworth, 'Wives in Germany', letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1945.

⁹¹ Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 269; '18s-a-week Maids for BAOR Wives', *Daily Mail*, 22 January 1946.

⁹² Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 276. This sentiment was seemingly much stronger in America, see Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 263-98.

⁹³ 'Troops in Germany Ask for Company, *Yorkshire Post*, 22 May 1945.

⁹⁴ Carruthers, *The Good Occupation*, 262-9.

⁹⁵ Joe Illingworth, 'Soldiers' Wives in Germany – Problems They May Help to Solve', *Yorkshire Post*, 24 August 1946.

A representative of the Church of England's Moral Welfare Council suggested in a letter to the *Times* that the future of Europe depended on the success of the occupation 'and to that [...] the British families may contribute a very great deal.'⁹⁶

But in the first months of the occupation concerns over the difficult living conditions in Germany postponed the arrival of British women and children. The sincere caution of officials was publicly supported by a number of BAOR and CCG (BE) personnel, some of whom doubtless had ulterior motives.⁹⁷ But in the spring of 1946, after the so-called 'battle of the winter' had abated, discussions at the highest levels of government were held regarding the possibility of relocating British wives to Germany.⁹⁸ In August, after a number of false dawns due to shortages of basic supplies and adequate housing, 'Operation Union' got under way.⁹⁹ 'Married Families' (the official designation, which also included betrothed couples) were to be given passage to Germany. They would be fully integrated into the British occupation administration, provided with furnished accommodation, rations, entertainment, and much more besides.

On 15 August, the first party of eighty-seven BAOR wives, intended as a 'pathfinders' to test the arrangements ahead of the main parties, sailed from Tilbury to the port of Cuxhaven.¹⁰⁰ Their ambassadorial role was spelled out in no uncertain terms in a message from the Prime Minister:

I know you will realize that each and every one of you has an important mission to perform on behalf of your country. The British soldier has been rightly called 'our best ambassador'. You can also do much to bring a wholesome influence on

⁹⁶ G. L. Russell and Victoria Leveson Gower, 'B.A.O.R. Families', letter to the editor, *Times*, 13 September 1946.

⁹⁷ B.A.O.R. Husband, 'Soldiers' Wives in Germany – Not Suitable For Them Yet', letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1945.

⁹⁸ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 133.

⁹⁹ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 135.

¹⁰⁰ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 135; 'Show a Good Example to the Germans', Attlee Tells Wives of BAOR Men', *Daily Mirror*, 18 August 1946.

the German people by your example. You are going as representatives of the British people, and your behaviour and that of your children will demonstrate to the Germans the innate decency and honesty of the British and of their way of life. I know that you will show the virtues of good manners, of honest dealing, and of tactful consideration [...] I hope that your stay in Germany will bring you happiness and that it will impress upon the minds of the Germans memories of a thoughtful, humane, and generous people whose way of life is one to emulate.¹⁰¹

Sir Sholto Douglas, Military Governor of the British Zone, conveyed a similar message upon the group's arrival: 'it is by your bearing and conduct as well as that of your menfolk that the Germans will form their opinion of the British way of life in which we all believe'.¹⁰² The women, sporting Union Jack lapel badges for purposes of identification, were sent on their way via train or army car.¹⁰³ Captain Matthew Evelyn Wood, tasked with 'conducting' the British wives on their trip through Germany, mused that he must be 'the ugliest officer in BAOR' - much to the delight of the *Daily Mail*.¹⁰⁴

In the subsequent weeks and months, hundreds of women and children travelled to Germany aboard the *SS Empire Halladale* and *SS Empire Trooper* - and their passage inspired a great deal of interest back in Britain. The newspapers documented their experiences in great detail, publishing photographs and personal stories which emphasised the novelty of being abroad.¹⁰⁵ In the *Daily Mail*, it was reported that the women were compelled to receive a series of immunisations, prior to enjoying their 'last English meal for some time', which consisted of 'cereals, bacon

¹⁰¹ Quoted in 'Mr. Attlee's Message to B.A.O.R. Wives', *Times*, 16 August 1946.

¹⁰² Quoted in 'British Wives in Germany', *Times*, 19 August 1946.

¹⁰³ 'B.A.O.R. Wives Land at Cuxhaven', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 September 1946.

¹⁰⁴ 'BAOR's 'Ugliest' Escorts Wives', photograph, *Daily Mail*, 17 August 1946.

¹⁰⁵ 'The First of the British Wives to Join Their Husbands in Berlin', photograph, *Picture Post*, 31 August 1946.

and eggs (real), marmalade and toast, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding'.¹⁰⁶ In the local papers, there was perceptible a degree of pride that local women had been awarded the grand honour of being amongst the first wives to venture to Germany.¹⁰⁷

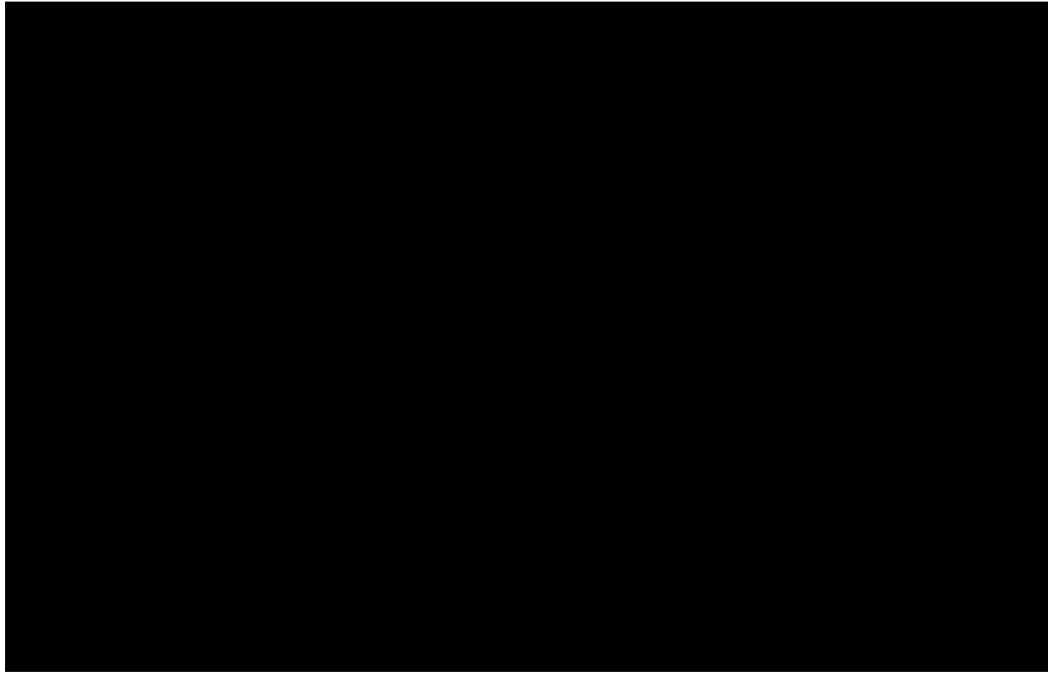


Illustration 10: 'The First of the British Wives to Join Their Husbands in Berlin',
Picture Post, 31 August 1946

The authorities, perhaps with an eye to stimulating a positive response from the media, had ramped up the patriotic fanfare. The *Times* reported that 'welcome surprises for women long accustomed to ration restrictions and an austere diet' were

¹⁰⁶ 'Picture Gallery - Off to Berlin Soon', photograph, *Daily Mail*, 20 July 1946; 'Picture Gallery - 87 BAOR Wives Say 'Farewell Britain' - and on to Germany', photograph, *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1946.

¹⁰⁷ 'BAOR Wives Off to Germany', *Yorkshire Post*, 14 August 1946 reported on the trip of Betty Fourness of Burley, Leeds.

to be expected on board the transport ships.¹⁰⁸ These included, as numerous newspapers and newsreels reported in precise detail, a choice of six wines, available with meals consisting of white bread, crisp rolls, chicken, ice cream, soup, turbot, chicken, roast *and* boiled potatoes, green peas, pineapples, and coffee, along with new toys for the children.¹⁰⁹ The sounds of 'military bands on a flag-bedecked dockside' greeted families upon their arrival in Cuxhaven, before they continued on to their final destinations by road and rail. These trains were also stocked with cigarettes, sweets, and magazines, while, in the midst of crippling transport shortages, it had been planned for everyone to have a corner seat.

This red-carpet treatment was well-documented in the press, with the *Times* also commending the 'marvellous organization' of the British authorities.¹¹⁰ *Gaumont-British* and *Movietone* each produced two newsreels, evidently sourced from the same officially-sanctioned footage, documenting the voyage of the wives and children and their first week in Germany.¹¹¹ The thrilling moment of being

¹⁰⁸ 'B.A.O.R. Families in Germany – General McCreery's Welcome – A British Example', *Times*, 2 September 1946.

¹⁰⁹ 'Brickbats etc', *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1946; 'B.A.O.R. Families in Germany – General McCreery's Welcome – A British Example', *Times*, 2 September 1946; 'B.A.O.R. Wives Land at Cuxhaven', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 September 1946; *Defence: Wives of Servicemen Stationed in Germany Leave to Join Husbands*, 5 September 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410130015, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *Germany: Army Wives and Children Reunited With Husbands*, 12 September 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410130030, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *BAOR Families Are Off*, 5 September 1949, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 47419, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>; *BAOR Families Settle Down*, 12 September 1949, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 47419, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

¹¹⁰ 'B.A.O.R. Families' Reunion – Early Impressions of Germany', *Times*, 3 September 1946.

¹¹¹ ; *Defence: Wives of Servicemen Stationed in Germany Leave to Join Husbands*, 5 September 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410130015, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *Germany: Army Wives and Children Reunited With Husbands*, 12 September 1946, *Gaumont-British News*, newsreel, Ref BGU410130030, ITN Source Newsreels, <http://www.itnsource.com/en>; *BAOR Families Are Off*, 5 September 1949, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 47419, British Movietone News Digital

reunited with husbands and fathers in Germany, where they would live ‘surrounded by ex-enemies’, was captured with a triumphant poignancy. But not everyone was so happy: Elizabeth Crookston of Weston-Super-Mare wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to complain at the grandiose jingoism she had encountered:

All the publicity and ostentation over BAOR wives going to Germany is none of our seeking; all we require and demand is a passage out there. The fuss over the journey and our arrival is entirely unnecessary; moreover, to me it is positively humiliating and infuriating. We are not children or imbeciles, and are able to take care of ourselves [...]. If, as seems imperative in England to-day, we have to be accompanied by “incidental music,” then please remember that we have not asked for it.¹¹²

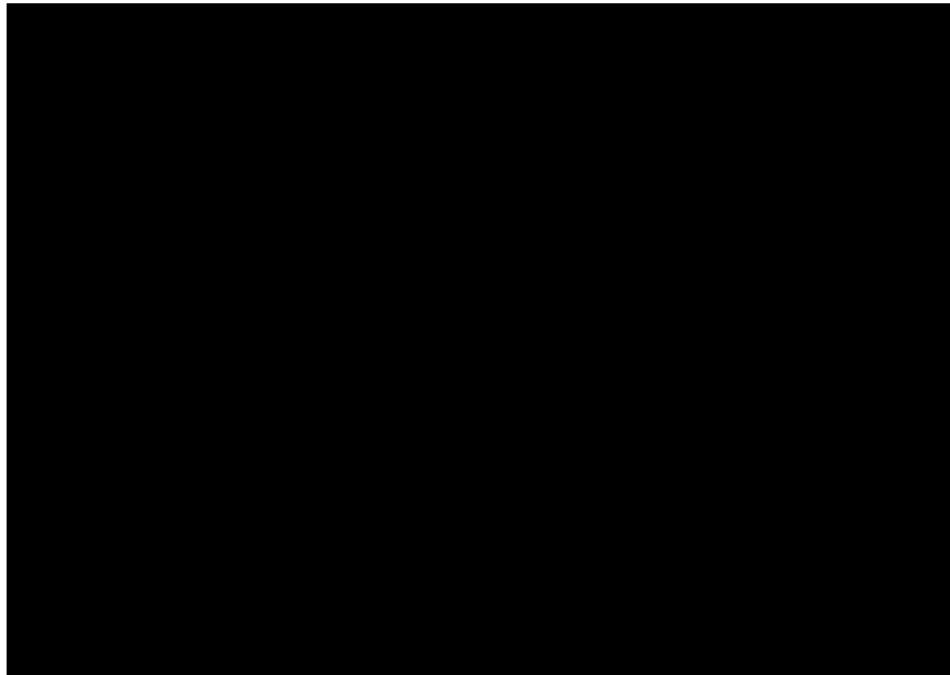


Illustration 11: British Wives and Families arrive in Cuxhaven, 1946, Imperial War Museum Archive

Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>; *BAOR Families Settle Down*, 12 September 1949, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 47419, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>.

¹¹² Elizabeth Crookston, ‘Soldiers’ Wives’, letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 August 1946.

Yet these British women and children, whether they liked it or not, had entered an extraordinary social milieu as representatives of a conquering army. The distinctive power dynamics of military occupation, conveying social status and privileges to occupiers over their occupied subjects, was particularly acute in the British Zone. While the relationship between rulers and ruled was by no means straightforward or fixed, the British and the Germans inhabited very different spheres. This was as true in material terms as any other, with the more-than-adequate provisions of entertainment, accommodation, and, above all, food setting apart British personnel and their families. CCG (BE) translator Mary Bouman's personal correspondence attests to this, remarking upon the 'strange life out here' that was 'sometimes quite devoid of reality'.¹¹³ She was astonished to find that some members of the CCG (BE) and BAOR seemed to regard Germany 'as a sort of British colony and the Germans as a species of rather inferior natives'. The 'strange feeling' of walking through 'utter desolation' into the 'soft carpets, comfortable chairs, spacious restaurants and luxurious bedroom fittings' of a British-only club was like 'passing into another world'.¹¹⁴

There was no attempt to hide the stark division between occupiers and occupied in official messaging, on the contrary it was often highlighted as evidence of a job well done. Nowhere was this clearer than the remarkable *Pathé* newsreel *Where BAOR Wives Will Live*, released in August 1946.¹¹⁵ The film, produced with the support of the British authorities, attempted to provide viewers with an insight into the types of communal flats that families would inhabit in places such as Hamburg, Hannover, and Brunswick. It exhibited these 'comfortably-furnished and well-

¹¹³ Mary Bouman to her parents, 2 August 1946, Herford, Bouman Papers; Mary Bouman to her parents, 20 August 1946, Herford, Bouman Papers.

¹¹⁴ Mary Bouman to her parents, Undated letter 'Bummel in Hamburg', Hamburg, Bouman Papers.

¹¹⁵ *Where BAOR Wives Will Live*, 5 August 1946, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1406.15, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

heated' abodes, along with the new Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) stores, a Club in Brunswick that would provide 'recreational, social and helpful amenities', and the writing and reading rooms of the Hotel Lorenz, 'where Hitler used to stay'. The newsreel went on to document a personal experience of 'Operation Union', talking with Sergeant Major Putland, stationed in Germany, and his wife, still in Luton, who were soon to be reunited in Bad Oeynhausen. But it is the final segment of the film, detailing the work of the CCG (BE)'s 'requisition quartering team' in Hamburg, which stands out in dramatic style: a British officer is shown knocking on the door of a German woman, gesturing to explain that the flat will be 'taken over for a British wife' before touring the flat, pointing out the furniture and belongings that will also be requisitioned. The young mother stands shocked and distraught, comforting her perplexed son as she confronts the reality of losing her house and most of her belongings – and yet the narrator simply continues to explain the positive implications for British women expecting to move to Germany. The spectacle exhibited, with a sense of satisfaction, the severe and stern character of the British occupation at work.

The CCG (BE) and BAOR ensured that the wives and families of the British occupation forces would be shielded as much as possible from the severe shortages that confronted the German people. In the *Daily Mirror*, Marguerite Peacocke detailed the 'undreamed-of luxury' that would be found 'when the Joneses go to Germany'.¹¹⁶ 'The whole attitude of the Rhine Army HQ', she reported, 'is that a private's wife should have as good a time as a colonel's'. Thus, all families would live in a newly-furnished house or self-contained flat, complete with kitchen and bathroom, food, fuel, and laundry 'for less than £3 a week'. This would be 'much greater comfort and at less cost than at home', while additional household

¹¹⁶ Marguerite Peacocke, 'When the Joneses Go To Germany – BAOR Wives Will Find Life in Germany a Mixture of Undreamed-of Luxury and Make-do-or-go-without', *Daily Mirror*, 15 July 1946.

expenditure would also be cheaper given the lack of any purchase tax, although wives were advised to bring their own sheets due to a shortage in the British Zone. Moreover, in the various clubs and cinemas their 'pocket money' would go much further than at home, while the military would provide recreational transport. There were even plans for a cheap system of domestic service. In addition, their food provisions would be more than comfortable, being entitled to Auxiliary Territorial Service rations, 100 cigarettes, and 4 oz. of sweets or chocolate per week, while extra foodstuffs, wine, spirits, and household goods were all available from the NAAFI store. British wives in Germany were to get 'twice as much as they do at home of most of the things which are rationed in Britain', including meat, sugar, preserves, fat, butter, tea, bread, and cheese.

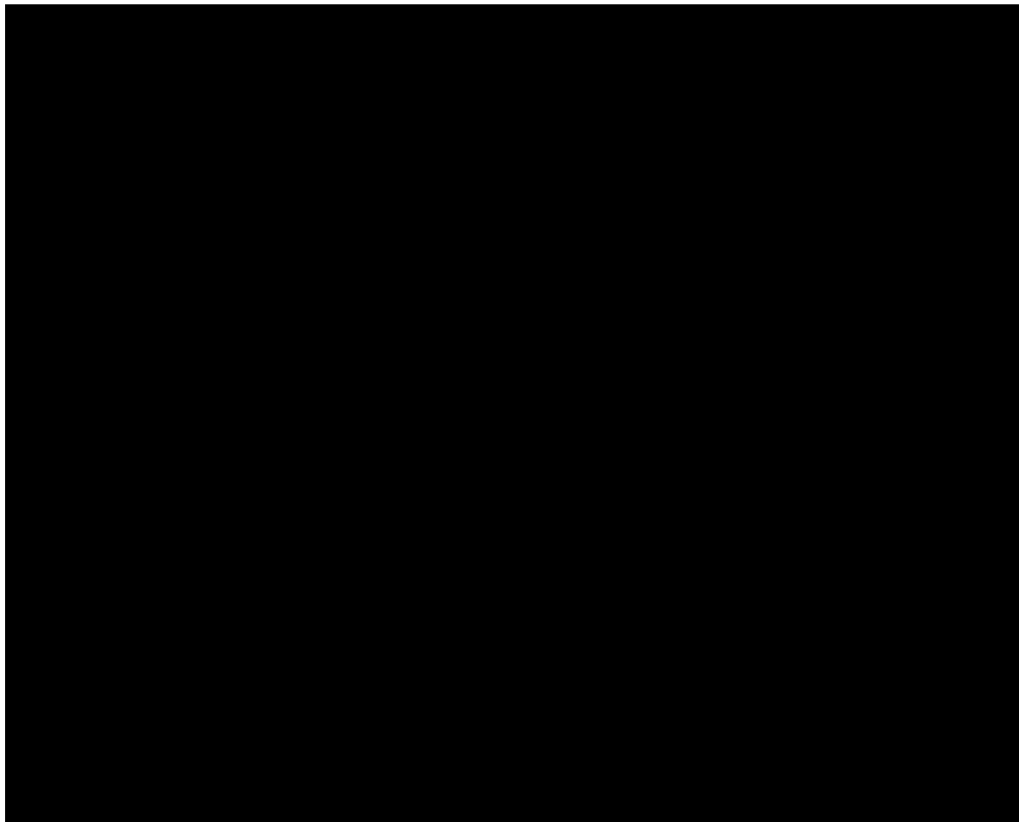


Illustration 12: NAAFI Store in the British Zone, undated, Imperial War Museum
Archive

As families relocated to the British Zone, there was also a heightened sense of media interest in the day-to-day experiences of life in Germany. In the course of three articles over one week in January 1946, the *Daily Mail* had explained that British women would likely find furnishings in German private homes to be 'solid and Victorian, but clumsy' and the rooms 'probably dark and over-filled with furniture, pictures and dust-collecting objects'.¹¹⁷ On the street, they would see 'more and better silk stockings', 'better complexions', and 'an almost complete avoidance of facial make-up', while their children 'will have to become accustomed to traffic on the right of the road and the fact that German drivers are usually ruthless regarding pedestrians'.

In July 1946, writing in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, John Flett reasoned that British women would be surprised at the good quality housing they could come to expect in 'pleasant German holiday resorts [...] scarcely touched by the war' and would enjoy the picturesque spring weather.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, they would also be faced with 'vast tracts of the most appalling devastation' that 'can scarcely be called pleasant' and would likely see hunger and near-starvation in the streets. Flett continued, apparently unsympathetic to the urgent shortages facing the German population, that while British food rations would be more than ample, these women would have to tolerate limited opportunities for leisure: 'untidy, dirty, the rubble of shattered houses piled high on either sides, these German streets offer no adventure for the shopper'. Amusements would be sparse, consisting of theatres and cinemas 'far less attractive than our own' and cafes serving 'incredibly bad German beer'. It was inevitable that social life would 'have something of a colonial flavour' to begin with, wilfully detached from the untrustworthy Germans:

¹¹⁷ 'BAOR Wives: First Go Out in June', *Daily Mail*, 21 January 1946; '18s-a-week Maids for BAOR Wives', *Daily Mail*, 22 January 1946; 'All mod. con. For BAOR', *Daily Mail*, 25 January 1946.

¹¹⁸ 'What B.A.O.R. Wives Will Find in Germany', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 16 July 1946.

These people are still poles apart from ourselves. Their ideas are even to-day strongly coloured by the propaganda of Hitlerism. They feel no responsibility for the war, or for the crimes committed by their armies or their leaders.

Pampered Darlings?

The stories of untold luxury provided to British wives provoked opposition amongst members of the CCG (BE) and BAOR, many of whom felt they were being handed a raw deal. The *Daily Mail* featured the complaints of a self-styled 'service bachelor', confined to army barracks, who accused the BAOR wives of being 'spoiled darlings'.¹¹⁹ But it was the women of the CCG (BE), most of whom lived in the private requisitioned accommodation that was now being reassigned to wives and families, who felt most aggrieved. Mary Bouman, a translator in the Zonal Executive Office at Herford, wrote home to her parents to deride the comfort afforded to the British wives and families:

If they move in anywhere the house is always redecorated and put into full repair, whereas we just move in with things often in quite a dilapidated condition with no curtains at all at the windows [...]. I suppose it is one result of the acute housing shortage in England. What could be better than to come out here, have a house and all found for you and ready to move into. No wonder families are coming out at an increasing rate.¹²⁰

It was, she felt, hardly fair that the authorities were pandering to them, while 'those who do the work here' were merely an afterthought: 'in almost everything they come first and we come second'.¹²¹ This frustration at the elevated status of 'Married Families' even inspired a group of CCG (BE) women to voice their protests publicly, leading to the publication of stories in the *Daily Mirror* and *Manchester Guardian*

¹¹⁹ 'Wives in BAOR 'spoiled darlings'', *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1946.

¹²⁰ Mary Bouman to her parents, 25 August 1947, Herford, Bouman Papers.

¹²¹ Mary Bouman to her parents, 6 August 1947, Herford, Bouman Papers.

about how they were losing their requisitioned furniture and lodgings to the British families who were 'pampered and petted all the way'.¹²²

The portrayals of lavish comfort on offer to British families in Germany also provoked an incensed reaction amongst certain sections of the British public and media, serving to further diminish the reputation of the occupiers. All the luxury was, much of the mass-market press contended, an insult to their hard-pressed readers across Britain. The *Daily Mirror* poured scorn on the 'biggest BAOR family', who had left their 'little house' in Reading for a fourteen-room mansion in Detmold 'complete with servant, cook and governess for the children'.¹²³ Likewise, the *Daily Mail* expressed outrage when it was revealed that these luxuries provided not only British wives but also German women who married British service personnel with 'a higher standard of living than the British housewife at home'.¹²⁴ The NAAFI stores, piled high with unrationed goods 'which have long been unobtainable in Britain', were said to be reminiscent of a pre-war shop, offering everything from tinned fruit to 'face powders of the quality not seen in Britain for years'. A few weeks later, one of the paper's readers penned a letter suggesting that the provision of ostentatious food, 'which even in ordinary times would rank as luxury fare', and 'preferential treatment' was 'calculated to fan the growing flame of discontent among all the harassed and unfairly treated housewives of Britain'.¹²⁵

That said, the wives and families did find some supporters in Britain. In late August, Joe Illingworth leapt to their defence, rejecting the 'spoiled darlings' tag that

¹²² "Stay Out of Germany' Call to Wives', *Daily Mirror*, 2 August 1946; 'Treatment of B.A.O.R. Wives – British Girls Complain', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 September 1946.

¹²³ 'Biggest BAOR Family Leave Small Home Here for a 14-room House', *Daily Mirror*, 3 September 1946.

¹²⁴ 'Wives in BAOR 'spoiled darlings'', *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1946.

¹²⁵ 'Brickbats etc', *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1946

had now become commonplace.¹²⁶ There was a ‘tacit unformulated assumption at the back of some people’s minds’ that wives were ‘coming out to have a good time and form a decorative social background to life in Germany’. Rather, Illingworth suggested that these women were accomplishing important work, taking the example of York resident Mrs Hartley, a graduate of Leeds University, who was organising the educational syllabus for British children in the Zone.

There were also a growing number of stories condemning the CCG (BE) for failing to provide suitable supplies of accommodation and furniture to British families, as well as anomalies and inconsistencies in provisions of other goods and foodstuffs. In the *Daily Mail* it was stressed that ‘all is not easy for the BAOR wife’: while the first to move had been ‘impressed by their pampered, much publicised and generally efficiently organised journey from England to Germany’, they were now ‘finding that the administration [...] is beginning to creak’.¹²⁷ ‘BAOR wives in tears’, exclaimed the *Nottingham Evening Post*, explaining that some women had been ‘ordered into “piggeries”’ without tables, carpets, or mattresses.¹²⁸ By December 1946, these logistical problems were severe enough to instigate a reduction in the number of wives permitted to relocate to Germany.¹²⁹ That month, Cyril Dunn wrote a long article in the *Yorkshire Post* relating the concerns of women he had met in Germany, assuring readers that ‘life for British wives in the British Zone is much more real and earnest than is generally supposed’.¹³⁰ In Dunn’s article, one BAOR wife exclaimed that ‘all this stuff about Pampered Darlings makes us *boil!*’.

¹²⁶ Joe Illingworth, ‘Soldiers’ Wives in Germany – Problems They May Help to Solve’, *Yorkshire Post*, 24 August 1946.

¹²⁷ ‘The Outer World – All Is Not Easy For BAOR Wife’, *Daily Mail*, 20 August 1946; also see ‘Few Homes, No Furniture for BAOR Wives’, *Daily Mail*, 20 July 1946.

¹²⁸ ‘B.A.O.R. Wives in Tears’, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 31 August 1946.

¹²⁹ ‘Army Cuts BAOR Wives Lists: Too Few Houses’, *Daily Mirror*, 20 December 1946.

¹³⁰ Cyril Dunn, ‘British Wives in Germany – They Say: “We Are Happy but Not Pampered”’, *Yorkshire Post*, 13 December 1946.

Yet the portrayal of these women as over-indulged and a blight on the country's international reputation had become firmly entrenched – raising the ire of the British press and public alike. In 1947, an anonymous British Army Captain, currently serving in India after a period in occupied Germany, informed readers of the *Daily Mirror* about the 'appalling' situation he had left behind:

Men, women, and children are dying in the streets while fat, bloated, snobbish wives of Control Commission officers sit back in the house of some evicted family whose underfed daughter is a slave for a meagre wage [...]. Never in all my life have I been so ashamed of being English.¹³¹

The same year, J. N. Walton wrote to the Prime Minister warning that the requisitioning of German houses to accommodate British families was a 'crime against humanity' and not befitting a Labour administration.¹³² She quoted extensively from an letter which had appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, suggesting the British were living surrounded by a 'wall of quite unnecessary luxury'.¹³³ Their conduct, she concluded, had contravened the Prime Minister's exhortation to demonstrate the 'innate decency' of the 'British way of life' and would inevitably 'leave a bitter legacy in the minds of the German people'.

The occupation authorities had hoped that their attempts to domesticate the occupation would bring order and composure, helping to ward off endemic fraternisation and resurrecting the public image of their personnel. But instead, 'Operation Union' had seemingly served to further defame the reputation of the British occupation forces. These 'Married Families', believed to be living extravagantly people back home struggled by, seemed to be a hindrance to Britain's own recovery and a burden in the battle to 'win the peace'.

¹³¹ Captain D. E. H., 'Viewpoint', letter to the editor, *Daily Mirror*, 5 May 1947.

¹³² Letter J. N. Walton to the Prime Minister, 17 January 1947, Vol III, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

¹³³ S., 'The Herrenvolk', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 January 1947.

The War is Lost

The controversies over fraternisation and the relocation of British families to the Zone had both gestured towards a broader and even more contentious issue, namely the appropriate treatment of the German people in the course of the occupation. In the case of 'fratting', official policy and public sentiment in favour of a harsh, aloof attitude towards the Germans had come up against the realities of everyday life. Likewise, 'Operation Union' had prompted fierce disagreements over the appropriate conduct of the British wives and children vis-à-vis their new neighbours. This included complaints that the imperial character of the relationship between occupiers and occupied was a threat to the peace. Ernest E. Laws even wrote to the Prime Minister, expressing his concerns that misconduct in Germany would preclude any chance of Britain ever 'winning the peace':

I write to you as principle director of policy and coordinator of Foreign Office, War Office, and other interested departments to beg you to withdraw forces families from these Zones and repatriate them [...]. Nazism is not dead: every act of arrogance and exploitation revives it; and the war is lost.¹³⁴

His anxieties were far from unique: in October 1946, the *Times* featured a letter from a group of influential women, including philanthropist Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, social reformer Margery Fry, and women's rights activist Baroness Pethick-Lawrence.¹³⁵ These women, many of whom were allied to liberal or socialist causes and broadly sympathetic to the 'soft peace' ideas of Victor Gollancz, recorded their 'surprise and anxiety at the ideas and methods displayed in the arrangements for the

¹³⁴ Letter Ernest E. Laws to the Prime Minister, 1 February 1947, Vol. V, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

¹³⁵ Katharine Atholl, Marjory Allen of Hurtwood, Anna Barlow, Elizabeth M. Cadbury, Cynthia Colville, C. M. Craven, Amabel Eardley Wilmot, Margery Fry, Alice Gainsborough, Susan Isaacs, Geraldine Jebb, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Ethel Snowden, Sybil Thornbike, Helen Waddell, Florence Wedgewood, Barbara Wootton, and Hylda Wrench, 'British Wives in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 10 October 1946.

British wives'. The British families in Germany, they suggested, had been supplied with comforts such as extra rations, special shops, and 'special transport facilities to save the British wife from sitting near a German' at the great cost to the local populace. The requisitioning of property amid high infant mortality, hunger oedema, tuberculosis, and general human suffering was a humanitarian tragedy. These acts, they concluded, would only serve to damage 'British popularity and prestige' and ultimately lengthen the occupation. The following day, a letter from Clementine Churchill appeared, offering her support to the signatories and suggesting that great numbers of 'thoughtful people' would surely agree.¹³⁶

Yet while the condemnation of such ostentatious luxury in the mass-market press had found a willing audience, playing upon the everyday concerns of families in austerity Britain, this moralistic appeal from elite women was much more controversial. The wives of British personnel were, unsurprisingly, none too pleased at this derogatory portrayal of their supposed moral failings. They took to the press to defend themselves and the provisions afforded to them as representatives of a conqueror. 'BAOR Wife', wrote to the *Times* to challenge the claims made by these 'distinguished women', asking flippantly whether any of them had husbands in the BAOR and defending the right of women such as herself to have a happy family life.¹³⁷ The tales of luxury, she added, had been overstated: while there might be cheap champagne at the NAAFI, this was merely 'one of the few fruits of victory' for women who were 'examples of all that an ambassador should be'. Ruth Elford, who was intending to join her husband in Germany in the near future, also wrote a stern defence of the British women in Germany.¹³⁸ It was, she thought, hypocritical to lambast fraternisation with the Germans and then also condemn the scheme to bring

¹³⁶ Clementine S. Churchill, 'British Wives in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 11 October 1946.

¹³⁷ B.A.O.R Wife, 'British Wives in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 17 October 1946.

¹³⁸ Ruth Elford, 'British Wives in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 15 October 1946.

out their families simply ‘because it means requisitioning a few houses from the German people’.

There was also a good deal of support for the quasi-imperialist ethos of the British families in the mass-market press – even if their supply of ostentatious luxury remained an unacceptable indulgence. For many, the requisitioning of German houses, the provision of German servants, and the self-imposed detachment of the British occupiers and their families was felt to be more than justified: Britain had won the war after all and the guilty Germans deserved everything they got. In the *Yorkshire Post*, Cyril Dunn insisted that the wives and children were fine ambassadors for Britain. Their integrity and admirably stern attitude towards the Germans was said to be encapsulated in the following tale of parental strife:

A kind of passive war, confined to the minor skirmish, is going on for possession of the pavements in Celle. German mothers with prams obstruct the way, trying to make British mothers with prams detour into the road. “I got fed up with this,” a young Scotswoman said to me, “and one day I just pushed straight on, until our prams touched. We stood there, glowering at each other over our prams, until the German woman gave way. She yelled something at me. I supposed it was horrid.”¹³⁹

These distinctive conceptions of how the occupation should be conducted were indicative of the ongoing disagreements in Britain over the correct interpretation and resolution of the ‘German Problem’. This would come to a head in yet another public scandal, as CCG (BE) authorities set to work on the construction of a British HQ in the city of Hamburg.

¹³⁹ Cyril Dunn, ‘British Wives in Germany – They Say: “We Are Happy but Not Pampered”’, *Yorkshire Post*, 13 December 1946.

The Hamburg Project

In the course of the commotion over the arrival of British wives and children in occupied Germany, there had been special complaint about the construction of a 'British ghetto' in Hamburg. The 'Hamburg Project' was an ultimately abortive attempt by the CCG (BE) to construct a Military Government headquarters, with provisions to accommodate British personnel and their families. It was suggested in some organs of the press that the initiation of such a project, while thousands of Germans had no beds and were now living in tents, was the very definition of 'asking for trouble'.¹⁴⁰ This, it turned out, was to be a prophetic warning, with the plans prompting an incensed reaction amongst resident Hamburgers and, in turn, the British press.

The immense scale of destruction in the major towns and cities of the British Zone had left the CCG (BE) without an identifiable headquarters. Military government offices and compounds were dotted around the countryside in smaller towns like Minden, Lübbecke, Herford, and Detmold, where a larger supply of intact buildings had been available in the summer of 1945. The 'Hamburg Project' was intended to streamline the cumbersome British administration, creating a centralised HQ in the centre of this medieval port city. This, it was hoped, would help to curb the spiralling costs of maintaining an occupation army and civil administration in Germany.¹⁴¹

British planners masterminded a scheme that would see the repair and modification of the existing offices in the Altstadt, as well as the construction on the north-west banks of the Außenalster of numerous twelve- and eight-storey

¹⁴⁰ 'Stay Out of Germany' Call to Wives', *Daily Mirror*, 2 August 1946; 'Treatment of B.A.O.R. Wives – British Girls Complain', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 September 1946.

¹⁴¹ Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 277-8; Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 318.

residential flats and various theatres, shops, hotels and clubs.¹⁴² This ambitious building project was intended for completion in the autumn of 1947 and would employ over 35,000 German labourers. These plans would, however, come at a considerable cost to the local population, originally estimated in late 1945 at the demolition of around 750 badly-needed houses and the requisitioning of many more. The result would be the re-housing of over 30,000 people, necessitating a programme of repairs to damaged houses throughout the city, in order to accommodate as few as 5,000 British officers and their families.¹⁴³ The imperial overtones of the project were unmissable: one secret memorandum even described it as the creation of a 'British colony' in Hamburg.¹⁴⁴

With internal objections regarding prospective problems of logistics and manpower eventually overcome, these plans were given the go-ahead in May 1946. In mid-June, a press release was issued by the PR/ISC, informing the British media of the 'Hamburg Project' for the first time.¹⁴⁵ It emphasised that the areas for 'implementation' were already heavily devastated, that nobody would be removed until adequate accommodation was made available, and that the plan would 'effect economy in personnel and efficiency' of the Control Commission. The reaction was, to say the least, muted, with little residual interest from the media in the

¹⁴² Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 140.

¹⁴³ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 140; Knowles, *Winning the Peace*, 114-8; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 427 (1946), 17 October 1946, Col. 1154-92.

¹⁴⁴ Press Release – Hamburg Project, Appendix A (Secret), 14 June 1946, FO 1056/520 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Hamburg Project Publicity, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁵ Press Release – Hamburg Project, 14 June 1946, FO 1056/520 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Hamburg Project Publicity, National Archives, London.

technicalities of the British Zone's amorphous administration. For the population of Hamburg, however, the news of further mass requisitioning aroused a great deal of distress. They had been subjected to some of the most destructive bombing raids of the war, killing thousands and destroying vast swathes of the city, including a large percentage of existing housing. The prospect of further reductions to the available stock of accommodation prompted intense public anger.

On 27 June 1946, this discontent came to a head when around eighty women marched on the Rathaus, calling for support from the mayor in their protests against the 'Hamburg Project'.¹⁴⁶ They were soon joined by as many as 4,000 protestors who, according to the Public Safety Branch of the CCG (BE)'s official report, became 'truculent' and teetered on the edge of outright insurrection. The incensed Hamburgers chanted and made a few half-hearted attempts to force entry into the town hall, where a delegation of six women were meeting with Mayor Petersen and British officials. At the end of the meeting, Petersen, 'white moustache bristling, hands grasping the lapels of his Savile Row suit', addressed the protestors to a chorus of cheers and boos.¹⁴⁷ The crowd soon dispersed, the whole incident was over by midday, and only eleven arrests were made – while some rebellious youths may have 'knocked off a few hats', the atmosphere had been, at least temporarily, calmed without resort to violence.

¹⁴⁶ Public Safety Branch – Daily Situation Report, 1800 Hour 27 June 1946, FO 1056/520 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Hamburg Project Publicity, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁷ PR Branch CCG to Chief PR/ISC, Press Reports on Hamburg Demonstration (with press cuttings), 28 June 1946, FO 1056/520 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Hamburg Project Publicity, National Archives, London.

Yet these demonstrations caused a stir in Britain's mass-market press, for whom the apparent resurgence of nationalist fervour amongst the German people was regarded as an existential threat. Almost all the national dailies covered the story and many, including the *Daily Herald*, *News Chronicle*, and *Daily Mail*, gave it front-page billing.¹⁴⁸ These reports meticulously detailed the hostile chants and songs aired by the crowd, from 'we are not in concentration camps now' to 'why don't you finish the hunger blockade' and 'we are not Indians – we are Germans'. If such revelations were shocking enough, the repeated singing of *Deutschland über Alles* and the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* had even graver connotations. The *Daily Express* also alleged that Free Hamburg, 'a new Fascist-youth organisation', had circulated chain letters in preparation for the protest, condemning the Mayor and city council as 'Jews, and the tools of Jews'. The newspapers also noted with some disbelief the insults levelled at the British forces policing the demonstration on 27 June, including one 'German matron' who had supposedly shouted 'schweinhund' at a BAOR officer.

'A great big gin palace in the middle of Hamburg'

Those, including much of the mass-market press, who had embraced the ideas of Lord Vansittart's *Black Record* remained openly antagonistic towards Germany and were seemingly wary of a Nazi revival. They continued to conceive of the occupation as a means of punishment and control and, in this, the 'hard peace' lobby found themselves in line with the ethos of CCG (BE) policy, at least as it stood in the summer of 1946. In fact, many of those who harboured anti-German

¹⁴⁸ PR Branch CCG to Chief PR/ISC, Press Reports on Hamburg Demonstration (with press cuttings), 28 June 1946, FO 1056/520 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Hamburg Project Publicity, National Archives, London.

sentiments embraced the colonial overtones of the British Zone as a viable means of enforcing lasting change upon a people ill-educated in the ways of liberty and democracy. Labour MP Richard Grossman shrewdly identified the subtle evolution that advocates of a 'hard peace' had made since the war:

I cannot help feeling that many hon. Members of this House, and many of the general public, are still suffering from the propaganda of the war. They move from "Vansittartism" to something which is equally wrong at the moment, an attitude of treating Germans as a potential Colonial people.¹⁴⁹

The 'Hamburg Project' was regarded, as such, as a perfectly reasonable undertaking. It would centralise the administration and increase efficiency, not to mention provide housing and amenities for the British personnel and their families, all in preparation for a long-term assignment. In turn, the outright disobedience of the local populace was considered to be a worrying indication of the German people's renewed self-confidence: beaten but seemingly not out. There was no sense, in the British media at least, that these protests demonstrated the burgeoning of a new democratic spirit. Rather, they seemed to substantiate the most hysterical fears of Vansittart and his followers. The apparent revival of nationalistic, even Nazi, ideas matched-up perfectly with the idea of the 'unchanging German' and further reinforced the perceived need for a severe and unremitting occupation.

On the other hand, the 'soft peace' lobby, spearheaded by Victor Gollancz, had expressed a long-standing opposition to imperialism of all kinds – not least in the case of postwar Germany. For them, the 'Hamburg Project' was controversial precisely because it seemed to embody the British occupation's quasi-imperialism and apparent disregard for the humanitarian concerns of the German people.¹⁵⁰ The

¹⁴⁹ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 427 (1946), 17 October 1946, Col. 1154-92.

¹⁵⁰ For more on the imperial character of the British Zone, see Torriani, 'Nazis into Germans'; Camilo Erlichman, 'Strategies of Rule: cooperation and conflict in the British Zone of Germany, 1945-1949', (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015).

anger expressed by the local population, rather than a symbol of resurgent nationalism, was regarded as a righteous response to a scandalous proposition.

In late 1946, Lord Beveridge, condemned the situation he had encountered on a visit to Germany, describing the 'conditions of life' for Germans as 'intolerable'.¹⁵¹ The failed policies of the British administration were, he felt, partly to blame, foremost amongst them the 'Hamburg Project', which had made 'a desperate situation worse'.¹⁵² Fenner Brockway agreed, writing in his *German Diary* of the same year, that turning out 30,000 Germans onto the streets and confiscating their belongings had 'caused a wave of resentment more bitter than any since the Occupation began'.¹⁵³

In the House of Commons, Labour MP Richard Stokes, who had been an ally of George Bell in the wartime campaign against area bombing, led the charge. He brought up the 'Hamburg Project' in a number of parliamentary debates, most notably on 17 October 1946.¹⁵⁴ In this debate, he described dispossessing people 'who have been bombed to blazes' of their houses and few remaining possessions for the benefit of the 'British Raj' as an 'atrocious'. Stokes's distaste for the imperial culture of the Control Commission authorities, especially amid the humanitarian distress found in postwar Germany, was made abundantly clear:

Are we to see, in the midst of this devastation and in a state of things where men and women have not enough money to buy food for their families, have nowhere to live but holes in the ground, and nothing in the shape of a prospect of industrial development, what? A great big gin palace in the middle of Hamburg? For what? For what I call the Hamburg Poona, for the British Raj?

¹⁵¹ Beveridge, *An Urgent Message*, 2.

¹⁵² Beveridge, *An Urgent Message*, 18.

¹⁵³ Fenner Brockway, *German Diary*, (London: Gollancz, 1946), viii.

¹⁵⁴ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 144-5.

The 'Hamburg Project', he concluded, would only serve to further damage British prestige and threatened to undermine the overriding objective of the occupation – which, in his mind, was to liberate the German people from oppression:

Is this to be done when everybody is suffering from cold and hunger, and is it to be surrounded with soldiers carrying fixed bayonets and marching up and down outside? Is that the way to treat a population who should regard us as liberators and not as conquerors? We went there to liberate them from a beastly disease and now that we have done it we are behaving in exactly the same way as the beast did. This is precisely the sort of thing that the Nazis did.

These liberal and left-wing commentators, finding support in the pages of the upmarket press, were increasingly outraged at the perceived callousness of the Military Government authorities. British authorities, in their unfaltering commitment to major infrastructure projects and the housing of British wives and families, were intensifying food and housing shortages. The German people – who, importantly, had done nothing to deserve their plight – were justifiably enraged at the unjust requisitioning programme and the greed of the occupiers. These misdeeds not only threatened Britain's prestige as a moral nation and world power, but the very peace that the occupation was meant to protect.

The British authorities in Germany decided to shelve the plan, on the euphemistic account of 'supply issues', at the end of 1946.¹⁵⁵ But the furore over the 'Hamburg Project' had already added fuel to the fire of the growing public and media resentment towards the conduct of the British occupiers. For some the angry response of local residents invoked fears of renewed German nationalism, while others perceived this scheme as a symbol of the imperialist ethos and rank immorality that stood as the unfortunate underpinning of the occupation. It was a disagreement that symbolised the ongoing fractures characterising the British response to the Allied occupation and the fate of postwar Germany.

¹⁵⁵ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 145.

Maladministration

The British authorities in Germany had supply issues of another kind, namely allegations of systemic corruption and criminality that threatened to further undermine their public reputation. The underworld of postwar Europe would later be immortalised in Carol Reed's 1949 film noir *The Third Man*, in which Orson Welles plays Harry Lime, a kingpin racketeer in murky postwar Vienna during 'the classic period of the black market'.¹⁵⁶ Yet prior to the film's release, the British public were already well aware of the underhanded dealings transpiring in occupied Germany.

In 1946, two MPs, Denis Pritt, Labour but pro-Stalin, and Michael Astor, Tory, had sent letters to the Control Commission seeking investigation into serious allegations of fraud and corruption in Germany.¹⁵⁷ Scotland Yard detectives were engaged in assessing the veracity of these claims and public relations officials warned that 'a steady of stream of these complaints' should be expected in the British media.¹⁵⁸

The apparent malpractice of industrial representatives working within the CCG (BE)'s administration was an area of particular concern. The British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee (BIOS) had been established in 1945 to oversee the acquisition of technical and scientific data from the British Zone – from documents

¹⁵⁶ *The Third Man*, film, directed by Carol Reed, starring Orson Welles (1949; London: London Films).

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Astor to John Hynd, 18 November 1946, FO 936/743 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Allegations and Investigations of cases of corruption in CCG, British Zone, 1946-48, National Archives, London; Report for Prime Minister from John Hynd, 9 December 1946, FO 936/743 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Allegations and Investigations of cases of corruption in CCG, British Zone, 1946-48, National Archives, London.

¹⁵⁸ Telegram from CCG to Control Office, 28 November 1946, FO 936/743 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Allegations and Investigations of cases of corruption in CCG, British Zone, 1946-48, National Archives, London.

and patents to machinery and skilled personnel – and to identify possible targets for dismantling.¹⁵⁹ BIOS also sent technically-adept businessmen and scientists into the British Zone to assess factories and other sites. In April 1946, BIOS team no.1972, made up of representatives of the perfumery and cosmetic industries including companies such as Unilever, Pears Soap, and Yardleys, were investigating the manufacture of the famous *Eau-de-Cologne 4711*.¹⁶⁰ The team sought to obtain the secret formula for this world-famous aftershave, visiting their competitor's factory in Cologne. Here, they were told that the formula was known only by the owner of the business, the sixty-seven-year-old Maria Mühlens, who was currently undergoing medical treatment at her temporary home (her family home, described in official reports as a castle, had been requisitioned).¹⁶¹ The men of BIOS team 1972 called on her and, according to Mühlens and a number of observers, turned increasingly hostile at the refusal to hand over the secret formula.¹⁶² They suggested that Unilever, represented by A. W. Adam, would set up a new company in England to produce *Cologne 4711* and that Frau Mühlens would receive a 50% share, provided she handed over the formula. Growing frustrated, the BIOS team then allegedly threatened Mühlens with imprisonment and the closure of her firm's Cologne factory.

¹⁵⁹ Longden, *T-Force*.

¹⁶⁰ BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London; FO 936/78, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Article in *New Statesman* Alleging Corruption in CCG, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁶¹ Report, n.d. BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London.

¹⁶² Witness Reports, n.d. BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London.

In August, a *Daily Express* reporter got wind of the story and threatened publication, seeking immediate assurance from Military Government officials that the offending personnel were to be suspended. The CCG (BE) authorities successfully rebuffed the allegations, contending that the offending men had never been members of their organisation. Yet while this was technically true, behind closed doors officials were concerned that BIOS Investigators would be 'put in an invidious light' if this 'somewhat unorthodox [albeit] unsuccessful trade piracy' were made public'.¹⁶³ These fears were realised a few months later, when the story made its way into the press through the BBC's German Service correspondent David Graham.¹⁶⁴ His broadcast, 'Why Recovery Lags', preceded damning assessments of the story in November editions of the *New Statesmen and Nation* and the *Tribune*, the latter was also syndicated in the *New York Herald Tribune European Edition*.¹⁶⁵ It was alleged that businessmen in British Army uniforms coercing German officials into giving them trade secrets was a relatively common practice, coming at the expense of British taxpayers. This industrial espionage and fraud was said to be the result of insufficient supervision on behalf of British authorities, who had 'helped to render catastrophic the predicament into which the international situation, and above all the world food shortage, have placed the British Zone'. The *New Statesman* condemned journalists and MPs for being 'too reticent' about the 'condition of the administration in the British Zone'. It was understandable that nobody wanted to believe 'the evil of men doing a difficult job', but here was clear proof of systemic corruption and 'maladministration'.

¹⁶³ Letter C. S. Low, T-Force, to Miss Chasanovitch, Board of Trade, 17 August 1946, BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London.

¹⁶⁴ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 231.

¹⁶⁵ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 232; *New York Herald Tribune (European Edition)*, 9 November 1946; *New Statesman and Nation*, 9 November 1946.

The story prompted questions in the House of Commons and even led to an official investigation.¹⁶⁶ The Board of Trade and CCG (BE) reached opposing conclusions, with the former concluding that it was 'proper for [the BIOS team] to make the enquiries upon which unfavourable Press comment has been made' while condemning Frau Mühlens's 'improper attitude'.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, Gilmour Jenkins, a COGA public relations official, had 'little doubt that their behaviour at the interview with Frau Mühlens was irregular'.¹⁶⁸ Yet there was, he felt, no means of bringing about any charges and concluded that it was best 'to let the affair die a natural death'. This didn't stop Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster John Hynd from confronting Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman*, at a drinks reception, to question the merit of publishing the story. Martin later responded via mail, detailing the investigation and reiterating his belief that corruption was occurring on both 'a large and small scale'.¹⁶⁹

The scandal of BIOS team no.1972 prompted an incensed reaction from some members of the Control Commission, including Major-General George Erskine, who

¹⁶⁶ Minutes (Millbank meeting), 22 January 1947, BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London; see FO 936/78, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Article in New Statesman Alleging Corruption in CCG, 1946-7, National Archives, London; Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 430 (1946), 14 November 1946, Col. 238-371.

¹⁶⁷ Letter Wood to Jenkins, 7 February 1947, BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London.

¹⁶⁸ Letter Jenkins to Wood, 9 May 1947, BT 211/169 Board of Trade: German Division: Files, Alleged Irregular Behaviour of B.I.O.S. Team No. 1972 Investigating the Manufacture of "Eau-de-Cologne 4711", National Archives, London.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes, FO 936/78, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Article in New Statesman Alleging Corruption in CCG, 1946-7, National Archives, London; Letter Kingsley Martin to John Hynd, 12 November 1946, FO 936/78, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Article in New Statesman Alleging Corruption in CCG, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

worked in the Office of the Deputy Military Governor. In a remarkably frank letter to Gilmour Jenkins, Erskine decried the story as ‘typical of the sort of rubbish which is put across to the British public’.¹⁷⁰ He suggested that the ‘attacks on the Control Commission’ were ‘an admission of a guilty conscience on the part of many different groups’, including the Conservative Party and their supporters in the press. The ‘great wedge’ of the British public was, he continued, ignorant and did ‘not care a hang what happens in Germany so long as they are not asked to make any sacrifices’. There was also the ‘small but lively body of opinion’ who ‘think we should do far more for the Germans’ and the ‘old retired Colonel’ who ‘comes to life about once a week [...] to say things were very different when he ran it after the last war’.¹⁷¹

Yet Erskine’s assessment of British public opinion had conveniently overlooked the mounting scandals that were overshadowing the occupation’s public image. The growing evidence of corruption, extravagance, and misbehaviour were not merely fabrications, but genuine problems undermining the integrity and effectiveness of the British forces in Germany. The glaring inability of the PR/ISC to effectively control news coverage, coupled with the renaissance of a staunchly critical press corps, meant that these scandals and misdemeanours would repeatedly make their way into the newspapers. While much of the mass-market press, specifically the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*, were all too happy to publish sensationalist stories that illuminated government ineptitude, they usually derived from factual reporting. As one leading CCG (BE) official would lament in 1948, the organisation had become an ‘Aunt Sally’, with its work ‘always in danger of being

¹⁷⁰ Letter Erskine to Jenkins, 6 December 1946, FO 936/78, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Article in New Statesman Alleging Corruption in CCG, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁷¹ This is probably a reference to Thomas H. Minshall.

used as a “wet weather story”, especially as public curiosity ‘in its less high forms’ was particularly ripe for criticisms and intrigues.¹⁷²

In the coming months and years, the newspapers published an unremitting stream of dramatic tales documenting the profiteering and criminality seen to be plaguing the British Zone. In the spring of 1947, Chief Inspector Hayward and Detective Inspector Chadburn of Scotland Yard, tasked with investigating alleged crimes in the British Zone, came across another outrageous case of alleged wrongdoing.¹⁷³ Their work had led them to Harold Ryder, a deputy controller in the Trade and Industry Division of the CCG (BE), who was eventually charged, alongside several colleagues and their German accomplices, with involvement in various types of racketeering.¹⁷⁴ These indictments ranged from the buying and selling of German goods, including cutlery sets and bicycles, to the unauthorised allocation of 3,500 tons of steel to German manufacturers. Ryder’s trial commenced in June and encouraged a substantial amount of press interest, with the hearing being widely regarded as symptomatic of the crooked dealings that British officials were habitually engaged in.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Letter PR/ISC to CAO, FO 1056/176, 14 February 1948, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Publicity General Vol. 1, November 1947 – August 1948, National Archives, London.

¹⁷³ Metropolitan Police Report, 3 April 1947, FO 936/692 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Investigations Carried Out as a Result of Information given by Mr Pitt MP, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Alleged Dealings of British Official’, *Times*, 26 March 1947; ‘Bought £s with Knives’, *Daily Express*, 26 March 1947; ‘British Officers Accused of Plot’, *Daily Mail*, 25 March 1947; ‘Conspiracy: Six For Trial’, *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1947; ‘Court Told of “Deal” With Customs Official’, *Daily Mirror*, 26 March 1947.

¹⁷⁵ ‘7 Britons in ‘Racket’ Trial’, *Daily Mail*, 11 June 1947; 2-day Trial Ends in 10/- Fine, *Daily Express*, 13 June 1947; ‘Britons Freed’, *Daily Mail*, 13 June 1947; *Daily Telegraph*, 13 June 1947; *Daily Graphic* 13 June 1947; *News Chronicle*, 13 June 1947; ‘British Zone Officials Acquitted’, *Times*, 14 June 1947.

In fact, all defendants were acquitted, barring a misdemeanour offence, and questions were raised within the Control Commission administration about the 'sensational' presentation of the case in the press.¹⁷⁶ There were suggestions that Deputy Military Governor, Brian Robertson, should publicly 'counter the misleading statements' which had appeared in one of his regular press conferences.¹⁷⁷ Yet Gilmour Jenkins stepped in, arguing that since 'interest in this case has died down' it would be 'best to do nothing which might revive it'.¹⁷⁸ He was plainly aware that the negative publicity of this sort could not be easily refuted, and helped to besmirch the reputation of the Control Commission even when charges were ultimately unproven. That said, on 17 June, Ryder would appear in another trial accused with fraudulent activities, along with two fellow senior CCG (BE) officials and a number of German businessmen. This time, much to the intrigue of the British newspapers, Ryder was found guilty of corruptly receiving items, including diamonds, sapphires, firearms, cutlery, bicycles, and a silver cigarette case, in exchange for business advantages.¹⁷⁹ While this verdict would also later be overturned upon appeal, with Ryder successfully claiming that these gifts were acquired in the 'ordinary course of

¹⁷⁶ Letter Brian Robertson to Chief Administrative Office et al, Press Economic Sub-commission, 6 May 1947, FO 936/692 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Investigations Carried Out as a Result of Information given by Mr Pitt MP, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁷⁷ Draft Letter to Brian Robertson, 17 June 1947, FO 936/692 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Investigations Carried Out as a Result of Information given by Mr Pitt MP, 1946-7, National Archives, London; Letter from Brian Robertson, 20 June 1947, FO 936/692 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Investigations Carried Out as a Result of Information given by Mr Pitt MP, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Jenkins to Brian Robertson, n.d., FO 936/692 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Investigations Carried Out as a Result of Information given by Mr Pitt MP, 1946-7, National Archives, London.

¹⁷⁹ 'Illegal Deals In Germany Alleged', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 June 1947; 'Brilliant, Butter in Suitcase', *Daily Express*, 17 June 1947.

friendship', the damage had been done – few papers bothered to cover the acquittal.¹⁸⁰

There were scores of racketeering cases like Ryder's, with charges including drug trafficking and note forgery.¹⁸¹ This included evidence that some of those tasked with 'winning the peace' were mixed-up in rackets on a par with that of Harry Lime in *The Third Man*. In September 1948, the *Daily Mail* published an outrageous story of corruption, tied to Germany's black market, which highlighted the shadowy underworld of postwar Europe.¹⁸² It was claimed that Scotland Yard were tracking a notorious underworld kingpin, dealing in stolen army supplies, currency, and Nazi loot, who had cost the taxpayer millions while making himself a millionaire '20 times over'. He led a gang, most of whom were said to come from a public-school background, and had seized upon the occupation forces through bribery and intimidation. It was believed that 'high-ranking British officials' were involved, silenced with bribes from £50,000 to £250,000, while others were threatened with violence through the trickster's so-called 'insurance department'. The gang's money trail was said to reach around the globe, much of it laundered through legitimate businesses or siphoned off into off-shore accounts in Bermuda. The man in question, whose whereabouts seem to have ultimately evaded Scotland Yard, was said to live a life of luxury in hotels across continental Europe. Whether or not the story was based in fact or fantasy, its apparent plausibility speaks volumes about the ubiquity of corruption in this period.

¹⁸⁰ 'Gifts Retrial Clears Briton', *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1947.

¹⁸¹ 'Drug Traffic in Germany', *Times*, 20 May 1949; 'Trial of Six British Officers', *Times*, 12 November 1945; 'Mean, Nasty' BAOR Wife', *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1947; 'Yard List Dress Deals By Wives', *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1947; 'Yard Men Seek Note Forgers in Germany', *Daily Mail*, 23 June 1945; 'DSO Captain Stole Frau's Wine Set', *Daily Mail*, 13 January 1949; 'RAF Men Alleged To Have Robbed Scared Germans', *Daily Mirror*, 30 August 1946.

¹⁸² 'Gang Spent £250,000 On Bribes', *Daily Mail*, 11 September 1948.

There were several other cases in which high-ranking officials of the BAOR and CCG (BE) were implicated in corruption and wrongdoing. In particular, the authorities felt pressed to instigate numerous inquiries into the disappearance of treasured art, furniture, and other valuable items from the estates of the German aristocracy. In July 1947, the *Daily Mail* reported on an investigation into the lost treasures of Prince Ernst-Wolrad zu Schaumburg-Lippe's requisitioned Schloss Bückeburg.¹⁸³ This case incriminated leading figures in the military government's administrative hierarchy, including Sholto Douglas, Military Governor of the British Zone since May 1946. It was alleged that various figures, including Air Officer Commanding Vice-Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Office (German Section) William Strang, Chairman of the Economic Control Office for the British and American Zones of Germany Sir Gordon Macready, and Sholto Douglas's wife, Lady Douglas, had taken huge amounts of furniture, cutlery, and other household items to add princely charm to new abodes across Germany, along with Coningham's villa in Cannes.¹⁸⁴ The story irked representatives of both the press and British administration, helping to ensure that Sholto Douglas's tenure as Military Governor was unexpectedly short.¹⁸⁵ He was replaced by his deputy, General Brian Robertson, in October 1947.

'The Sin of Germany is Our Sin'

The British authorities were also forced to confront the corruption and illicit trading that was rampant amongst the lower ranks of their personnel. The war, and its aftermath, had seen an upsurge in black market activity across Britain and Europe: the 'spiv' became a recurring character in the news media, used to denounce the

¹⁸³ 'British Loot Royal Jewels', *Daily Express*, 20 July 1946; 'Treasury Inquiry Opens Today', *Daily Mail*, 8 July 1947; 'RAF Castle Check Opens', *Daily Mail*, 9 July 1947.

¹⁸⁴ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 123.

¹⁸⁵ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 125.

purportedly unpatriotic and greedy activities of antisocial racketeers.¹⁸⁶ In the minds of the public, as Mark Roodhouse has argued, the black market was a moral category as much as an economic or legal one.¹⁸⁷ In continental Europe, the chaos and disorder which had accompanied the end of the war had seen a rapid escalation in the pervasiveness of black and grey market activities. Illicit trading arguably reached its apotheosis in occupied Germany, where poverty, hunger, and the breakdown of societal norms of law and order catalysed a ubiquitous shift towards the barter economy. For many Germans, there were few means of survival other than acquiring food and other basic resources through such trades. Yet for members of the occupation forces, the trade of looted goods, knickknacks, food, alcohol, and much else besides was altogether more opportunistic. Scores of Allied soldiers and civilian administrators seized their chance to enrich themselves during their time as occupiers.

The British media and public showed a great deal of interest in postwar Germany's black market, not least because of the shortages and rationing that remained a feature of everyday life in austerity Britain.¹⁸⁸ The evidence of British personnel seeking personal gain and, in the process, potentially threatening the success of a hard-earned peace, was bound to cause a stir. In August 1945, The *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* featured an article by Ferdinand Tuohy condemning the 'racketeering in Germany' as a 'flaw of the occupation' that was damaging the 'prestige and self-respect' of the occupiers.¹⁸⁹ The writer, an author and former *Daily Mail* correspondent, suggested that too much interest had been

¹⁸⁶ Mark Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 243.

¹⁸⁷ Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain*, 35.

¹⁸⁸ Roodhouse, *Black Market Britain*, 48; David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 93-129, 296-325.

¹⁸⁹ Ferdinand Tuohy, 'Racketeering in Germany – Prestige of Occupation Armies is Damaged by Souvenir "Winning"', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 7 August 1945.

shown in the lifting of the fraternisation ban – which he felt had handed the Germans ‘the first victory of the peace’ – and not enough in the looting and bartering that was now commonplace amongst ‘racketeers in uniform’. This concern, he hastened to add, was for Britain’s standing in the world and did not ‘emanate from sympathy with the quelled vampire, now so submissive and sucking-up’.

It was not long before the mass- and middle-market papers were divulging the not-so-secretive workings of the Germany’s black market, where cigarettes had established themselves as the currency du jour.¹⁹⁰ As Lieutenant-Colonel Byford-Jones wrote in his *Berlin Twilight*, ‘only an infinitesimal proportion of cigarettes were smoked’ in occupied Germany, passed instead from person to person at a profit.¹⁹¹ Allied occupiers of all nations suddenly found themselves in the advantageous position of being *de facto* suppliers of capital – Germany’s new central bank.¹⁹² They could, and did, spend their expansive supplies of Camels, Lucky Strikes, and Players on goods and services, from Nazi paraphernalia to cameras (3,000 cigarettes at September 1945 prices), or watches (1,400 cigarettes).¹⁹³

British personnel were afforded a generous ration of fifty per week and able to buy another sixty at reduced NAAFI prices, while further supplements routinely arrived from home (usually avoiding customs duty).¹⁹⁴ They were in a particularly profitable situation, able to sell their vast allocation of cigarettes (or other goods) to Germans in exchange for Marks. Then, as Germany’s otherwise defunct currency remained legal tender at the British Army’s NAAFI stores, this money could be used

¹⁹⁰ ‘Berlin – A City of Barter’, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 July 1945; ‘British Army of the Rhine’, *Daily Express*, 13 September 1945; ‘Cigarettes: Currency for a Continent’, *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1945.

¹⁹¹ Byford-Jones, *Berlin Twilight*, 38.

¹⁹² ‘GI Bandits Captured in luxury Hide-out’, *Daily Mail*, 5 January 1946.

¹⁹³ ‘British Army of the Rhine’, *Daily Express*, 13 September 1945.

¹⁹⁴ BBB [Bernard Buckham], ‘Cigarettes From Home to ‘Bad Lads’ of the Army’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 May 1945; Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 117.

to buy goods, including more cigarettes, or Savings Certificates. The latter could be subsequently exchanged for pound sterling – money for old smokes.

The ubiquity of corruption amongst British personnel in Germany inspired moral condemnation from some colleagues. Edna Wearmouth, a member of the CCG (BE), did regularly procure laundry services (ten cigarettes) and packs of writing paper (twenty cigarettes) as well as various postcards, souvenirs, and other luxuries that could not be obtained by any means other than the black market.¹⁹⁵ But she objected to the unchecked dishonesty she had encountered in the British Zone, complaining to her father about a ‘most objectionable young man’:

I shall never forget that man. He boasted about all the money he’s making out here, changing cigarettes for German Marks and selling them for English money [...]. He said he’d never go back to UK for he was having the time of his life out here. Never did a stroke of work, plenty of money, everything on the Black Market, plenty of drinks, plenty of parties – how Enid and I kept our mouths shut and refrained from spitting at him, I cannot imagine!!!¹⁹⁶

In June 1946, the true extent of corruption in the British Zone was broached publicly for the first time, when Assistant Chaplain-General of the British Army on the Rhine, the Revd Geoffrey Druitt, conducted a Whit Sunday service at the Garrison Church of St George, Charlottenburg, Berlin.¹⁹⁷ He criticised the moral failings of the occupation forces, suggesting that:

a sad proportion of the occupying armies are playing a shameful part in encouraging the rot. Too many are exploiting for financial gain the material needs of this conquered people. Too many are prostituting their women and girls by giving way to lust and easy temptation. Unless it pulls itself together, Rhine

¹⁹⁵ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 27 March 1947, Herford, Wearmouth Papers; Edna Wearmouth to her father, 24 March 1947, Herford, Wearmouth Papers; Edna Wearmouth to her father, 27 April 1947, Herford, Wearmouth Papers.

¹⁹⁶ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 1 November 1947, Winterberg, Wearmouth Papers.

¹⁹⁷ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 113.

Army, as well as other Britishers, will leave a shameful heritage behind in Germany [...]. I tell you that it is a Frankenstein we are creating.¹⁹⁸

There were, he added, potentially disastrous consequences to this 'spineless indifference' and the 'horrid examples of carnal lust':

Germany [...] will become not a danger as a military power but as a cesspool of Europe, and it will be big enough and deep enough to drown herself and her neighbours, make no mistake. Today the problem of Germany is our problem. The weakness of Germany is our weakness. The sin of Germany is our sin. And the future of Germany is our future. We must call a halt to this landslide to a low-level, Godless living.

Druitt had personally invited members of the British press to attend, but his speech did not receive the level of attention he had anticipated.¹⁹⁹ It was not until a colleague handed a copy of his sermon to the *Times* some months later that the story took off, finding its way into a number of national newspapers.²⁰⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* suggested that 'few whose task it is to observe the manners of conquest in this unhappy country will consider that the Assistant Chaplain General has exaggerated the moral dangers of the occupation of Germany'.²⁰¹

A growing sense of dismay and outrage in Britain at the evidence of corrupt practices in Germany was expressed in the press and, most vociferously, in the House of Commons. Labour MP James Hudson was amongst those who expressed their objections, describing this 'merry game' as 'utter dishonesty carried on at the public expense'.²⁰² In the first two years of the occupation, there were several heated debates in which government ministers were pressed on the measures being taken to halt the wanton corruption. Secretary of State for War Frederick Bellenger was

¹⁹⁸ 'Corruption in British Zone – Chaplain's Warning', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 August 1946. Druitt was, of course, referring to Frankenstein's monster.

¹⁹⁹ Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 115.

²⁰⁰ 'Conduct of British in Germany', *Times*, 9 August 1946; 'The Outer World – 'Zone Will Hit Britain For Years', 'Padre Accuses BAOR'', *Daily Mail*, 9 August 1946.

²⁰¹ 'Corruption in British Zone – Chaplain's Warning', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 August 1946;

²⁰² "'Speculations' of British Troops in Germany", *Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1947.

forced to deny that cigarette barter was being 'used for immoral purposes', having emerged in tandem with rising levels of venereal disease.²⁰³ But while the government remained defensive, decrying attacks as 'cheap political publicity', officials in London and Germany were well aware that things had to change.²⁰⁴ In the following months, official announced obligatory 'Leadership Courses', reduced liquor supplies, 'homelier messes', the termination of 600 CCG (BE) contracts, and the establishment of a Criminal Investigation Department in conjunction with Scotland Yard.²⁰⁵ The *Dundee Evening Telegraph's* explained that these 'Sherlocks for Germany' would be tasked with tackling the 'underworld of smuggling, forgery, black marketeering, and fraud'.

Yet these various attempts to clean up the British Zone did not stop the flow of intriguing and highly newsworthy stories of scandalous behaviour. The four years of military occupation saw a steady stream of cases documented in the press in which British personnel of all ranks were charged with various black market offences. In August 1946, for instance, five Control Commission officers were found guilty of trading cigarettes and coffee for money and jewellery.²⁰⁶ In April 1947, Theodore Reid Hartwick, a Grade 1 (i.e. most senior) official in the CCG (BE), was imprisoned for six months and handed a £1,000 fine for forgery, the 'conversion of cigarettes intended for Displaced Persons and former POWs' for his own use, and illegal dealing with Germans.²⁰⁷ Likewise, RAF officer J. Washbourne Ecart was found guilty by court

²⁰³ 'No Immoral Barter With Cigs, Says War Minister', *Daily Mirror*, 22 July 1947.

²⁰⁴ 'The British Zone in Germany: Commons Critics of Government's Policy', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1946.

²⁰⁵ 'Yard to Check Zone Control', *Daily Mail*, 13 August 1946; 'The Outer World: Germany: Courts That Try Britons', *Daily Mail*, 14 August 1946; 'Sherlocks For Germany', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 21 September 1946; Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 116.

²⁰⁶ 'Black Market Offences', *Times*, 12 August 1946.

²⁰⁷ 'Offences in British Zone of Germany', *Times*, 24 April 1947; 'Control Officer is Gaoled and Fined £1,000', *Daily Mirror*, 24 March 1947.

martial of bartering cigarettes, flour, sugar, tea, tobacco, and coffee for marks.²⁰⁸ Peter Stainer, described in the *Daily Mail* as a 'wealthy Briton' and 'Lord of 3 manors', was sentenced to four years of penal servitude and a £1,000 fine in July 1946 for his part in black market operations in Germany.²⁰⁹ His official function had given him power over the provision of alcohol, which, along with other items, he would sell illicitly to Germans, incurring 'a serious loss of Sterling' on the British Treasury. These are only a small sample of the hundreds of analogous cases that made it into the British newspapers.²¹⁰

Another injurious aspect of the occupation were the numerous stories of murder and rape committed by members of the British forces.²¹¹ In September 1949, for instance, William Claude Hodson Jones was found guilty at Bow Magistrates Court of murdering Waltraut Lehman near Rotenburg in one of the most callous offences committed by a British soldier in Germany.²¹² In June 1945, Jones had, according to his own testimony, stopped off at a cottage for a drink of water before coming across

²⁰⁸ 'R.A.F. Officer Bartered Food and Cigarettes', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 19 July 1949.

²⁰⁹ 'Lord of 3 Manors' Gets Four Years', *Daily Mail*, 27 July 1946.

²¹⁰ 'Trading By Troops in Germany', *Times*, 22 July 1947; 'Sterling Vouchers in Germany – Stopping Currency Drain', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1946; '£39,500,000 Lost on Continent', *Times*, 15 April 1947; 'Currency Deals in Germany: Heavy Cost to Treasury', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 June 1947; 'Troops Made £20 Million On Smokes', *Daily Express*, 19 February 1947; 'BAOR Ban on the German Mark', *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1946; 'Struggle For Berlin', *Daily Mail*, 6 January 1948; 'Black Marks: Britain Pays', *Daily Mail*, 27 February 1947; 'Black Market Trial For 3 Officers', *Daily Mirror*, 29 December 1945; 'Briton Held in German Gaol – On Charges of Bring In Possession of a Control Commission Vehicle and Stealing Seventeen Gallons of Petrol', *Daily Mirror*, 18 January 1947; 'Several Britons to Face Trials In Germany' Shock', *Daily Mirror*, 10 June 1947.

²¹¹ 'British Officer and Girl Shot In Berlin: Murder Suspected', *Times*, 5 November 1946; 'Shots In Flat: Control Commission Driver For Trial', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 November 1948; 'Control Commission Driver Acquitted', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1948; 'British Official Murdered: Shot Dead In Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 May 1949; 'British Officer and German Girl Shot', *Daily Mail*, 5 November 1946; 'Shot Girl: 2 Officers Held', *Daily Mail*, 7 August 1946; 'Bath Man Dead In Germany', *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 2 August 1947; 'Briton Accused of Murder in Germany', *Dundee Courier*, 17 January 1948; 'Fight In Flat In Germany', *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 January 1948.

²¹² 'Shot German Girl', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 September 1949.

Lehman, who was picking flowers to place on a shrine dedicated to her deceased fiancé. The pair had then walked into a nearby wood, where they were 'intimate'. The defendant claimed that Waltraut Lehman had asked for chocolate and cursed him in German when he could only provide cigarettes. 'I was furious', he claimed 'sometimes I have a temper which is very hasty and I stop at nothing'. Jones proceeded to shoot the defenceless Lehman in her back, before dragging the corpse through the wood, removing her wedding ring, and concealing the body under bracken. He then attempted to clear the blood trail and cover his tracks, before returning to the cottage. Jones had evaded capture by returning to England, waiting until 1949 to decide that he wanted 'a fresh start in life' and ought to 'get it off [his] chest' by providing a statement to the police.²¹³ He was sentenced to death and executed by hanging at Pentonville Prison on 28 September 1949.²¹⁴

The Best of Everything

Beyond outright criminality, many of the British occupiers, with newly-acquired reserves of money and luxury goods alongside sizeable official rations of food, cigarettes, and alcohol, came to exude a culture of excess and indulgence. For one, there was seemingly an unceasing flow of inexpensive or free alcohol in the British Zone, consumed at the parties and dances that CCG (BE) and BAOR personnel held with an astonishing regularity in their exclusive clubs, hotels and messes. In the spring of 1946, with Germany facing an impending famine, Mary Bouman remarked in a letter home that 'the only commodity of which there seems no lack is drink. We

²¹³ 'German Girl's Death: Story of Shooting in a Wood: Ex-Soldier's Alleged Statement', *Manchester Guardian*, 31 August 1949; 'Alleged 1945 Murder in Germany', *Times*, 31 August 1949.

²¹⁴ 'In Brief', *Manchester Guardian*, 29 September 1949.

may have to starve at some future date but it hardly seems likely that we will go thirsty'.²¹⁵

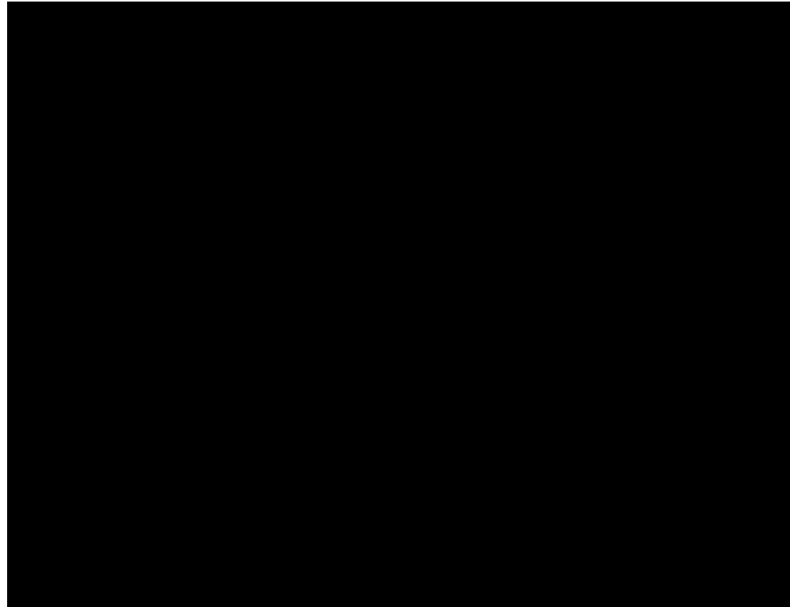


Illustration 13: The Malcolm Club, Lübbecke, undated, Imperial War Museum Archive

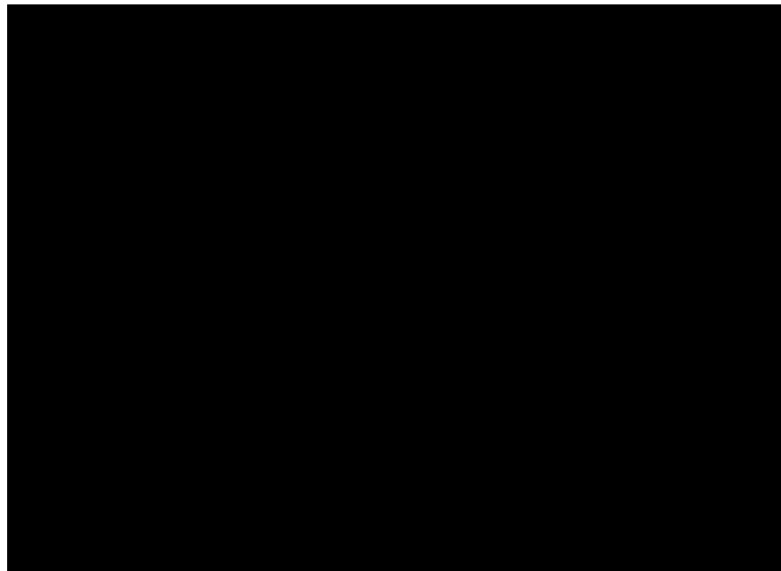


Illustration 14: NAAFI Bar, undated, Imperial War Museum Archive

²¹⁵ Mary Bouman to her parents, 4 March 1946, Lübbecke, Bouman Papers.

British personnel also found themselves able to acquire quantities and varieties of food that their friends and families in Britain could only dream of. A menu from the Lemgo Club, for instance, offered diners shrimp cocktail, roast chicken with sauté potatoes, champignons and grilled tomatoes, and *ananas à l'américaine* with ice cream, all accompanied with brandy, wine, and coffee.²¹⁶ 'THE FOOD?!!! It's amazing!!', Edna Wearmouth exclaimed in one letter home to her father, 'in England, before the war, we never had anything like this'.²¹⁷ And she realised her good fortune: 'You know dad I cannot help but feeling how lucky I am. I'm out here just when things are short at home and I'm getting all the best of everything.'²¹⁸

These revelations also made their way back to Britain in a more public form. In January 1947, for instance, *News Review* ran 'a Christmas night vignette' courtesy of the magazine's Berlin correspondent. This report focused on the exuberant festivities of the British occupation staff, who:

after a Bacchanalian feast of turkey and trimmings, cooked by hungry Germans and served by hungry Germans, washed down with lashings of champagne, Scotch and gin, British Government personnel, bored with boogie woogie and dancing, played pass-the-ball – with mince pies. The gaunt, white-faced Germans looked on and said nothing.²¹⁹

This brazen game of 'Mince Pies Football' inspired one reader, E. Taylor of Crewe, Cheshire, to write to John Strachey, Minister of Food²²⁰, and express her indignation at this 'scandalous disgrace to our country':

²¹⁶ Mary Bouman to her parents with enclosed menu, 13 June 1949, Herford, Bouman Papers.

²¹⁷ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 17 June 1947, Frankfurt, Wearmouth Papers; Mary Bouman to her parents, 19 May 1947, Herford, Bouman Papers.

²¹⁸ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 16 October 1947, Frankfurt, Wearmouth Papers.

²¹⁹ Letter E. Taylor to Strachey, Food Minister and enclosed cutting 'Mince Pies Football', *News Review*, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

²²⁰ The Ministry of Food had no direct responsibility for the conduct of CCG (BE) and BAOR personnel. The Permanent Secretary's reply took to defending the allocations of turkey and

I think the participants should be publicly tried [...]. If this is what our menfolk have fought for it's a great pity we were not on the losing side, for I am ashamed to think that any countryman of mine should stoop so low.

These stories reinforced the impression that a gulf between the *haves* and *have-nots* characterised life in postwar Germany, entrenched in imperial attitudes and paternalism. Victor Gollancz was foremost amongst the critics of such an injurious state of affairs, furiously condemning the '*Herrenvolk* atmosphere' alleged to be pervading the British Zone.²²¹ For Gollancz, the stark contrast with the pervasive hunger and near-starvation of the German people was acutely problematic – and yet further proof of Britain's ongoing moral decay.

Nor was it only the 'soft peace' campaigners who took umbrage at the questionable conduct of the British occupiers. Their public portrayal as racketeers and 'spivs', living extravagantly and actively damaging Britain's prestige on the world stage, was, to say the least, an undesirable one. In the face of domestic austerity measures, not least the dreaded bread ration, the news that members of the CCG (BE) and BAOR were living it up was hard to stomach. In April 1947, E. G. Ayrton of County Down, Northern Ireland wrote to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to report her distaste at stories she had heard from 'a well-informed person in the British Zone'.²²² The occupying forces, she alleged, were 'living in the lap of luxury, food and wine', attending parties every night in their clubs, driven around by clueless ill-informed English chauffeurs, and all the while 'British name and justice' were 'being dragged in the mud [...] no wonder the German's [*sic*] hate us.'

alcohol available to those stationed in Germany, see Letter from Permanent secretary to Mrs Taylor, 27th January 1947, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

²²¹ Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* 94-5.

²²² Letter E. G. Ayrton to Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster, April 1947, Vol VIII, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

Counting Losses

This public and media outrage was augmented when the financial cost of the scandals in the British Zone became fully apparent. The losses borne by the exchange of worthless Marks incurred losses on HM Treasury in both pounds and dollars – the items stocked in NAAFI stores were often purchased using Britain's dwindling dollar reserves. This remarkable state of affairs was allowed to continue until August 1946, when a British Zone currency, British Armed Forces Special Vouchers (BAFSVs), was issued as a preventative measure.²²³ The Treasury estimated in July 1947 that an astonishing £59,000,000 had been lost to this 'illicit currency dealing'.²²⁴ Yet the problems did not cease there, with the illegal trade in cigarettes continuing and British Zone petrol coupons being sold illicitly.²²⁵ BAFSVs were themselves temporarily withdrawn in January 1948, when it was realised that they too had acquired a value on the black market.²²⁶

This unnecessary outlay on the public purse had a powerful hold upon both political and public opinion in Britain. By 1947, the spiralling costs of the occupation had become a major political issue, with growing concern that the military government was simply too expensive to maintain in its current form. The spring budget of 1946 had brought to light Britain's growing financial commitment in Germany, with the announcement of an £80,000,000 annual outlay generating widespread criticism in the press.²²⁷ The reports that £10,000,000 had already been

²²³ 'Sterling Vouchers in Germany – Stopping Currency Drain', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1946.

²²⁴ 'Trading By Troops in Germany', *Times*, 22 July 1947; Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 117.

²²⁵ 'Opportunities For Black Market: British Zone Petrol', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 November 1947.

²²⁶ 'Soldiers' Money Is Called In', *Daily Mirror*, 6 January 1948.

²²⁷ 'Written Off - £10,000,000: Our Bill For Feeding Germans', *Daily Express*, 11 May 1946; 'M.P.s Critical Of Control Policy In Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 May 1946; 'The German Problem', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1946.

written off, with another £20,000,000 potentially lost, were splashed across newspapers and condemned as ‘paying reparations to Germany’.

The mass-market press, and particularly the *Daily Mail*, grew ever more critical of the mounting expenditure being levied upon the British taxpayer in order to feed the German people.²²⁸ In late 1946, it was announced that the British would spend £100,000,000 on food for Germany during the following year, with an estimated £140,000,000 each year hence. In the *Mail* an editorial described this as ‘an ironical situation’ in which ‘the victor nation is, in effect, paying reparations to the vanquished’.²²⁹ Britain was said to be ‘jeopardising its own prospects of speedy recovery in order to help the aggressor which brought it to the verge of bankruptcy’. The enduring power of these attacks is well illustrated by a *Daily Mail* editorial on ‘Taxpayers’ from February 1949.²³⁰ The article recalled the substantial losses sustained through illicit trading and administrative incompetence in Germany, when:

the Government knew what was going on, but did nothing effective [...] and the final grand total was £58,000,000 – exactly the same as this year’s excess on the health service [...] Money, you see, means nothing to this Government. Pounds, shillings, and pence are “meaningless symbols”. But remember, it is your money they are spending – you who are paying more taxes than anybody else in the world.

Conclusion

The British Zone of occupied Germany, as with all the Allied Zones, had witnessed a liberalisation of moral norms which not only led to illicit sexual relations with the local populace, but also encouraged extravagance, revelry, and racketeering. British personnel and their families enjoyed relative luxury, well-

²²⁸ ‘Germans’ New Diet To Cost Us Millions More’, *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1945; ‘Zones To Cost £250,000,000’, *Daily Mail*, 21 November 1946.

²²⁹ ‘Germany: The Price’, editorial, *Daily Mail*, 5 December 1946.

²³⁰ ‘Taxpayer’, editorial, *Daily Mail*, 18 February 1949.

appointed with cheap supplies of food and alcohol, not to mention entertainment and fine dining. British occupiers also sought out their own share in the spoils of victory, endeavours buttressed by a sense of entitlement, the imbalanced power dynamics of occupation life, and the chaos they had encountered in postwar Europe. Their forays into the ubiquitous black market provided some with a lavish lifestyle, while others became entangled in a murky world of crime and dishonesty. From the procurement of gold watches to the theft of royal jewels, the British Zone of occupation soon became irretrievably associated with corruption and intrigue.

The assortment of adverse and contentious news that emerged from the British Zone of occupied Germany had helped to convey the image of an unruly and immoral force of occupiers who were damaging Britain's prestige. They were, moreover, worsening Britain's perilous financial situation, with their misdeeds costing the hard-pressed British taxpayer. These apparent shortcomings compounded existing debates over the appropriate conduct for British occupiers, with the 'soft peace' lobby criticizing the quasi-imperialism that had come to define relations with the Germans. Yet even for those who were keen to embrace Britain's newfound place as a conqueror amid a defeated people, there was no place for the transgressions and misdemeanours appearing in the press. This was compounded with evidence of a renewed self-assurance amongst the German people, prompting fears that Britain's 'hard peace' had not yet been sufficiently remedial.

There was, in short, growing uncertainty amongst the British public and media as to whether Britain was indeed 'winning the peace'. By 1947, the CCG (BE) and BAOR had developed a darkly blemished public reputation, their exploits standing in stark contrast with the veterans of the war, now increasingly venerated as heroes. The Control Commission was seen as overly bureaucratic, oversized, and stocked with ne'er-do-wells, criticised not only for their misdemeanours but also a flagrant disinterest in learning German or anything about the country they were now

governing.²³¹ There were said to be problems with hiring competent personnel, not least because the Control Commission could not offer long-term tenure without a definitive end date.²³² In addition, the administration's structure came in for censure, with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster John Hynd's precarious position as a junior minister a target of much rebuke.²³³ The Control Office for Germany and Austria in Norfolk House garnered the unfortunate nickname of 'the Hyndquarters', amid calls for a resident Minister in the Zone itself.

In April 1947, Hynd would be replaced by Lord Frank Pakenham, a more senior political figure, whose overriding priority was the reduction of costs in Germany, starting with the integration of the London end of the administration into the Foreign Office.²³⁴ In July, E. S. Biddough wrote to the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to draw his attention 'to a few of the many things that is making the CCG a by-word, a matter of scorn to the German population'.²³⁵ The Control Commission was, she insisted, full of 'loafers', the 'worst possible type to represent England', and 'only the people capable of upholding the prestige of the British Empire' should be allowed to remain.

²³¹ G. L. Watson, 'Control Commission In Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 September 1946; G. L. Watson, 'Expenditure in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1947; J. B. D. Pagden, 'Control Of Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 3 August 1946; C. H. G., 'Control Of Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 10 August 1946; Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 326-7

²³² Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 332.

²³³ Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 334-5.

²³⁴ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 83, 89; Farquharson, 'The British Occupation of Germany', 337.

²³⁵ Letter E. S. Biddough to Lord Pakenham, 21 July 1947, Vol XI, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

Chapter Four

Get Out of Germany

‘We cannot proceed with our great task in Germany without the support and help of the British people’

William ‘Sholto’ Douglas, Military Governor of the British Zone, London, 7 June 1946.¹

In the first two years of the occupation, the British press had enthusiastically embraced its restored independence, reporting on the various scandals afflicting the CCG (BE) and BAOR. This, in turn, inspired consternation amongst the upper echelons of the British administration in Germany, who felt the media’s coverage was distinctly unfair, dwelling upon the misbehaviour of a minority of ‘black sheep’ and often propagating harmful misinformation. In other words, ‘fake news’ was felt to be overshadowing the many accomplishments and successes that had been achieved in the course of attempts to resolve the ‘German Problem’. ‘It is only too clear’, remarked one PR/ISC official in May 1947, ‘that no one in England knows very much about what is going on in Germany’.²

¹ Sholto Douglas Opening Speech, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

² Letter Ococks to Crawford, 8 October 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Report to Arthur Elton, 12 May 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

British officials in Germany were anxious that, without adequate public pressure to stay the course, their political leaders would no longer feel compelled to maintain their obligations. These fears were supplemented with a sincere conviction that the task in Germany was a momentous one deserving of wide acclaim: 'history books will record this in centuries to come', remarked one public relations official, '[but] can it be placed on the record now?'.³ Yet Fleet Street's relentless criticism of the British occupiers had quickly demonstrated the inability of the PR/ISC to control the mass media in peacetime. A more proactive public relations strategy was required, one that would be able to defend the integrity of the British occupiers and right the wrongs of the media's unmerited attacks.

In late 1945, officials in the PR/ISC had decided that the CCG (BE) should be permitted to 'tell its own story' through in-house media productions such as exhibitions, films, and written publications. It was envisioned that these publicity channels, under the editorial control of British authorities, would revise the news agenda through the presentation of a more positive, optimistic vision of the occupation. These endeavours would be coupled with renewed attempts to utilise the output of the BBC, historically amenable to official oversight and editorial control. The campaign was intended to convey a sense of the situation in Germany, 'produce informed public opinion', and promote the legitimacy and efficiency of the CCG (BE)'s approach.⁴ This strategy corresponded with the Labour government's growing

³ Reply from Mil. Gov. HQ Staff (Publicity), 22 September 1945, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

⁴ Report to Arthur Elton, 12 May 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Minute Crawford to Sir Oliver Harvey, 23 June 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records,

commitment to public information dissemination, regarded as an important and under-utilised tool in the creation of a better society.⁵ It also aligned with the PR/ISC's own re-education programme in occupied Germany: the British people, it was concluded, could also benefit from a dose of top-down instruction.

This chapter uses an unexploited archive of official sources to document the attempts of the PR/ISC to publicise the work of the British occupation forces. These official media productions, though relatively impressive in their scale and ambition, had to confront an ever-more disparaging portrayal of the British occupiers. It quickly became clear that any reorientation of media and public opinion would be anything but straightforward. By the summer of 1947, unchecked media criticisms of the occupation authorities evolved into a coordinated campaign: a number of national newspapers called for the British to 'Get Out of Germany'.

Germany Under Control

In the months following Potsdam, the British occupiers had begun to grasp the harsh realities of occupying a war-torn country: the mounting costs of maintaining the occupation and feeding the German people were ripe to provoke criticism in Britain. In late 1945, PR/ISC officials were justifiably anxious that the government's April budget, which would publicise the extent of expenditure for the first time, was likely to give the public 'a shock'.⁶ At the same juncture, stories of

Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

⁵ Crofts, *Coercion or Persuasion?*, 12-3; Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*. There were numerous public information films made under the Attlee administration, see 'National Archives Public Information Films', Index of Films 1945-51, National Archives, accessed 11 May, 2018, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/1945to1951/filmindex.htm>.

⁶ Meeting, 21 December 1945, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

fraternisation and black marketeering had started to dominate the mass-market press coverage of the occupation, obscuring the work being undertaken to 'win the peace'.

In December, representatives of the CCG (BE) and the BAOR met to discuss the possibility of arranging a public exhibition under the title *Germany Under Control* which would 'show the work, aims and achievements' of the occupying forces. The proposed opening of the exhibition in London during the week of the budget speech was hamstrung by logistical failings, yet the project continued amid escalating press criticism.⁷ The emphasis on 'the enlightenment of the public at home in regard to the tasks and problems of the Control Commission', designed to remedy the apparent misconceptions of a public at the mercy of the mass media, seemed an ever more pressing concern.⁸

On 7 June 1946, a lavish ceremony marked the opening of *Germany Under Control* in its Oxford Street venue, held in conjunction with the London Victory Celebrations one year on from VE Day. A 'Popular Room' held the main attractions, including large physical exhibits such as a Volkswagen, examples of military equipment transformed into agricultural machinery, Himmler's death mask, and a display comparing German and British rations on a set of scales.⁹ Alongside this was the 'Information Room', where up-to-date statistics and reports received from the British Zone live by teleprinter illustrated the ongoing work of the Control

⁷ Letter from Campbell, 31 May 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

⁸ Letter Bishop to Mills, 14 December 1945, FO 1039/670 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol III, 1945, National Archives, London.

⁹ A number of the exhibits would eventually be acquired by the Imperial War Museum, where some of them remain on show to the present day.

Commission.¹⁰ A number of service personnel seconded from the Zone of occupation were on hand to answer questions from attendees.¹¹

The exhibition summarised the broad objectives and ‘machinery of control’ set out in at Potsdam 1945, ranging from various demilitarisation, denazification, and decentralisation activities through to the diagnosis of ‘the economic problem’, health policy, education reforms, re-education, civil service structure, police reorganisation, the rebirth of democratic politics, and even the rearrangement of the fire services now that wartime bombing had ceased.¹² The exhibition displays and accompanying pamphlet were principally intended as a means to further publicise the stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement.¹³ Yet the staging of this public relations exercise actually coincided with the decision of British policymakers to readjust their policy in Germany, tending towards the ‘Western option’ and away from Potsdam. It was an inconsistency symptomatic of the growing gulf between Britain’s declaratory policy on Germany and the emerging reality of Cold War diplomacy.

The influence of the wartime debate was palpable, with *Germany Under Control* espousing a chiefly historical narrative.¹⁴ The full script of the exhibition’s

¹⁰ Letter Catherine Dryden to Mr. Edwards, 7 June 1946, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

¹¹ Letter Campbell to Treadwell, 23 June 1946, FO 1039/670 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol III, 1945, National Archives, London.

¹² Script, FO 1039/671 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Script for “Germany under Control” Exhibition in London, National Archives, London.

¹³ Exhibition Pamphlet, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

¹⁴ ‘Germany – Our Way’, Draft – from Director of Public Relations, Control Office for Germany and Austria, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign

displays was over 12,000 words in length, beginning with a chronological interpretation of the German past and diagnosis of Nazism. Developments in Germany from 1918-45 were the subject of around one-third of the displays, offering a condemnation of the 'German military tradition' that, it was claimed, had been re-established in the Weimar Republic due to the government's heedless use of force to quash unrest. The NSDAP was characterised as 'an instrument of conspiracy and coercion' put into power 'by an evil alliance among fanatical Nazi revolutionaries and the most unrestrained German reactionaries and militarists'. There was no concealing the purported depth of Nazi acculturation, the popularity of the Third Reich, or 'the inherent autocratic mind of the German'.

At the same time, the exhibition sought to acknowledge the potential corrigibility of the German people, under the watchful supervision of the British occupiers. In fact, the general theme of the exhibition, as exemplified on its poster, was 'swords to ploughshares' – reminiscent, to some extent, of the plans for pastoralisation articulated by Henry Morgenthau Jr. during the war. It was a message that also played upon a form of imperial patriotism, venerating 'the British model' as an excellent and curative means to remove the 'Nazi taint' from German state and society.

In accordance with the accompanying London Victory Celebrations, and perhaps also in anticipation of the public's predispositions, the Second World War took centre stage. The sacrifices and glories of wartime were deliberately appropriated to draw in crowds and challenge critical interpretations of the occupation. This included numerous exhibits somewhat peripheral to the overarching theme of occupying Germany, such as the Bronze Eagle from the Reich Chancellery, Hitler's personal standard, and a full range of German medals issued by

the Nazi Party.¹⁵ There were even abortive plans to transport the room from Hitler's bunker in which he had committed suicide.

The opening ceremony, by chance coming only two days before Revd Druitt's reproachful sermon in Berlin, featured speeches from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster John Hynd, Military Governor of the British Zone William Sholto Douglas, and his deputy Brian Robertson.¹⁶ *Germany Under Control's* ambition to counter press criticism, challenge misinformation, and publicly legitimise the work of the CCG (BE) was abundantly clear in these addresses. Sholto Douglas lamented that 'the magnificent work that had already been done by the Control Commission is not always properly appreciated at home', even though it was 'an achievement of which the whole British people may be proud'. His speech concluded that 'we cannot proceed with our great task in Germany without the support and help of the British people'.

John Hynd likewise emphasised the various achievements of the CCG (BE), suggesting that this was 'an enterprise of great magnitude and difficulty' for which there was 'no precedent in human history'. These undertakings were, moreover, being accomplished with 'no less credit by our men and women in Germany than the military victory itself'. Hynd was also keen to stress that despite forthcoming challenges there could be no repeat of the Control Commission 1919-30:

¹⁵ Letter Campbell and Attachment, 20 February 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London; Attached Leaflet, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

¹⁶ Sholto Douglas Opening Speech, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

Our Military Government and the Control Commission have worked miracles, but miracles have still to be achieved before order is fully restored and the objective of the Potsdam Agreement is realised [...]. This time we must be sure. This time we must stay until we have finished the job.¹⁷

The exhibition itself left no doubt about Britain's long-term commitment, with the concluding display explaining that it would be 'many years before [the Germans] can learn fully many of the essentials of democracy.' Moreover, the historical analysis on display remained engrossed with the threat that Germany still posed and the complex, difficult, and momentous task this left for the British occupiers.

Germany Under Control attracted over 220,000 visitors to its Oxford Street venue before embarking on a tour of sixteen cities around the UK.¹⁸ While this fell short of initial projections, partly due to organisational deficiencies which had restricted the number of visitors that could be safely admitted, it was regarded within the PR/ISC as something of a triumph.¹⁹ In addition, press coverage augmented the scope of the exhibition's impact, with a number of national and local newspapers reiterating information on display. Some reports even quoted lead organiser Brigadier Campbell's outlandish remark that 'the task undertaken by the Control Commission was the greatest enterprise this nation had ever set its hand to.'²⁰

¹⁷ Hynd Opening Speech, FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London.

¹⁸ Minutes, 2 September 1946, FO 946/12 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, *Germany Under Control* Exhibition – Notes of Meetings, 1946, National Archives, London.

¹⁹ Report, 11 June 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London; Report, 18 May 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

²⁰ 'Conditions in "Germany Under Control"', *Western Daily Press*, 4 February 1947.

This positive impact upon the ongoing public debate over Germany stemmed from successful promotion, an interesting set of eye-catching artefacts, and, perhaps most importantly, the consistent and coherent overriding focus of the narrative. In the pursuit of popular backing for the CCG (BE), the exhibition's organisers embraced all the tools of modern public relations. This included an eye-catching poster, a press preview, BBC radio reports covering the opening ceremony, the production of the BBC's first television documentary (produced under the same title and transmitted on 18 September 1946), and the invitation of A-list celebrities, even if members of the Royal Family declined to be associated 'with such a controversial subject'.²¹



Illustration 15: *Germany Under Control* Exhibition Poster

²¹ Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, *Germany Under Control: Exhibition, 1946*, National Archives, London; Letter Croxson to Campbell, 22 June 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London; 'BFI Screenonline: Robert Barr 1909-1999', obituary, British Film Institute, accessed 11 May, 2018, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/901205/index.html>; 'BBC: Detective', publicity material, BBC, accessed 11 May 2018, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2013/18/4-extra-detective>.

It was clear, moreover, that the exhibition had received notice from influential members of the political and media establishment: an official report remarked on how 'certain sections of the public' had shown considerable interest, specifically mentioning MPs, journalists, and lecturers.²² The succinct outline of the aims of the occupation as set down at Potsdam, the successes attained to this point, and the reasoning behind a long-term commitment of time and money even encouraged one visiting MP to request elements of the exhibition be retained for display in the Houses of Parliament.²³

There were, however, also clear limitations to the effectiveness of this public relations exercise, not least its relatively modest scale. A single exhibition could hardly be expected to compete with the powerful aggregate influence of the most popular national newspapers, whose criticism of the British occupiers continued unabated. There were also problems with *Germany Under Control*, prompting one visitor to write to the organisers and complain that he 'found the whole show to be very dull'.²⁴ A more representative visitor survey suggested that some members of the general public were sceptical of official information presented in this manner,

²² Final Report from Campbell to Treadwell, 22 August 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

²³ Letter Campbell to Treadwell, 26 June 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

²⁴ Letter from Wood, n.d., FO 1039/669 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Economic Divisions: Records, CCG Exhibition London: Vol II, December 1945 - March 1946, National Archives, London; Report from Campbell to Treadwell, 5 July 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London; Final Report Campbell to Treadwell, 22 August 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, "Germany Under Control" Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

branding it ‘propaganda’.²⁵ There were said to have been repeated complaints from visitors about the integrity of the facts on show, with some expressing doubts about whether the Germans were actually starving. The exhibition’s demonstrators grew concerned that visitors seemed to be leaving wondering exactly what Britain was gaining from the occupation.²⁶ In addition, a design flaw had helped to endorse a particularly damaging misconception. Displays comparing ration quotas were intended to reassure visitors that British austerity rations were much more generous than the meagre allowances given to the Germans. Yet due to an ambiguity in the arrangement of the exhibit, many visitors left with the opposite impression and openly questioned why they were paying taxes to provide their defeated foe with such generous allowances.²⁷

Germany Under Control had certainly exposed a subsection of the British public to a more laudatory evaluation of the workings of the Control Commission, but its ultimate influence should not be overstated. This showcase of the British in Germany may have helped to recalibrate expectations amongst leading politicians and journalists in the face of mounting criticism. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that the exhibition had made any major inroads in the attempt to counter negative press coverage of the occupation and to engage widespread public support.

²⁵ Report and Letter from Campbell 23 June 1946, FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, “Germany Under Control” Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

²⁶ Demonstrators Conference, 9 August 1946, FO 946/12 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Germany Under Control Exhibition – Notes of Meetings, 1946, National Archives, London.

²⁷ Letter Andfort-Jones to Campbell, n.d., FO 946/10 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, “Germany Under Control” Exhibition, 1946-8, National Archives, London.

'The Inescapable Persuasion of Visual Impact'

The *Germany Under Control* exhibition was one facet of a wide-ranging public relations campaign. And, in fact, officials felt the most appropriate medium for publicising facts that would 'support any actions or expenditure found necessary by the British government' was the documentary film. Inspired by the popularity of a successful and pioneering group of filmmakers active since the 1930s, known as the British Documentary Movement, the PR/ISC would produce films for screening in cinemas and workplaces across the country.²⁸ This was, officials reasoned, a medium that could truly reach a wide audience in an engaging manner, explaining why the British were in Germany and what they were doing there.²⁹

The PR/ISC turned to the Crown Film Unit (CFU), a part of the Central Office of Information tasked with creating official films for public release in Britain that had been a major asset in the arsenal of wartime propaganda.³⁰ They also employed the services of Humphrey Jennings, *the* outstanding auteur of the British Documentary Movement and long-term contributor to CFU productions. He had gained a reputation as an expert filmmaker whose cinematic articulation of a heroic but reserved patriotism had widespread appeal.³¹ Jennings's oeuvre included iconic films

²⁸ Jo Fox, 'John Grierson, His "documentary Boys" and the British Ministry of Information, 1939–1942', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25, no. 3 (August 2005): 345–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439680500236151>.

²⁹ Letter Crawford to Elton, 15 December 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947–8, National Archives, London; Notes Meeting, 9 January 1948, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947–8, National Archives, London.

³⁰ Philip C. Logan, *Humphrey Jennings and British Documentary Film: A Re-Assessment* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 305–7.

³¹ Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*.

such as *London Can Take It* and *Fires Were Started*, now recognised as some of the key works in creating the mythic image of the London Blitz.³²

In March 1946, the PR/ISC, with the assistance of the CFU, released their first cinematic portrayal of Germany under occupation, entitled *A Defeated People*. This eighteen-minute long documentary film, originally commissioned in the late summer of 1945, was an attempt to employ the patriotic perspective of Jennings's direction to the advantage of the CCG (BE).³³ This attempt to temper popular anxieties reiterated the unconditional defeat of Germany whilst advancing public understanding of the work of the Control Commission and its implications.³⁴

The disagreements that had pervaded British conceptions of the 'German Problem' and its resolution were encapsulated in the film's opening scene, in which off-screen voices offer a diverse array of opinions on the subject:

What's it like in Germany? Must be terrible...

Well, they asked for it – they got it!...

Yes, but you can't let them starve...

Don't know about that – I've got a son out there. As far as I can see it would be a good thing if some of them did die...

To these probing questions the stern voice of narrator William Hartnell speaks authoritatively: 'Well, a lot of Germany is dead [...]. At the finish, life in Germany just ran down, like a clock'. This is accompanied by images demonstrating Germany's overwhelming physical and social destruction. The tone is set at once and given even greater dramatic emphasis through Guy Warrack's dramatic musical composition: Germany is utterly vanquished.³⁵

³² Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain can take it: The British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 218-43.

³³ Logan, *Humphrey Jennings and British Documentary Film*, 283.

³⁴ INF 6/374 Crown Film Unit Productions, *A Defeated People* (British occupied zone of Germany) 1946, National Archives, London.

³⁵ Logan, *Humphrey Jennings and British Documentary Film*, 288.

The film continues in this vein, presenting evidence of Germany's destruction alongside a more personal contemplation of a people who are 'lost and lie looking without seeing, like the eyes of a dead rabbit'. There is an accentuation of the alleged collective guilt of the German people for 'the war they started' and allusions to a physiological diagnosis of Nazism, which was said to still present a threat to Britain. *A Defeated People* presents a relatively hard-line interpretation of the occupation: it advocates for totalising control of Germany, whose suffering was just desserts. The British were shown to be primarily concerned with neutralising any potential for future military aggression and political extremism.³⁶ Their intervention was characterised as magnanimous, pragmatic, and self-interested: 'our Military Government – that is your husbands and sons – have to prod the Germans into putting their house in order'.³⁷

The press response to the film demonstrates some success in demonstrating the integrity of the Control Commission and the virtue of their mission in Germany. The *Yorkshire Post*'s review described the CCG (BE) as 'working wonders', while the *Sunday Express* commended the film for presenting 'with the inescapable persuasion of visual impact the nature and complexities of the task facing the administrators'.³⁸ Yet *A Defeated People*'s most powerful message was of Germany's all-encompassing defeat. The footage of destroyed towns and cities, ravaged shipyards and factories, and a beleaguered people emphasised the annihilation of the country's military and economic prowess. It amounted to a self-congratulatory reflection on the comprehensiveness of Britain's victory. This was reflected in many of the film's reviews, with the *Daily Worker*'s critic taken aback by the powerful effect of its visual representation of utter devastation and longed for an even 'wider, deeper approach'

³⁶ Pronay, 'Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45', 46-8.

³⁷ Logan, *Humphrey Jennings and British Documentary Film*, 287.

³⁸ *Yorkshire Post*, 13 March 1946; *Sunday Express*, 17 March 1946.

to such an significant topic.³⁹ The *News Chronicle*'s review remarked that 'you will never obtain from any written or spoken narrative such an effect of empty misery and crushed aggressiveness, of a country so lost it is ripe for anything'.⁴⁰ The *Star* commended the film for showing the 'grim panorama of destruction and ruin, of shattered industries, of tattered people living in cellars and searching for lost relatives, crowding limited transport and working amid incredible conditions.'⁴¹

A Defeated People is an impressive and artistically valuable film which exemplifies the PR/ISC's endeavour to engage public support and raise awareness of the British occupation. Yet much like *Germany Under Control* it can hardly be said to have contested the media's persistent criticism of the occupation. The lengthy production time associated with such a project, filmed on location in the British Zone, had diminished any prospect of responding directly to the increasingly adverse public image of the occupiers. A subsequent PR/ISC report acknowledged that the publicity value of the CCG (BE)'s first documentary feature had been impaired by delays.⁴² The film emerged instead as a testament to the war, the destruction of Germany, and the principles agreed at Potsdam – a 'hard peace' fit for a sinful people.

³⁹ *Daily Worker*, 15 March 1946.

⁴⁰ *News Chronicle*, 16 March 1946.

⁴¹ *The Star*, 16 March 1946.

⁴² FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Letter Planning and Policy Section PR Branch to DG PR, 21 March 1946, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

The Long Story of Helpful Cooperation

The BBC, and specifically the network's prolific and ubiquitous radio programming, offered another fruitful means for broadcasting officially endorsed messages to a large audience.⁴³ Producing radio shows was less time-consuming and costly than capturing and editing motion pictures, and the format remained incredibly popular across Britain. In addition, it was a broadcast medium that in many ways leant itself to a more pedagogical, informative style of broadcast, as had been achieved to great effect during the war itself. But, most importantly, as a public broadcaster, the BBC was amenable to close editorial oversight from state officials – especially with regards to Britain's foreign affairs.⁴⁴ The PR/ISC hoped to utilise the BBC's platform to put across a more up-to-date vision of the occupation that responded to press criticisms and explained the CCG (BE)'s work to a mass audience.

In late 1946, Sholto Douglas, as Military Governor of the British Zone, raised the idea of recording a series of BBC radio programmes on the occupation:

I have been giving some thought to the spate of criticisms of the Control Commission which have been appearing in British newspapers, and which have been the subject of parliamentary debate recently. Most of these criticisms seem to be based on ignorance of the real position. I wonder if the British people are getting the right idea of what is happening in Germany? I feel that it might be very good from the standpoint of educating public opinion in Britain about the problems here if a number of us were to give talks over the wireless say once a week or once a fortnight [...]. The scripts would, of course, be sent to you for vetting before being delivered.⁴⁵

⁴³ McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*.

⁴⁴ Anthony Adamthwaite, "Nation Shall Speak Peace unto Nation": The BBC's Response to Peace and Defence Issues, 1945–58', *Contemporary Record* 7, no. 3 (December 1993): 557–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469308581267>.

⁴⁵ Letter Douglas to Jenkins, 21 November 1946, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Letter Jenkins to Douglas, 5 December 1946, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, John Hynd, welcomed the proposal and within a few weeks Douglas had already recorded a talk on the occupation for the BBC show *World Affairs*, broadcast in January 1947. This recording conveyed the message that the overriding goal of occupation was the establishment of ‘conditions for lasting peace in Europe’, primarily through demilitarisation and democratisation.⁴⁶ It was important, he stressed, that ‘we all need to be very level headed in our dealings with Germany and the Germans [...]. We must avoid sentimentality; we must face up to the lessons of history.’ Douglas directly responded to the criticisms of the CCG (BE), asserting that vast majority of his staff were good men and women who ‘have carried our good name to the four corners of the world. Many indeed have done so before. They are continuing that mission in Germany.’ The broadcast also offered a glimpse into the changing outlook of British policymakers, coming just as the Bizone came into existence. It emphasised that the British must be aware of ‘the hard facts of today’s world economics as they affect our task in Germany’. Bizonal fusion, it was argued, would help to curtail the escalating burden on the British taxpayer.

In the coming months, there would be regular radio shows documenting the work of the CCG (BE), continuing to outline a more up-to-date vision of official policy while correcting distortions in the press. A few weeks after Sholto Douglas’s appearance on *World Affairs*, Brian Robertson, as Deputy Military Governor, recorded another talk that once again promoted the establishment of the Bizone as a means of reducing expenditure.⁴⁷ Later in the year, Air-Vice Marshal Davidson led

⁴⁶ BBC Transcript of Radio Programme “World Affairs”, 9 January 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁴⁷ These radio pieces brought interest from *Illustrated* magazine, who were given access to Douglas and Robertson for a photo shoot intended to accompany an article on the work of the CCG, see Minutes Houghton “r.e. Illustrated”, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Telegram of Script for DMG,

a roundtable discussion on the occupation for the BBC feature *Spotlight on Germany*. He, like all official contributors, was handed a PR/ISC crib sheet, instructing him to emphasise the CCG (BE)'s successes and highlight the '50% cut in numbers and consequent reduction in the expense which the British taxpayer has to bear'.⁴⁸ In late 1947, Major General Bishop was tasked with directly responding to claims in the press that the work of Royal Engineers in Germany to demolish military structures had been left unfinished.⁴⁹

These attempts to publicise and defend the CCG (BE) were worthwhile, allowing officials to offset potential misunderstandings quickly and promote a more positive image of the British occupiers. Yet there were clear limitations to this kind of exposure, not least the sense that information provided by officials via the state broadcaster took on the guise of propaganda. In the course of the war, the BBC had evolved a reputation as an organ of government opinion regarding foreign affairs and, as such, there was bound to be a good deal of scepticism regarding the reliability of these claims about the occupation.⁵⁰ In addition, the challenges of working with an independent broadcaster (albeit a state-run one) could create significant

16 January 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁴⁸ Telegram Spotlight On Germany to be Broadcast, with attached Draft of Introduction, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁴⁹ Letter Croxson to Dean, 8 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Draft of BBC Broadcast, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London. Also see, Guidance to Robert Birley from BBC Goldie, 16 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁰ Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 68.

headaches. In the aftermath of a conflict in which propaganda had played an unprecedentedly prominent part, and in the midst of a developing war of words between East and West, there was a great deal of uncertainty over the legitimate role of peacetime official information and propaganda.

While the BBC accommodated the CCG (BE)'s programming requests and editorial input, the state broadcaster ultimately retained control over published content – much to the distaste of PR/ISC officials. In December 1947, the BBC was planning a special live edition of their regular *Round the World* series, documenting how Christmas was being celebrated around the world. As part of the show, Chester Wilmott would report live from a Displaced Persons (DPs) camp at Wolterdingen, in the British Zone of occupied Germany. CCG (BE) and BAOR officials granted the BBC permission to record the broadcast but, as ever, requested consultation over the script.⁵¹ Wilmott's recording offered a personable insight into the Christmas celebrations of the BAOR soldiers and DPs involved in 'Operation Woodpecker', a British-led undertaking in which German trees were felled for export to Britain for use in major housebuilding projects.

Yet there was some consternation amongst the higher echelons of the PR/ISC when a test broadcast (recorded in case the live link failed) was provided for evaluation. It noted that 'Operation Woodpecker' had instigated major protest in Germany, where it was feared deforestation would create a dust bowl, and had already been 'extensively used as propaganda against us' – any reawakening of the

⁵¹ Letter Laurence Gilliam, Director of Features BBC, to Croxson, 27 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Telegram from Croxson to Gauntless, 28 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

subject was unwelcome.⁵² But if the stated objections of officials to the broadcast centred on the prospect of antagonising Germans, it was also apparent that their principal source of concern was the potential damage that this programme could do to Anglo-Soviet relations. The various interviewees had made ‘attacks by innuendo on [the] administration of [the] USSR’, including the Latvian Valda Dreimanis’s suggestion that if she returned home she would not even be allowed to have a Christmas tree.⁵³ The PR/ISC deemed these remarks to be ‘politically undesirable’ in the tense climate of the Cold War.

Leading PR/ISC officials lobbied Laurence Gilliam, BBC Director of Features, to scrap the report or substantially change the transcript from the pre-recorded version.⁵⁴ In internal memos these officials criticised the BBC as being ‘very stupid’ in their failure to contact officials at a ‘reasonably high level’ about the programme.⁵⁵ Yet the BBC was adamant that they had been awarded appropriate permission and, asserting their editorial independence, initially refused to modify the broadcast. The dispute escalated, with officials at the Foreign Office (German Section)

⁵² Telegram Berlin to FO, 22 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵³ Telegram Brownjohn to Dean, 28 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Letter Lamont to Underwood, 28 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁴ Letter Laurence Gilliam, Director of Features BBC, to Croxson, 27 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Letter Croxson to Gilliam, 8 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁵ Letter Lamont to Underwood, 28 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

corresponding with William Haley, Director General of the BBC.⁵⁶ The state broadcaster was forced to launch an internal review and, despite the arguments of Chester Wilmott that it was important to report the 'truth' about tree-felling (including references to the Nazi plunder of forests), the programme's producers were persuaded to rewrite the script as per the demands of the CCG (BE).⁵⁷

PR/ISC officials accepted that the BBC were 'doing everything in their power to meet us over this' and be 'helpful and cooperative'.⁵⁸ This was, they concluded, 'yet another incident in the long story of helpful cooperation which we have learned to expect from the BBC.' But the Christmas broadcast furore exemplifies the complex and vaguely-defined relationship that the CCG (BE), and other official bodies, had with the state broadcaster. Reflecting on the furore, Col. I. C. Edwards, deputy chief of PR/ISC, wrote to Eric Underwood, head of Information Services Division in the Foreign Office, to recommend that greater powers of veto were required.⁵⁹ 'This HQ', he argued, 'should be in a position to insist on deletion of any portion of such items which are not in complete accord with the current policy in Germany'. But while Underwood agreed in principle, he emphasised the limitations placed upon the PR/ISC when ceding any editorial control:

⁵⁶ Letter Dean to Haley, Director General BBC, 10 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁷ Letter B. E. Nicholl, BBC, to Dean, 16 November 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London; Telegram MG to Dean, 20 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁸ Letter Dean to Gilliam, BBC, 30 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁵⁹ Letter Edwards to Underwood, 20 December 1947, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

I am not aware of any mandate which gives powers to censor either comment by the sponsors or statements by private persons. We possess no such powers over newspaper articles and there would be no justification for exercising them upon other publicity media.⁶⁰

There was, he concluded, 'no way of ensuring that all publicity material issued from Germany is "in complete accord with the current policy" [...]. Such a desirable result can certainly not be achieved in this country.' While the BBC were 'far more amenable than most newspapers', as the final outcome of the 'Christmas broadcast contretemps' had illustrated, the PR/ISC only possessed 'absolute powers' over the content of media 'made under our own auspices.'

'Our Shop Window'

The officials of the PR/ISC had not failed to recognise the vital importance of the written media in public perceptions of the occupation. For one, many of them were newspapers journalists or editors by trade. But more pressingly, it was the damaging critiques of the press that they so urgently seeking to counteract. In response, the PR/ISC established *British Zone Review*, an in-house magazine published bi-weekly (and then monthly) for the duration of the occupation. They perhaps hoped to replicate to success of *The Post Office Magazine*, a comparable public relations exercise that had begun life as an internal publication before gaining a large public readership in the 1930s.⁶¹ The regularity and quick turnaround time of such a publication, combined with total editorial authority, offered a potentially powerful means of information dissemination. *British Zone Review* would be

⁶⁰ Letter Underwood to Edwards, February 1948, FO 946/68 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Radio Programme: Spotlight on Germany, National Archives, London.

⁶¹ Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 110–2.

distributed across Britain as well as amongst personnel in Germany. As a member of the magazine's editorial board noted, it intended 'to be a really re-educative publication. By re-educative I do not only mean for the Germans, but also of the British attitude towards their own task in Germany.'⁶²

Military Governor Brian Robertson remarked in 1949 that *BZR* had become the CCG (BE)'s 'shop window', offering a 'review of the activities of the Control Commission' intended to emphasise 'the difficulties of CCG's job and illustrate what the job is'.⁶³ The magazine featured an array of articles on all aspects of the occupation, some offering a light-hearted emphasis on social experiences while others exhibited a more plainly political tone. In addition, there were a number of regular columns including items such as soldiers' letters, interviews with British journalists stationed in the Zone, profiles of German officials, articles by commanding officers, photograph compendiums, and a padre's page. In sum, it presented an optimistic appraisal of the CCG (BE) and its workings and was, in some ways, the perfect platform for defending the organisation from ongoing attacks in the press.

From the very beginning, however, there was a rather disorderly feel to the magazine, with its unusual mixture of articles united only by the fact that they were

⁶² Letter PR Branch Berling to HQ PRISC, 16 April 1947, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁶³ Editorial Meeting Minutes, 27 January 1949, appendix B, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London; Editorial Meeting Minutes, 16 May 1947, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

incessantly upbeat about the work of the Control Commission. A CCG (BE) official later complained that while it was 'expressive of a certain friendliness', it lacked a clear identity, was 'encouraging rather than constructive', and ultimately 'devoid of a point of view'.⁶⁴ In particular, there was a lack of clear guidance over exactly how political the *BZR* should or could be, with the head of the PR/ISC's Magazine Section criticising the publication for being 'simply cheap and often very crude propaganda on behalf of the Commission'.⁶⁵

The *BZR*'s editorial board habitually discussed increasing the scope and refining the clarity of the magazine's message. But the *BZR*'s editor, John Moffat, responded to calls for the publication to take an even more explicit political stance by warning that 'the government might be accused of running a newspaper!'⁶⁶ In his view there were two types of propaganda, direct and indirect: 'the first is crude, the second discreet. The first often fails; the second always produces results. The "*BZR*" practices the second.'⁶⁷ This apparent awareness of the problems associated with

⁶⁴ Letter J. E. Dowling, 15 January 1948, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁶⁵ Letter Head Magazine Section PRISC, 30 April 1948, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁶⁶ Editorial Meeting Minutes, 27 January 1949, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁶⁷ Letter Moffat (editor), 19 April 1949, FO 1056/128 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board: Correspondence, 1948-1949, National Archives, London.

taking a strong political line did not prevent the magazine from encountering the chagrin of other branches of the CCG (BE). In fact, by 1949 the Political Division were demanding the *BZR*'s cessation after a number of articles had caused them acute embarrassment.⁶⁸

In spite of these manifold uncertainties, the *BZR* saw relative success within the British Zone, where the vast majority of its 20,000 print run was sent.⁶⁹ This is perhaps unsurprising, as the magazine was free and available to British troops starved of English-language literature, but it nevertheless represented something of a success for the PR/ISC. But *BZR*'s publication in the UK was an unmitigated disaster, undermining the legitimacy of the entire exercise. To begin with, around 2,000 copies of each edition were sent to Britain, sold at a cost of 6d. in Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) offices and the stationer W. H. Smith & Son. It was assumed that, as the publication gained notoriety, this number would quickly increase. This proved to be a wildly optimistic assumption, with sales barely managing to top 500 overall and some stationery offices selling as few as two copies.⁷⁰ There was some suggestion that, with MPs, government officials, and, most importantly, newspaper editors receiving copies of the publication, it made some imprint upon the public debate

⁶⁸ Editorial Meeting Minutes, 27 January 1949, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁶⁹ Editorial Meeting Minutes, Print Run Allocations, 16 May 1947, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

⁷⁰ Editorial Meeting Minutes, 27 January 1949, appendix A and B, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

over postwar Germany.⁷¹ Yet the ambitions of the PR/ISC to redirect public opinion regarding the CCG and the work of British occupiers looked increasingly doomed to failure.

‘£160 million a year – to teach the Germans to despise us’

In the first year of the occupation, critics had persistently lambasted the CCG (BE) and BAOR in parliament and the pages of the press for alleged incompetence, immorality, greed, and misconduct. With PR/ISC’s attempts to redirect media coverage and resurrect their organisation’s public image faltering, the British occupation had acquired a rotten reputation. This was only worsened by the news of escalating costs and glaring inefficiencies: in 1946, even the Foreign Office acknowledged, in private, the inadequacies of this ‘highly-paid army of retired drain-inspectors, unsuccessful businessmen and idle ex-policemen’.⁷² Likewise, the Prime Minister added his concern at the poor quality of the staff, noting in a message to Bevin that ‘all is not well’ in Germany.⁷³ The mass-market newspapers soon began to publish more sustained and damning criticisms of the British occupiers.

In July 1946, the *Daily Mirror* published Trevor Blore’s article, ‘£160 million a year – to teach the Germans to despise us’.⁷⁴ The article’s charge was that ‘lavish supplies of inexpensive drinks and easy, but dirty, money’ were causing ‘widespread demoralisation and corruption’ among British personnel in Germany. It was, Blore

⁷¹ Memorandum Treadwell to Britten, 20 March 1946, FO 1056/510 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), Issuance of News Policy, National Archives, London.

⁷² Quoted in Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 65.

⁷³ Quoted in Meehan, *Strange Enemy People*, 65.

⁷⁴ Trevor Blore, ‘£160 Million A Year – To Teach The Germans To Despise Us...’, *Daily Mirror*, 8 July 1946.

suggested, 'all so easy' for a sizeable portion of British personnel to make huge profits and run amok. He identified the heavy drinking of service personnel as a major source of misbehaviour, alleging that 'any midday or evening' you could see 'small groups of British men and women, generally of civilian status, swigging champagne cocktails [...] at the double.' Blore showed particular dismay at the spectacle of 'British women, some mere girls, carried out dead drunk under the eyes of the German servants'. The article also decried the black-market dealings, said to be ubiquitous amongst officers, which had 'robbed' the British taxpayer of at least £15,000,000 in the last year alone. These corrupt activities had also encouraged the almost daily murders and thefts that were said to be blighting NAAFI and UNRRA stores, with which a 'hopelessly understaffed' British police force battled. Finally, Blore's commentary poured scorn on the quality of the personnel hired by the Control Commission, who were antagonising the Germans rather than acting as representatives of British democracy. He took special effort to commend the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment for having avoided the misconduct so prevalent amongst their colleagues in Germany. These soldiers had instead maintained British honour, marching through the town of Einbeck at frequent intervals with colours flying as 'to remind the local citizens who won the war.'

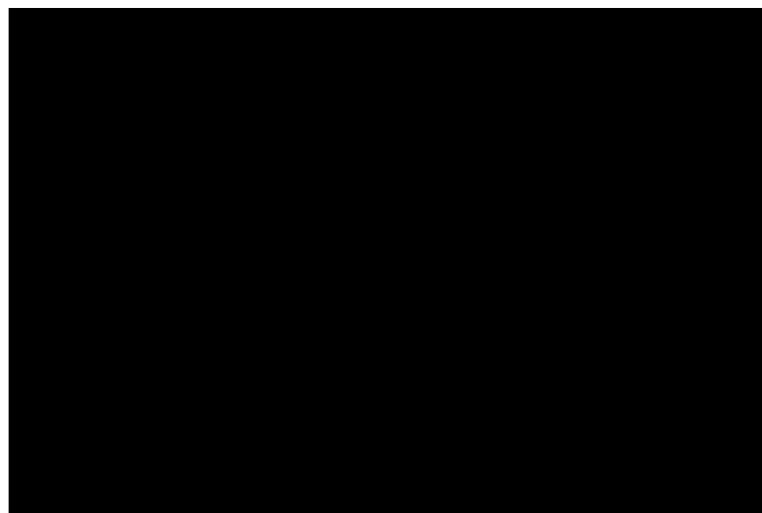


Illustration 16: Military Police Sign, unknown date, Imperial War Museum Archive

The litany of failings in Blore's 'report to the people', all of which came 'at the expense of the British taxpayer's pocket and Britain's prestige', had been exposed through the cooperation of disgruntled and concerned personnel in Germany. The paper reprinted some of their letters, including one from an anonymous veteran of both world wars and both Control Commissions, warning that the same mistakes were being repeated: the British were proceeding as the Nazis had done across Europe rather than demonstrating 'OUR way of living'. The result, he believed, was that the Germans, who 'to their faces, submit to insults' from ill-behaved British personnel were profiting 'behind their backs' as a result of such weakness.

In August 1946, Frank Owen's regular column in the *Daily Mail* also turned its attention to occupied Germany. Owen described the British Zone as reminiscent of a dump situated outside one's house, upon which a family of beggars live at the homeowner's expense.⁷⁵ The country was 'one large malodorous rubbish heap', costing British taxpayers £80,000,000 a year and soon to be yet more. The CCG (BE), said to be known colloquially as 'Complete Chaos, Germany', was an 'unwieldy, over-staffed, and file-bound' bureaucracy that could only be negotiated efficiently through bribery. Its fastidious pencil-pushing staff of incompetents, unable to find employment back home, were 'discrediting the good name of Britain'.

These criticisms reached their apogee in the late summer of 1947. That year, often recognised as a hinge in the history of Britain's twentieth century, saw a postwar readjustment of the nation's overseas commitments.⁷⁶ British obligations across the world were increasingly unsustainable, with the new US loan being consumed 'at a reckless, and ever-accelerating speed'.⁷⁷ The anti-colonial insurgencies in India and Palestine, coupled with the worst winter since 1881,

⁷⁵ Frank Owen, 'Good Morning – Let's Get Our Heads Out Of The Sand In Germany', *Daily Mail*, 11 October 1946.

⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 159.

⁷⁷ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 83.

exacerbated the weakness of the British economy.⁷⁸ In addition, the country's array of commitments around the globe, including in Germany, worsened British labour shortages.⁷⁹ It was a desperate predicament, with the Labour government under sustained domestic pressure to reduce current levels of spending.⁸⁰ This was despite the growing threat of the Soviet Union and the ongoing uncertainty regarding America's long-term commitment to Europe.⁸¹

In the spring of 1947, British policymakers opted to withdraw funding from Greece and Turkey, an admission of weakness that provoked a response from American policymakers.⁸² By the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers in March 1947, the US domestic political scene had changed, with mid-term elections bringing an anti-Soviet Republican majority to congress.⁸³ This, combined with the power vacuum left in Greece and Turkey, prompted President Truman to ask Congress for American aid: his speech on 12 March laid out the foundations of what would become known as the Truman Doctrine.⁸⁴ In early June, US Secretary of State George C. Marshall outlined an ambitious European Recovery Program: the Marshall Plan. These decisions cemented America's commitment to Europe, eased British financial anxieties, and marked a major escalation of the Cold War. The Marshall Plan also had profound implications for the occupation of Germany, implying the restoration of this former enemy as a potential ally in the fight against communism.⁸⁵

In Britain, the threatening behaviour of the Soviet Union and the prospect of American financial aid soon drowned out the remaining voices of opposition within

⁷⁸ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 83; Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 277.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 277.

⁸⁰ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 153.

⁸¹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 158.

⁸² Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 84.

⁸³ Schwarz, 'The Division of Germany', 143.

⁸⁴ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 84.

⁸⁵ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 87.

government to the Cold War strategy that Bevin had espoused since May 1946.⁸⁶ Yet it was not until January 1948 that this shift in British diplomacy would be made public, when Bevin launched his anti-Soviet crusade in the House of Commons and, subsequently, on the BBC.⁸⁷ This delay was partly a product of ongoing Cold War diplomacy, but also stemmed from official anxieties about the public response to such a change.⁸⁸ Leading officials recognised that residual Germanophobia, as well as pro-Soviet sentiment, were still prevalent across Britain.⁸⁹ Moreover, popular anti-Americanism had begun to manifest itself more forcefully, with much of the mass-market press reacting negatively to the news of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan.⁹⁰ These pressures were felt particularly acutely within the Labour Party itself, as symbolised by the publication of the *Keep Left* pamphlet in May 1947 which rejected Soviet and American domination and advocated a 'third force' United Nations.⁹¹

The result of the delay in publicising the British government's new Cold-War orientation was the perpetuation of an ever-more pronounced gulf between publicly-espoused official policy and actual diplomatic priorities.⁹² There was, in other words, little assurance to be had that Britain's troubling financial predicament and international overstretch was in the process of being resolved through American intervention. In August, when the temporary convertibility of pound sterling fashioned Britain's second balance of payments crisis since the end of the war, press scrutiny intensified.⁹³ The mass-market newspapers instigated a campaign

⁸⁶ Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', 122.

⁸⁷ Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', 123; Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 285.

⁸⁸ Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*, 226; Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 277.

⁸⁹ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 26.

⁹⁰ Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 76-7.

⁹¹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 153.

⁹² Deighton, 'The "Frozen Front"', 462.

⁹³ For more on the crisis, see Alec Cairncross, *Years of Recovery: British Economic Policy 1945-51* (London; New York: Methuen, 1985), 121-64.

demanding a premature end to the occupation of Germany. They argued that the British occupiers, shown to be unruly and incompetent, were costing the taxpayer dearly without effecting any lasting solution to the 'German Problem'. The British were, if anything, making the problem worse, offering a terrible example to the Germans and undermining the nation's prestige on the world stage. If there were any arena from which Britain's commitments could safely be withdrawn, then surely this was it?

'Get Out Now!'

The idea of abandoning the military occupation had first been touted in July 1947, when Douglas Jay, Labour MP for North Battersea, had suggested at a public meeting that the expenditure in Germany was too high for Britain to bear.⁹⁴ If the Americans weren't prepared to cover more of the costs, he suggested that Britain should notify them of the intention to evacuate by the end of the year. This idea, which garnered little response at the time, would gain traction in the mass-market press within only a few months.

In early August, the *Daily Telegraph* featured an article documenting the high-ranking CCG (BE) officials who had given up their positions in frustration at the organisation's incompetence.⁹⁵ The Control Commission, they lamented, had no clear policy and an administration which 'thwarted' all 'initiative and personal zeal'. The following week, the paper's editorial suggested that Brian Robertson's recent admission that his staff had encountered complications in their task 'to extend the empire of true democracy, of peace and of decency' prompted 'disquiet and

⁹⁴ 'Get Out Of Germany', *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1947.

⁹⁵ 'Zone Officials Resigning – Control System Thwarts Initiative', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1947.

questioning'.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, further letters had appeared in the *Times* doubting the efficiency of the CCG (BE), with the administration said to be far too large and filled with incompetent staff, while their superiors did nothing to rectify the situation.⁹⁷



Illustration 17: 'The Cuckoo in the Nest', *Daily Mail*, 6 August 1947

The *Daily Mail*, ever keen to deride the Attlee administration, also became increasingly critical of expenditure in Germany. In early August 1947, the paper published a scathing cartoon showing Attlee as a mother bird feeding dollars to the already vastly overfed 'British Zone in Germany' cuckoo (whose bespectacled

⁹⁶ 'Frustration', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 August 1947.

⁹⁷ B. K. Blount, 'The British in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 22 August 1947; Tracy Carter, 'The British in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 30 August 1947.

appearance seems to be a caricature of Lord Pakenham) in the 'British Economy' nest.⁹⁸ The invasive bird was sapping the nation's resources, depriving the fledgling chicks (labelled 'import-export gap', 'food shortage', and the nearly-lifeless 'consumer'). It was a blunt attack on the Labour government and marked the beginning of a determined campaign against the continuation of Britain's presence in Germany.

On 11 August, the *Daily Mail's* Germany correspondent Brian Connell took aim at the Control Commission, said to be an 'amateur team' of 'aloof administrators' who 'have committed the unforgivable crime of getting neither respect nor results from their two years' efforts'.⁹⁹ Connell, who claimed to have met an administrator that had failed to meet a single German after four months in his job, continued in equally strong terms:

Missing by the very method of its recruitment either the result-by-example integrity of the long-term Civil Servant or the practical efficiency of the new managerial type, Britain's Control Commission neither administers Germany nor controls it. While the dead hand of its amateur bureaucrats in their parallel administrations lies heavy on the land, the nominal passing of executive power since the beginning of the year from the palsied hand in the velvet glove of the British to the nerveless paws of the Germans has resulted in official and economic activity dissolving in a sea of utter corruption.

A Vansittart-inspired interpretation of the 'German Problem' remained, with an equally scathing portrayal of the German people, who were said to be taking advantage of the CCG (BE)'s glaring incompetence:

The British are now paying £2.10s per head to provide £100,000,000 of bread grains while the Germans weep crocodile tears that we are deliberately starving them [yet] without any question something like 70 per cent of the Germans are getting food as good as in England - and in many cases more varied.

⁹⁸ 'The Cuckoo in the Nest', Cartoon, *Daily Mail*, 6 August 1947.

⁹⁹ Brian Connell, 'The Palsied Hand in the Velvet Glove', *Daily Mail*, 11 August 1947.

There were even explicit warnings that Britain's rank mismanagement of the Zone might allow for a revival of Nazism:

In the uneasy lull which lies over Germany today, half a million heads are being raised to sniff the changing air. Merchants, professional men, the middle class, and the myriad minor aristocracy, who thought Hitler slightly vulgar, and have taken good care not to "collaborate" with us, sense their turn is coming [...]. At their shoulders stand the snubbed, humiliated, resentful survivors of the regular officers' corps [...], [who] offer their organising ability, their administrative efficiency, and their talent for engrossing discipline in the midst of anarchy [...]. Many people may recall that this is just about where Hitler came in.

Two days later, the *Mail* published an editorial article on the situation in Germany, condemning the government's decision to spend an estimated 11% of the American loan on feeding the German people while also running up an enormous bill for the costs of the British administration.¹⁰⁰ The prospect of waiting to off-set these costs until October, when it was hoped the Level of German Industry plan would be revised, was met with a soon-to-be familiar refrain: 'The plain man says: "Get out now! We cannot afford to wait until then!"'.¹⁰¹

A week later, on 21 August, another editorial in the *Mail* intensified the pressure, decrying the British occupiers as a 'Disgrace to Britain'.¹⁰² The British occupation of Germany was 'one problem which must be handled now with speed and decision' and 'because of the shame it is bringing upon the British name' it 'should be ended forthwith'. The British had entered Germany with the 'intention of restoring order, exacting punishment, and teaching the Germans the high standards of the British way of life'. Yet the result had been 'wholly discreditable to ourselves', the task being 'physically and financially beyond our own powers' and 'morally far beyond the powers of those we sent there to handle it.' The total cost of the occupation, including administrative overheads, the upkeep of the BAOR soldiers,

¹⁰⁰ 'Germany', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 13 August 1947.

¹⁰¹ Deighton, 'The "Frozen Front"', 462.

¹⁰² 'Disgrace to Britain', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 21 August 1947.

black market losses, and food exports, was estimated to be £228,000,000 per year and the labours of 124,000 personnel. The moral costs were said to be 'even more appalling', from the lowest ranks, where 'mounting figures of venereal disease [...] tell their own story', to the highest, where 'the grossest corruption pervades the organisation':

Hardly a day passes but we read with shame of British officers of field rank and over in Germany being charged with corruption, looting, or some similar offence [...]. Racketeering and blackmail have become part of the daily practice of large numbers of the occupying forces, both military and civilian. These things must be exposed, and *The Daily Mail* intends to expose them. They are making the name of Britain stink in Europe. The inevitable conclusion is that we must bring these men home, for our own good and theirs [...]. The longer the decision is delayed the worse it will be for us. We must get out of Germany NOW. We cannot afford to remain there.

It was not long before leading officials in the Foreign Office, COGA, and CCG (BE) raised their concerns over what they perceived to be an orchestrated 'Get Out of Germany' campaign that was 'proceeding with increasing virulence'.¹⁰³ They were understandably concerned that such attacks could damage the morale of their staffs, enrage the local population, and ultimately derail Britain's plans for Germany and Europe. Lord Pakenham, the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was provided with daily briefings about the *Mail's* critical campaign. The pervasive influence of the mass-market press was apparent to all concerned, with one Foreign Office official noting that 'enlightened opinion [...] is perfectly aware that a panic evacuation would be in the real interests of neither ourselves nor the Germans, but in such cases the unenlightened cannot be ignored'.

There were calls for a government spokesperson to stress 'that we will not permit our temporary embarrassments to invalidate our long-term responsibilities in

¹⁰³ Minutes E. Underwood to J. Mark and Pakenham, 22 August 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

Germany', something that was hoped 'would have a salutary effect on opinion in this country and in Germany too'. In the meantime, Pakenham proceeded to write to the *Daily Mail's* owner, Viscount Rothermere, and the paper's new editor, Frank Owen, to complain that the piece on 21 August was a 'gross exaggeration' that must not have been seen by either man prior to publication.¹⁰⁴ He also reminded Owen of his promise to get in touch 'before launching out along those lines' and proposed a friendly meeting to discuss the matter further. Owen rebuffed his offer in no uncertain terms:

The only thing astonishing about the *Daily Mail* article is that it was not published a long time ago. It contains no exaggerations at all, and you need not believe that it was done without my knowledge - on the contrary, I initiated it.

As a matter of hard fact, we have evidence in this office which, if published, would result in a number of high-ranking officers being placed under immediate arrest for court martial. The charge is looting, and on a massive scale. It will astonish a good deal more if the Director of Public Prosecutions does not move in the matter.

If you are not aware of these facts, I suggest you look into them, because they are likely to explode an almighty scandal.¹⁰⁵

On 4 September, Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Express* published its own exposé of the British Zone under the incendiary headline: 'BRING HOME THESE MEN! CORRUPT, LAZY, THEY DISCREDIT OUR RULE'.¹⁰⁶ John Deane Potter's article warned that Germany, far from a democracy, was turning toward communism and fascism –

¹⁰⁴ Letter Pakenham to Rt. Hon. Viscount Rothermere, 22 August 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Letter from Pakenham to Frank Owen, 25 August 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Frank Owen to Pakenham, 26 August 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹⁰⁶ John Deane Potter, 'Germany: A Report on the British Zone by John Deane Potter, who recently returned from Hamburg after an 11-weeks investigation into life under British control', *Daily Express*, 4 September 1947.

he even quoted a joke, originally delivered by a German comic, poking fun at the predicament: 'are you not warmed by the democratic sun? It's a funny thing about that sun, it turns some of us red and some of us brown again'. Likewise, a German liberal was cited as saying 'if we were never Nazis before, we are today'. It was clear, Potter argued, that the British authorities were to blame - there were far too many 'maggots feeding on the corpse of defeated Germany' amongst their ranks:

the reason why democracy is a laughing stock in German today is due to 20,000 Britons called CCG (BE). The best of them admit ruefully this stands for Complete Chaos Guaranteed (By Experts).

Potter painted a picture of a 'typical Control Commission official', designating him 'Civilian Officer Spiv'. A failed salesman, Spiv had come to Germany in the face of a panic over demobilisation, maintaining his artificial standard of living through the black market and using most of his time to gallivant around the German countryside. He liked it here because 'it provided everything that a man of his mentality could want': unlimited drink, from champagne to beer, cheap food, and German women to wait on him in any capacity. Mrs Spiv, who had, of course, joined him in the British Zone, enjoyed it just as much, provided with a grand house and several servants.

The CCG (BE), it was alleged, had a culture of 'laziness and corruption', its members enjoying comforts at the Atlantic Hotel and through the Old Boy Network of racketeering which pervaded the British Zone. This was 'Britain's newest Colonial Service', but with a much inferior staff and only one fear: exposure in the press.¹⁰⁷ The article went on to document numerous stories of dishonesty and folly, such as ordering anti-freeze for air-cooled VWs, that were said to be costing British taxpayers as much as £150,000,000 per year. Potter's conclusion was for the British to leave Germany before it was too late:

¹⁰⁷ Potter even quoted a public relations official, who lamented the lessening of press censorship.

I think it is high time, for the sake of Britain and the future of Europe, that the Spivs were sent home – and quickly. Brought back to work – while they are still capable of it.

Amongst the upper echelons of the British administration there were once again suggestions to contact the paper's editor, Arthur Christiansen, in order to point out factual errors in John Deane Potter's article.¹⁰⁸ The news that the entire report had featured prominently on Soviet-controlled Berlin Radio presented a further means of persuasion, with one Foreign Office official acerbically noting that Christiansen 'may derive some satisfaction from the contribution which his paper has made to our ally's propaganda machine'.¹⁰⁹ Yet in the aftermath of Frank Owen's straight-bat response, it was reasoned that '[not] much good can come from intervening with newspaper editors or proprietors. The only real answer is to take the offensive ourselves'.¹¹⁰

Military Governor Sholto Douglas and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin were both tasked with penning 'private' letters defending the CCG (BE) and BAOR, asserting that 'the vast majority [...] tackle their Augean task' with 'industry and conscientiousness'.¹¹¹ The official line was that while corruption and misbehaviour

¹⁰⁸ Draft Letter to Arthur Christiansen, n.d., appendix A, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹⁰⁹ Letter FO German Section to (Acting) Chief PR/ISC, Berlin, 13 September 1947, Appendix C, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Telegram Brownjohn to Dean, 13 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹¹⁰ DUS to Jenkins, 17 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹¹¹ Telegram Brownjohn to Dean, 13 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Message from Commander-in-Chief, appendix B, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of

had transpired, only a small faction of 'black sheep' were to blame.¹¹² Public relations officials had always intended for these letters to be publicised, intentionally placing them in Routine Orders where the Press were 'likely to get hold of [them]'.¹¹³ This scheme paid off and they were published in a number of national newspapers the following month.¹¹⁴

By this time, several more articles condemning the conduct of the British authorities in Germany and suggesting they should be brought home had appeared in the mass-market press. The *Daily Graphic* questioned spending '£80,000,000 on misfits', while in the *Sunday Pictorial* Rex North claimed that the Control Commission members were motivated by cheap drink, plentiful food, and easy living rather than the important task in hand.¹¹⁵ In the *Daily Mirror*, the authors of the 'Live Letters' column, responding to correspondence about government spending and where potential reductions in expenditure could be found, replied:

Laddie, we can give 'em plenty! For instance, get out of Palestine next week. Then get out of Germany; that would save a packet. It is to us Old Codgers little

Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Telegram Dean to Brownjohn, 29 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Letter from Jenkins to Ernest Bevin, 3 October 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Letter from Bevin to Douglas, 6 October 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹¹² That said, there were also attempts to refute the allegations entirely, see 'Behaviour of Troops in Germany – Mr. Shinwell's Praise', *Times*, 17 January 1948; 'Shinwell Finds No Excesses', *Manchester Guardian*, 17 January 1948.

¹¹³ Telegram Westropp to Dean, 1 October 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹¹⁴ 'Control Commission Staff Defended', *Times*, 20 October 1947.

¹¹⁵ '£80,000,000 On Misfits', *Daily Graphic*, 30 August 1947; Rex North, *Sunday Pictorial*, 15 October 1947; see assorted cuttings, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

short of lunacy to spend £80,000,000 a year helping Germany to prepare for another war on us (which is what we did in 1918 and are doing now. Anyway, we can't afford the money).¹¹⁶

By October, senior officials in the CCG (BE) were anxious that the campaign had, 'in a less hysterical form', even 'reached the correspondence columns of the *Times*'.¹¹⁷

In hindsight, the political repercussions of the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign were negligible, with no suggestion that such calls were ever taken seriously by the powers-that-be. But it had crystallised the undesirable public image of the CCG (BE) as a force of incompetents and of the occupation as a blight on Britain's international standing.

'Doubts in the minds of the public at home'

In the aftermath of the press campaign, leading officials of the CCG (BE) felt increasingly duty-bound to act upon allegations of wrongdoing. In October 1947, a 'morality memo' was issued to all members of the Control Commission, warning them of the potentially disastrous consequences of 'any departure from high standards' in the face of the allegations circulating in the press. But the memorandum angered members of the Commission, who felt it unduly accusatory, and it was soon leaked to the British newspapers.¹¹⁸ PR/ISC officials were exasperated, lamenting that 'any efforts to uphold the prestige of CCG personnel must of course fail in their effect if they are torpedoed by such ill-advised

¹¹⁶ W. Hemmingway, 'Live Letters', letter to the editor, *Daily Mirror*, 6 November 1947; E. P. Dixon, 'Live Letters', letter to the editor, *Daily Mirror*, 5 September 1947.

¹¹⁷ Minutes, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London; Aubrey Douglas-Smith, 'British Policy in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 1 October 1947.

¹¹⁸ Selkirk Panton, 'Anger Over Morality Memo', *Daily Express*, 1 October 1947.

memoranda as that which the press seized upon with unholy glee on 1st October'.¹¹⁹ It was, according to one frustrated official, 'indicative of a weak administration' to 'seek to blame all for the sins of the few', adding that this 'sort of stupidity hardly helps us to offset doubts in the minds of the public at home about CCG'.¹²⁰

That month, the Select Committee on Estimates published a report on the occupation administration which concluded that 'the burden of supporting the German in peace is proving as irksome as the burden of defeating him in war'.¹²¹ The committee recommended urgent changes, including more emphasis on German recovery, the economic reintegration of all occupation Zones, a definitive policy on the length of occupation, increased German responsibility for the economy, and priority to food imports. While some of these recommendations would subsequently emerge in the course of Anglo-American attempts to pursue a 'Western option' for Germany, others were unrealistic in the geopolitical context.

Nevertheless, a desire for change did lead to a number of substantial cuts to the CCG (BE)'s staff: in the spring of 1947, the Control Commission had been reduced from 26,000 staff to 20,000, while the following year it had fallen to 16,000 and, in 1949, only 12,000.¹²² The organisation's complex administrative structure was also simplified and the quality of the personnel improved, partly through the introduction of language tests. These were regarded as steps in the right direction, at least in the more supportive organs of the upmarket press. In June 1948, a *Manchester Guardian*

¹¹⁹ Draft Letter r.e. 'Press Attacks on Control Commission for Germany', Croxson, n.d., FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹²⁰ Letter Croxson to Underwood and attached cuttings: 'morals memo angers zone staff' (carried by nearly every paper today), 1 October 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹²¹ 'Expenditure in Germany – Urgent Changes Recommended', *Times*, 25 October 1947.

¹²² 'Control Commission', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1948.

editorial talked glowingly of the cuts and reorganisation of the CCG (BE), suggesting that 'even the Commission's best friends would agree that this reshuffle is overdue'. Yet in general, media interest in the occupation waned significantly after the animated missives published during the summer of 1947.

As far as the Public Relations/Information Services Control Group were concerned, the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign inspired a great degree of soul-searching. Their attempts to regulate and counteract the independent media had, quite obviously, met with little success. It was acknowledged that more 'positive publicity to counteract the abuse of CCG personnel' was needed, yet this was not easy to achieve in an 'authentic form' – namely, 'from the pens of journalists themselves'.¹²³ While every help was provided to encourage more constructive portrayals, there was no longer a 'news peg' upon which stories could be hung: 'the Commission, now two years old, is no longer a novelty, so that a straight up description of the work of CCG officials is not "news"'.

In the midst of the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign, one PR/ISC official had suggested that an illustrated booklet might be a novel method of pointing out the hard work of CCG (BE) staff.¹²⁴ It was felt that in the face of government austerity, 'the Commission will probably become more rather than less of a whipping boy for superficial observers', who were likely to echo Mr. Potter's cry of 'Bring Home these Men!'. A booklet could demonstrate that the CCG (BE) and BAOR were 'indispensable instruments towards the settlement of Europe' and that 'their efforts are not as

¹²³ Croxson to Underwood, Publicity To Off-set, Recent Newspaper Articles Against Control Commission Personnel, 30 September 1947, FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

¹²⁴ Draft Letter r.e. 'Press Attacks on Control Commission for Germany', Croxson, n.d., FO 946/62 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Press Campaign "Get Out of Germany", 1947, National Archives, London.

remote as they would at first glance appear from Britain's export drive'. In June 1946, the PR/ISC contemplated a similar scheme, with *The First to Be Freed*, a Ministry of Information publication on the administration of Eritrea and Somalia from 1941-43, put forward as an exemplar.¹²⁵ Yet Director of Information Services for COGA, George Houghton, rejected these plans out of concern that with 'the whole picture changing so quickly' their lengthy production times would make such publications 'dated'.¹²⁶

The PR/ISC, anxious to continue their work to improve the public perception of the CCG (BE), did continue to work with the COI on the production of documentary films about occupied Germany. Yet, with the public contours of official policy in Europe unchanged, their work remained closely tied to a Potsdam-era interpretation of the occupation. In 1947, one official remarked that they 'would be doing a very ill service' if they did anything to encourage the British public to feel sorry for the Germans.¹²⁷ In August, a proposed film on living conditions in Germany was rejected because it was felt that it would arouse sympathy without being relevant to the worries of the British taxpayer.¹²⁸ Likewise, in March 1948 discussions over a film on the work of voluntary associations in Germany were cut short when a COI official

¹²⁵ Letter from Sir Eric Bamford, 24 May 1946, FO 945/529 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, Booklet On the Work of CCG (BE), National Archives, London; 'First to be Freed' Booklet, FO 945/529 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, Booklet On the Work of CCG (BE), National Archives, London.

¹²⁶ Minute by Houghton, FO 945/529 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: General Department, Booklet On the Work of CCG (BE), National Archives, London.

¹²⁷ Letter Crawford to Elton, 15 December 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹²⁸ Minutes, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Letter Crawford to Triton, 7 August 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

stated tersely that 'charity and compassion are not at the moment a suitable foundation for a government-sponsored film.'¹²⁹

It was eventually agreed that the PR/ISC's forthcoming documentary films should revisit the central themes addressed in *A Defeated People* and the *Germany Under Control* exhibition, which emphasised the important work being done to resolve the 'German Problem'. The first of these documented the work of a Kreis Resident Officer, the Control Commission's 'man on the ground'. Graham Wallace once again took directorial duties, albeit with the assistance of a German production unit as to reduce costs: *K.R.O. – Germany 1947* was released in July 1948 to little acclaim, failing even to secure a theatrical release.¹³⁰ The film was listed alongside *How to Make Pickles* in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*'s record of new educational films, available for viewing from selected libraries and film institutes.¹³¹

K.R.O. – Germany 1947 surveyed the work that the British were doing 'in order that the German people may learn how best to help themselves', following the daily activities of a noble and considerate, but above all effective, British administrator (who also acted as the film's narrator). In the midst of unprecedented turmoil in Germany, this was the story of the CCG (BE) undertaking a fruitful and essential mission that needed to be seen through to the end. The KRO is a figure of authority, efficiently going about his task and ensuring orders for 'making Germany work again' were carried out, whilst keeping unreliable Germans in check. The German people are portrayed foremost as weak, destitute, and dependent on the paternal figure of the KRO as they encounter food and housing shortages, an influx

¹²⁹ Letter Ococks to Crawford, 10 March 1948 and attached report, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹³⁰ INF 6/395 Crown Film Unit Productions, Kreis Resident Officer – Germany (problems in post-war German districts) 1947, 1947-51, National Archives, London.

¹³¹ 'New Educational Films', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 January 1948.

of refugees, the black market, idle industry, and a broken education system. The film provided little occasion for sympathy with the narration remarking that ‘this is the price that Germany is having to pay for waging war’ before reprimanding the local inhabitants for selfishly refusing to give up their spare rooms to refugees. The film even shows a sly-looking German duplicitously take and pretend to smoke two cigarettes offered by the kindly KRO, before hiding and later selling them on the black market.

October 1948 saw the release of PR/ISC’s next creation, *A School in Cologne*, also directed by Graham Wallace and likewise unable to find a theatrical distributor.¹³² The film focused on the importance of the work being undertaken by British education officers in Germany, where the job was said to be ‘far from finished’. It emphasised the increased efficiency of the British authorities, noting that ‘a staff of under 200’ was tasked with ‘the enormous job of controlling all education activities in the British Zone’. *A School in Cologne* also exhibited a more distinctly empathetic and emotive outlook towards the Germans, clear in both the camerawork, which included panning shots of children’s feet without shoes, and commentary, partly delivered from the perspective of one of the German schoolchildren. This generation of German children, who had ‘never been taught what is right or wrong’, were the future of Germany. Their struggles to learn without adequate supplies of food or clothing and in dilapidated buildings were deemed worthy of the concern of British authorities.

This slight change in emphasis may well have been due to the increasingly disturbing conditions experienced by Wallace and his crew on location in Cologne. Ongoing food shortages, industrial strikes, street gangs, and bands of thieves had led officials to warn of the need to finish their work ‘before there is a total breakdown in

¹³² INF 6/990 Crown Film Unit Productions, *A School in Cologne* 1948, 1947-50, National Archives, London.

the Ruhr area.¹³³ There was, however, little official encouragement for this newly compassionate outlook, which was forcibly toned down from initial scripts. A CFU representative wrote in December 1947 that 'we are worried [...] about the general atmosphere of a film based on this treatment as we feel this could easily be too sentimental and possibly exceedingly emotionally confusing.'¹³⁴ The PR/ISC agreed that 'it would only pander to the German tendency to self-pity and would encourage a sentimental attitude to the problem in this country. Such tendencies ought to be discouraged rather than encouraged.'¹³⁵ 'It must be remembered,' one official asserted, 'that the film is made for British audiences and it is essential to get over that we are doing something positive in Germany and not wasting our time.'¹³⁶

Graham Wallace's final film under the supervision of the CCG (BE), *Trained to Serve*, was released at the end of 1948 and documented the reformed German police force – once more without theatrical distribution.¹³⁷ The film marked another shift in tone, emphasising Anglo-German cooperation, increased German responsibility, and a greater sense of optimism. *Trained to Serve* contrasted the history of the German policing under Nazism, when the totalitarian character of the police and arbitrary arrests of the Gestapo were universally feared, with the change that had arisen under the supervision of the Public Safety Branch (PSB) of the Control

¹³³ Letter Elton to Crawford, 19 January 1948, FO 946/91 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Film of German Education, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹³⁴ Letter Ococks to Crawford, 10 December 1947, FO 946/91 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Film of German Education, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹³⁵ Letter Crawford to Ococks, 15 December 1947, FO 946/91 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Film of German Education, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹³⁶ Letter Crawford to Creighton, 15 December 1947, FO 946/91 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Film of German Education, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹³⁷ INF 6/401 Crown Film Unit Productions, *Trained To Serve*, National Archives, London.

Commission. The police were commended for becoming 'servants of the people' rather than their masters.

Meanwhile, the PR/ISC's magazine, the *British Zone Review*, had failed to garner any more interest amongst the British public and measly sales figures, coupled with ongoing paper shortages, came to threaten the future of the publication. W. H. Smith & Son soon reduced their allocation by half, to only 1,000 copies, before turning to an 'order on demand' quantity, beginning with a miserable forty-four copies.¹³⁸ PR/ISC officials disagreed over the root of this failure, with some suggesting that the *BZR* had not been given adequate publicity in official publications, while others blamed the magazine's placement on the shelves of W H Smiths.¹³⁹ There were suggestions that it should be directed at British tourists, who would soon be allowed to visit Germany again, or that libraries and schools should be encouraged to subscribe.¹⁴⁰ The chief of the Foreign Office Information Services Division declared

¹³⁸ Letter Chief ISD to Ref. and Features Chief CCG, 16 June 1949, FO 1056/109 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review": Editorial and Sales Policy, 1948-1949, National Archives, London.

¹³⁹ Letter Ref. and Features Chief CCG to Chief ISD, 27 June 1949, FO 1056/109 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review": Editorial and Sales Policy, 1948-1949, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁰ Letter Moffat (editor), 19 April 1949, FO 1056/128 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board: Correspondence, 1948-1949, National Archives, London; Editorial Meeting Minutes, 28 April 1949, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London; Editorial Meeting Minutes, 27 January 1949, appendix B, FO 1056/300 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC,

the episode 'a debacle' and argued that this profound lack of interest demonstrated the inadequacy of a magazine that needed to be more popular, glossy, and entertaining. A revamped version of *British Zone Review* was, however, never to be realised: in 1949, officials pulled the plug on a venture they regarded as increasingly devoid of purpose.

In the face of the Cold War, the context for the PR/ISC's work had changed significantly. In the first place, behind the veneer of an ongoing commitment to Potsdam, British policy had radically shifted, rendering much of the CCG (BE)'s messaging about Germany or the task of British occupiers obsolete. Britain's Cold War posturing also had a significant impact upon the government's public relations strategy, which from 1948 turned more readily toward anti-Soviet propaganda.¹⁴¹ The Central Office of Information, along with the British Council and the covert methods of the Information Research Department, were increasingly bound up in these endeavours – with less interest in the mediation of news from Germany.¹⁴²

In addition, the PR/ISC was hit hard by cuts and found itself increasingly unable to acquire adequate funding for its endeavours.¹⁴³ In late 1947, at the height

ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board, 1947-1949, National Archives, London.

¹⁴¹ Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War', 124.

¹⁴² Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 80; Smith, 'Covert British Propaganda', 67–83; Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, xvi.; Fletcher, 'British Propaganda since World War II', 97–109; T. Shaw, 'The Information Research Department', 263–81.

¹⁴³ Letter Crawford to Birley, 19 August 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Crawford to Elton, 20 September 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Termination of film on coal industry, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Letter from Norman Clarke Chairman of British Zone Correspondents Association

of the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign, the suggestion to produce a film explaining why the costs of the occupation were escalating was shelved after it thought too complex to fit onto a single reel, while a longer film would have been financially impossible.¹⁴⁴ In the case of *British Zone Review*, the magazine's editor John Moffat insisted as late as 1949 that the magazine should be maintained in spite of its mounting financial losses due to the fact that 'publicity is an essential factor – even for popular governments!'.¹⁴⁵ Yet to many of Moffat's colleagues, the production of a bi-weekly magazine was an expendable flight of fancy. The director of the CCG (BE)'s Reference and Features Branch wondered whether it was simply a 'prestige effort which is undesirable to give up for prestige's sake.'¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

In a speech to assembled members of the press at the inaugural dinner of the British Zone Correspondents' Association, Military Governor Sholto Douglas

to Sholto Douglas and attached memorandum, 1947, FO 946/47 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, German and Austrian Publicity: British Zone Correspondents' Association, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London; Letter Crawford to Triton, 7 August 1947, FO 946/92 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, Central Office of Information: Films to be made on conditions in Germany, 1947-8, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁵ Letter Moffat (editor), 19 April 1949, FO 1056/128 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review" Editorial Board: Correspondence, 1948-1949, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁶ Letter Ref. and Features Chief CCG to Chief ISD, 27 June 1949, FO 1056/109 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Public Relations and Information Services Division, and U.K. High Commission, Information Services Division: Registered Files (PR, ISC, ISD and other Series), "British Zone Review": Editorial and Sales Policy, 1948-1949, National Archives, London.

remarked that 'Germany is the focus on which the thought of the world is centred.'¹⁴⁷ His audience of journalists appreciated the sentiment and, in fact, repeatedly referred to their own task as one of telling 'the world's most important story'. Such statements were not entirely hollow grandiloquence: the effective telling of the 'German story' came to be regarded as an integral facet of 'winning the peace'.

The Public Relations/Information Services Control Group orchestrated an expansive public relations campaign, including the creation of a public exhibition, numerous documentary films, and an in-house magazine as well as instigating a close relationship with the BBC. Their efforts attempted to propagate the virtue of the British occupiers and engage the support of the public at home. At its core, the inherent aim of the PR/ISC's work was to curtail the escalating criticism of their organisation in the British press. Officials ambitiously hoped a more straightforwardly optimistic interpretation of events in Germany would emerge in its place. But while individual productions were often impressive, creative, and effectively engaging, the PR/ISC's impact upon media and public perceptions of the British occupation was, at best, minimal.

Instead, the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign in the summer of 1947 stood as the pinnacle of domestic interest in the British Zone of occupation. It was the culmination of two years of stories about the scandalous behaviour of the occupation staff, whose alleged fraternisation, corruption, greed, and hedonism were seen to be risking the peace and damaging British prestige. With intense press criticism branding the British occupation as a failure, the PR/ISC had few means to put forward any adequate rejoinder.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Norman Clarke Chairman of British Zone Correspondents Association to Sholto Douglas and attached memorandum, 1947, FO 946/47 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Information Services: Records, German and Austrian Publicity: British Zone Correspondents' Association, National Archives, London.

This campaign was yet another source of pressure for the besieged Labour government, which was already confronting severe financial problems, anti-colonial insurgencies, and the growing threat of Soviet empire-building. British policymakers had, of course, already opted to uphold their obligations in Germany while attempting to limit their financial outlay. The Anglo-American transition toward economic and political restoration of the western Zones, a rapid transfer of power to German authorities, and a winding-up of Allied administrative responsibilities was, therefore, already well underway by the August of 1947. Yet this transformed outlook remained distinct from Britain's declaratory policy, meaning there was no ground for any substantial revision of the official messaging about the 'German Problem' or the British occupation.

This gulf between the public and *de facto* iterations of British policy for Germany had allowed the 'Get Out of Germany' campaign to emerge, further reinforcing public and media perceptions of the occupation as a deplorable failure. The apparent shortcomings of the British occupation authorities had come to define their public image, something illustrated by the increasingly defensive reaction of CCG (BE) and BAOR personnel in their personal correspondence.¹⁴⁸ Mary Bouman and Edna Wearmouth were both mindful in letters to friends and family to differentiate themselves, and the majority of their colleagues, from what they believed to be a disorderly minority giving them a bad name. That said, there were also those who seemingly embraced their newfound reputation as scoundrels: in a letter to the Prime Minister, Eve Graham recalled attending a party during her time

¹⁴⁸ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 17 November 1947, Frankfurt, Wearmouth Papers; Mary Bouman to her parents, 11 September 1947, Herford, Bouman Papers; Mary Bouman to her parents, 29 January 1946, Lübbecke, Bouman Papers.

in Germany where a cake had been decorated with the three emblems of the CCG (BE) - a swan (for swanning around), a fiddle, and a racquet.¹⁴⁹

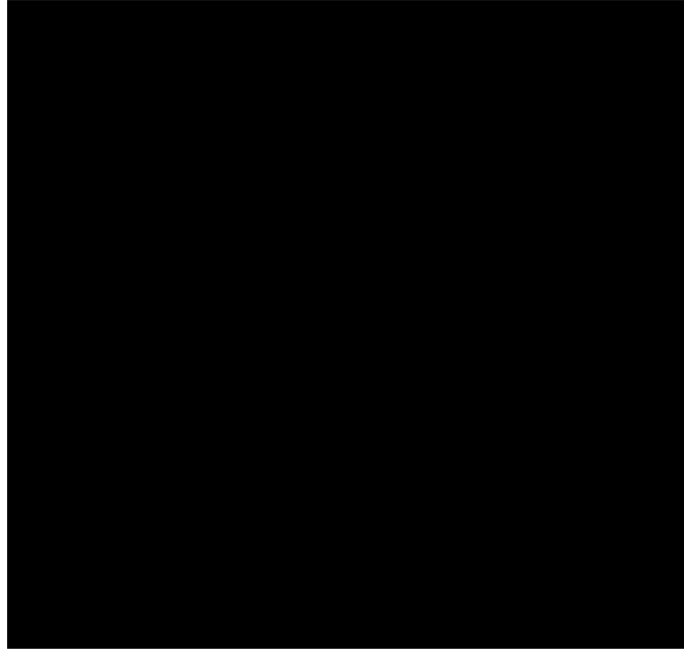


Illustration 18: British 'Racqueteers' in Schwerin, undated, Imperial War Museum Archive

In time, there was a good deal of self-deprecating humour directed towards the occupation forces in Britain, who were lampooned as bumbling incompetents out for a good time. The assortment of nicknames coined for the Control Commission in the popular press, from Charlie Chaplain's Grenadiers to Complete Chaos Guaranteed (By Experts), underscores the media's disdain for the organisation.¹⁵⁰ This unfavourable, if at times humorous, image of the occupation forces was distilled in the 1949 comedy film *It's Not Cricket*, which starred famed comic duo Basil Radford

¹⁴⁹ Letter Eve Graham to Prime Minister Attlee, 10 January 1949, FO 936/749 Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office, German Section: Establishments: Files, Miscellaneous complaints: General Public, 1946-51, National Archives, London.

¹⁵⁰ 'W. Thompson, 'Viewpoint – Failure of Occupation', *Daily Mirror*, 14 September 1949.

and Naunton Wayne as Major Bright and Captain Early, two British intelligence officers serving in postwar Germany.¹⁵¹

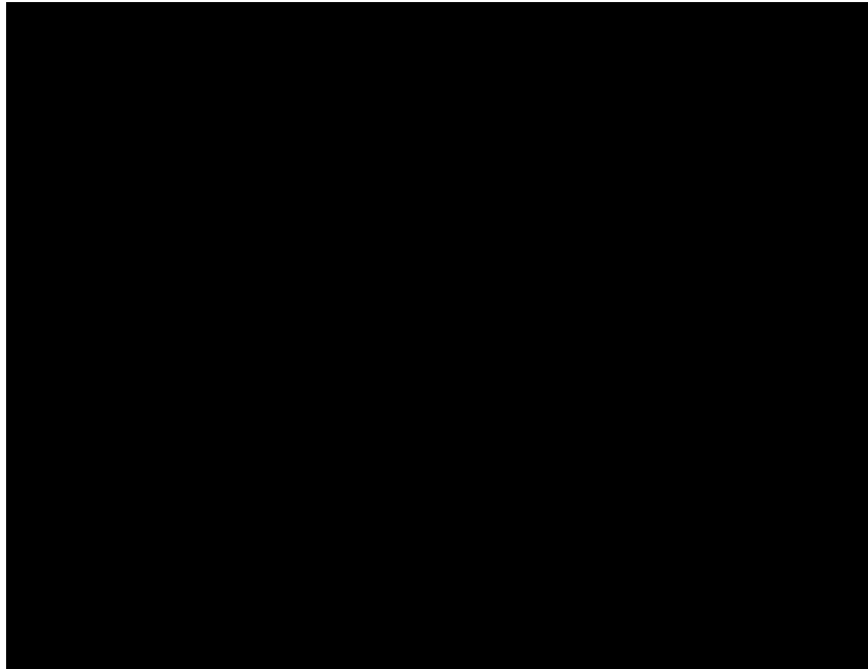


Illustration 19: Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford starring in *It's Not Cricket* (1949)

The film's opening credits explain to viewers that after the war 'Germany was famous for two things – Zones and Drones', and this was 'the regrettable story of two Drones who didn't even know their Zones. It starts in Germany, gets nowhere, and stops at nothing'. *It's Not Cricket* depicts the occupation forces in a strikingly unflattering light: the amiable fools Bright and Early are busy completing their pools coupon prior to going on leave when news of an escaped Nazi war criminal, Otto Fisch, is announced. Next, the two officers, waiting for their batman to arrive, presume 'he's probably doing a spot of fraternising'. In fact, he has been attacked by the aforementioned Fisch, who then himself arrives in the guise of a batman

¹⁵¹ *It's Not Cricket*, film, directed by Alfred Roome and Roy Rich, starring Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne (1949; London: Gainsborough Pictures).

unbeknownst to the hapless Bright and Early. They continue on their way and greet a soon-to-be demobilised colleague at the station with 'oh poor you, back to the stress and strain of civvy street'. Then, on a train bound for a cross-channel ship, they sit across from a Brigadier:

Brigadier Falcon: You gentlemen are in the Intelligence Corps, I presume?

Major Bright: Yes, rather so

Brigadier Falcon: What are you doing about Fisch?

Major Bright: Well it's nothing to do with us sir

Captain Early: No, no, the Catering Corps looks after that sir.

Major Bright: Plenty of it in the mess, I must say

Captain Early: Too much if you ask me sir!

Fisch, their fugitive batman, is finally recognised upon arrival in England, but it is too late and he escapes – leading to Bright and Early's dismissal.

Following this, the pair decide to start a detective agency in London, whereupon they again stumble upon Fisch in the course of their work. A Nazi caricature, with short temper, shifty demeanour, and miserable expression, he has made contact with a secret network of contacts in England – cue a series of comical 'Heil Hitlers'. The denouement of the film is a cricket game, in which a ball containing a stolen diamond is unwittingly used. The scene plays upon national stereotypes: Fisch, spectating from behind the side screen, is unable to comprehend this 'very dull game' and rushes onto the field to steal the ball. 'What does he think he's playing at?', asks one puzzled observer, 'whatever it is, it's not cricket' retorts Major Bright. The diamond is recovered, but the buffoonery is not quite complete – Bright and Early unsuspectingly hire a newly-disguised Fisch as their office assistant.

It's Not Cricket perfectly encapsulates the public image of the British occupiers that had emerged by the end of the 1940s: these were not magnanimous victors or gloried conquerors but blundering fools. The British occupiers, rather than

‘winning the peace’, were damaging the country’s reputation through ineptitude and immorality. This damning portrayal of the British occupiers was a reflection of introspective insecurities emerging from domestic and global conflicts over Britain’s place in the world.¹⁵² The occupation of Germany seemed to have exposed Britain’s weaknesses, hugely expensive in financial and moral terms while actively damaging the country’s prestige and international standing. The future of Germany was far from clear, with enduring anxieties over the potential re-emergence of nationalism and fascism: Germanophobic interpretations of the ‘German Problem’ remained commonplace in the popular press. But the work of the British administration was regarded as so calamitous as to be making these problems worse. The evacuation of soldiers or, at the very least, civilian administrators from Germany, cutting Britain’s losses, was seen as a necessary tonic. Their failings had helped to inculcate a harshly self-critical image of Britain across much of the mass-market newspapers. This was, it seemed, a nation in decline, unable to maintain its international commitments or uphold its own prestige.¹⁵³ The patriotic fervour that had greeted the end of the war was an increasingly distant memory.

¹⁵² In the immediate postwar period, British commentators were increasingly absorbed by a general sense of national deterioration and decline, see Judt, *Postwar*, 205.

¹⁵³ The crises of 1947 had dented British self-confidence and wartime enthusiasm, see Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 68-9.

Chapter Five

An End to Occupied Germany

‘When the new West German Government is formed under Dr Adenauer this week, Germany will have been safely launched on the road to Nazism’

*Sefton Delmer, Daily Express, 12 September 1949.*¹

The failure of the London Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in December 1947 marked the indefinite adjournment of any attempt to draw up a four-power solution to the ‘German Problem’.² In January 1948, Bevin’s public pronouncement of Britain’s intention to form a ‘Western Union’ was another major shift in the official position.³ It openly acknowledged the demise of the Potsdam Agreement and set the Anglo-American path towards West German statehood and the beginning of the Cold War. Now, freed from the shackles of this long-defunct accord, British and American policymakers intended to quickly restore the economic and political sovereignty of their Zones.⁴ This would end the Allied occupation and see the Anglo-German relationship enter an era of rapprochement.

In the spring of 1948, the two Western Allies laid the groundwork for the establishment of a West German federal state by creating a central administration in the Bizone under the Frankfurt Charter.⁵ The London Six-Power Conference, held between 23 February and 6 March, saw steps towards France’s adoption of the

¹ Sefton Delmer, ‘Can Germany Harm Us?’, *Daily Express*, 12 September 1949.

² Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*, 8.

³ Reynolds, ‘Great Britain’, 85.

⁴ Deighton, *The Impossible Peace*, 223.

⁵ This came in addition to the establishment of a high court and central bank, see Szanajda, *The Allies*, 81-3.

Anglo-American position.⁶ On 17 March, Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands announced the Treaty of Brussels – a precursor to the establishment of NATO the following year.⁷ This decision was made without Soviet consent and was seemingly in violation of Potsdam, which prompted the head of the Soviet military government, Marshal Sokolovsky, to walk out of the Allied Control Council in protest.

The second session of the London Six-Power Conference proceeded on 20 April and finalised plans for a free and democratic West German state. There would be a fusion of the US, British, and French Zones into a sovereign state, with a constituent assembly to be established by 1 September 1948. The Western Powers would, however, maintain supervision over the Ruhr, complete work towards demilitarisation and disarmament, and retain a military force within the Federal Republic of Germany.⁸ In June, fiscal reforms saw the establishment of a stable currency, the Deutsche Mark, and paved the way towards German economic autonomy.⁹ The Soviets responded with a currency reform in their own Zone, demanding the new East German Mark be recognised as the legal tender for quadripartite Berlin. On 16 June, with tensions gradually escalating, the Soviet representative walked out of the city's governing body, the Allied Kommandatura.¹⁰ Later that month, with inter-Allied disagreements over currency reform still unresolved, the Soviet authorities stepped up their obstruction of Allied traffic into the German capital. It was the beginning of what became known as the Berlin Blockade, a momentous juncture in the history of the Allied occupation.

The Western Allies opted to supply their Zones of Berlin through an airlift, an arrangement that would last until May 1949.¹¹ It was perhaps the most symbolic

⁶ Szanajda, 83.

⁷ Szanajda, 85.

⁸ Szanajda, 87.

⁹ Szanajda, 88; Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 32-3.

¹⁰ Szanajda, 89.

¹¹ Shlaim, 'Britain, the Berlin Blockade and the Cold War', 1-14.

event of the early Cold War, demonstrating the firm commitment of the Western Allies to contain the spread of communism and standing as an emblem of the growing reconciliation between victor and vanquished. The Berlin Blockade demonstrated beyond all doubt that the façade of four-power cooperation in Germany was over and offered a menacing background to the formation of a sovereign West German state.¹² The end of the blockade on 5 May 1949 was quickly followed by the passing of West Germany's Basic Law, ratified on 12 May and implemented eleven days later. In mid-August, Germany's first federal elections were held, with the success of the CDU seeing Konrad Adenauer confirmed as the new state's first Chancellor. In September, the Allied Military Governors were replaced by High Commissioners, which marked the *de facto* end of the postwar occupation even if the Western Powers retained the supervisory authority enshrined in the Occupation Statute.¹³ By October, the establishment of the German Democratic Republic brought about a semi-permanent division of Germany.

In two years, as conflict with the Soviet Union had intensified, American policy towards Germany had undergone nothing less than a revolution.¹⁴ That period saw British policymakers, increasingly reliant on American leadership and under the strains of postwar overstretch, fundamentally revise their own outlook accordingly. The creation of a new sovereign German state, only four years after the beginning of an occupation that some had expected to last for several decades, was a profound step. In the coming years, French policymakers, concerned with the threat of a renewed Germany but increasingly amenable to the Anglo-American stance, sought economic cooperation. This saw the founding of the European Coal and Steel

¹² Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 37.

¹³ The Petersberg Agreement of November 1949 would further expand the political independence of West Germany, before the Bonn-Paris Conventions came into force in May 1955 and formally concluded the Allied occupation.

¹⁴ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 167.

Community (ECSC) and, ultimately, led to the creation of the European Union.¹⁵ Britain's political leadership, eschewing the ECSC, were left with their own anxieties, not least about prospective German rearmament. Yet the path towards Anglo-German diplomatic reconciliation was firmly established and marked the beginnings of an increasingly close bilateral alliance.

Britain and the early Cold War

While popular reverence for the Soviet Union's wartime exploits maintained a strong hold across much of the British media and public, perceptions had been slowly changing since 1947. In February 1948, the Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia helped to engage popular support in the mounting political crusade against the Soviets, with a more welcoming embrace of America's commitment to Europe.¹⁶ The events of the Berlin Blockade fully confirmed a division between East and West and produced an anti-Soviet consensus across the British media, political, and public landscapes by the end of the decade.¹⁷

The crisis in Berlin has also been regarded by historians as a turning point in British public and media perceptions of Germany. D. C. Watt is amongst those who identified a 'surge of admiration and sympathy for the courage with which the inhabitants of Berlin stood up to the Soviet threat'.¹⁸ This was, he argued, the first time in a generation that images of Germans behaving in a morally acceptable way

¹⁵ Reynolds, 'Great Britain', 88-9; Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace*, 39.

¹⁶ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 165; Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 80, 82; Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 3, 552-6; Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951* (London: Penguin, 2006), 252.

¹⁷ Foster, 'The British Press', 29; Anne Deighton, 'Cold-War Diplomacy: British policy Towards Germany's Role in Europe, 1945-9', in *Reconstruction in Post-War Germany: British Occupation Policy and the Western Zones, 1945-55*, ed. Ian D. Turner (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1988), 32; Shaw, 'The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War', 82.

¹⁸ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 119; Schwarz, 'The Division of Germany', 148.

had appeared in Britain, invoking memories of the Blitz.¹⁹ The result supposedly was that the steps towards West German statehood 'ran into no particular opposition from the mass of British opinion'. Likewise, for Lothar Kettenacker, Britain's predilection for the underdog inspired a volte-face in perceptions of Germany and 'from that moment onward the British attitude towards Germany changed – the old enmity had gone'.²⁰ For John Ramsden, public support for feeding Berliners during the airlift was demonstrative of how Britons had begun to see Germans as 'fellow-human beings'.²¹ These sentiments can, to some degree, be attributed to the contemporary climate of the Cold War, with the Berlin Airlift quickly venerated as a heroic and magnanimous act in the name of freedom.

Yet while the historiography of the origins of the modern German state is extensive, there is next to no comprehensive study of the British response to these events.²² There is, as such, little substantive evidence to support such claims beyond the supposition that a chorus of opposition to the Soviet Union compelled a revision of attitudes towards Germany. But while official relations with the Soviets were intrinsically linked to the 'German Problem', this was by no means the case for media or public perceptions. In fact, during the first years of the Cold War, the threats posed by the Soviet Union and Germany remained largely distinct in their public iteration. In other words, policymakers were duty-bound to take an ostensibly rational and coherent approach, one in which the Cold War signalled reconciliation with Germany. This was much less of a prerogative for opinion-formers in the media and beyond, whose exchanges and perceptions followed their own rules and rationales.²³

¹⁹ Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany*, 120.

²⁰ Kettenacker, 'Introduction', 1-9.

²¹ Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, 245.

²² For an overview of the most recent work in this field, see Pertti Ahonen, 'Germany and the Aftermath of the Second World War', *The Journal of Modern History* 89, no. 2 (June 2017): 355-387, <https://doi.org/10.1086/691523>.

²³ Geppert, *Pressekriege*, 422; Rüger, 'Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism', 594.

This chapter surveys some of the debates and disagreements over Germany that emerged in the British media as the Allied occupation came to an end. It begins with an overview of the varying responses to the rapid revival of Germany's economic power and the controversy surrounding the decision to continue dismantling factories in the British Zone. The chapter then turns to West Germany's political renewal and the end of the military government, considering the British reaction to the election of Konrad Adenauer and the perceived prospects of establishing a stable and peaceful democracy. The last section considers British perceptions of the final act of the Allied occupation, the war crimes trial of Field Marshal Manstein held in December 1949.

As we will see, much of the British mass-market media remained distinctly cool, and at times openly antagonistic, towards Germany, warning their sizeable working- and lower middle-class readership of the dangers still posed by the unresolved 'German Problem'. Even now, the pervasive culture war between 'Vansittartists' and the 'soft peace' liberals remained at the heart of British perceptions of Germany. The powerful ties of memory, the enduring appeal of Vansittart's arguments, and the increasingly pervasive notion that the occupation had been a failure all coalesced to tarnish public portrayals of West Germany's path towards statehood. There was a growing sense that Britain had failed to 'win the peace', prompting yet more self-effacing reflections upon a nation seemingly in decline.

A Land of Milk and Honey

In August 1947, a *Manchester Guardian* editorial suggested that 'the plain economic facts dictated that we should be prodding Germany into life', rejecting the economic stipulations set out at Potsdam in the support of Britain's own

reconstruction.²⁴ And while the liberal upmarket press led the charge, the coming year would see the emergence of a consensus across political fault lines that some form of limited increase to German production would be in Britain's best interest.²⁵ By August 1948, even the *Daily Mirror* ran an editorial suggesting it was time to 'Put Germany On Her Feet'.²⁶

But in the final year of the military government, anxieties about the resurgence of Germany as an economic powerhouse also resurfaced.²⁷ In the first months of 1949, there were warnings in the British media that Germany was indeed getting 'back on its feet' – prompting fears over the threat of revived competition. Leading politicians faced public censure from Britain's concerned trade union leaders and manufacturers for allowing allegedly 'unfair' trade methods to persist in the western Zones.²⁸ It was suggested that American subsidisation of the German economy, coupled with artificially low labour costs, threatened British prospects on the world market. These complaints were voiced in the House of Commons, where the President of the Board of Trade Harold Wilson and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin sought to reassure business and union leaders that Germany would be stopped from 'muscling in' on British export markets.²⁹ At the same time, Deputy Board of Trade

²⁴ 'German Industry', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1947.

²⁵ 'Policies For Germany', editorial, *Times*, 24 July 1947; 'Britain Will Ban Monopolies In Germany', *Daily Mirror*, 3 January 1947; 'Britain Is Ready to End Output Ban In Germany', *Daily Mirror*, 18 January 1947; Brockway, *German Diary*, 140.

²⁶ 'The Road To Peace I – A Daily Mirror Policy Statement: Put Germany On Her Feet', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 19 August 1948.

²⁷ The topic of Britain's relative economic decline and comparative studies of the British and German economies in this period has aroused much interest from economists, see Eichengreen, Barry and Albrecht Ritschl, 'Winning the War, Losing the Peace? Postwar Britain in a German Mirror,' CEPR Discussion Paper No. 1809 (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research, 1998).

²⁸ 'The League of Diamond Men Starts a Battle', *Daily Mirror*, 10 February 1949; 'The Drain', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 11 February 1949.

²⁹ 'Germany As Trade Rival', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 February 1949.

President John Edwards downplayed the threat of a German speed-up, claiming that 'unfair competition' was 'not yet a serious menace'.³⁰

The *Manchester Guardian*, consistently supportive of plans for the revival of the German economy, played down fears of impending competition and pointed the finger to Britain's own failings.³¹ Germany's re-emerging export trade, expected to grow tenfold by 1952, was not simply the upshot of cheap labour, the paper's editorial insisted, but rather was a question of superior productivity.³² This same self-critical analysis was reiterated in the *Times*, where the portent of growing export competition from Germany was linked to Britain's own inefficiencies, outdated manufacturing techniques, and ineffectual management practices.³³ The *Daily Mirror*'s editorial on the issue criticised business leaders for wanting 'everything the easy way' but accepted the concerns of trade unionists regarding wage differentials.³⁴ The *Daily Telegraph* was, perhaps unsurprisingly, more inclined towards sympathy for the concerns of industrialists, suggesting that German export trade was being unfairly driven by wages 60% lower than those in Britain.³⁵

In the *Daily Mail*, Brian Connell offered a more anxiety-laden response, suggesting that 'the German drive to balance her economy and recapture her export markets is going to cause Great Britain a lot of trouble'.³⁶ The paper's editorial, 'Made in Germany', struck a similar tone:

For more than 3.5 years Britain has had a good run as the leading industrial nation outside the United States. Germany and Japan, her two biggest pre-war trade competitors, were down and out [...]. But now the horizon is no longer

³⁰ 'No Threat in Germany Speed-up', *Daily Mail*, 3 March 1949.

³¹ 'Competition', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 January 1949.

³² 'German Rival', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 May 1949.

³³ 'German Exports', editorial, *Times*, 29 January 1949.

³⁴ 'The Drain', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 11 February 1949.

³⁵ 'Competition', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1949.

³⁶ Brian Connell, 'Meatless Sunday For The Guenthers', *Daily Mail*, 31 January 1949.

clear. Another sun is rising – or re-rising, Germany, our formidable former enemy, is beginning to emerge again as a no less formidable trade competitor.³⁷

The editorial went on to question whether Germany's revitalised economy would once again facilitate a political and military resurgence, as had happened in the aftermath of the First World War:

If the recovery of German industry means the recovery of German war power, it would be a matter for the Military Security Board, who should not neglect it. The Western Allies should keep a wary eye on Germany – remembering that forewarned is forearmed.

These anxieties were not eased in the coming months, as further evidence of Germany's reconstruction efforts and industrial recovery came to light. Newsreels documented the restoration of German cities (*Movietone*), the apparent success of the currency reform (*Pathé News*), and the revival of industry (*Pathé News*).³⁸ In June 1949, a *Pathé News* film entitled 'Made In Germany' – Out to Capture World Market' highlighted Hamburg's trade fair as proof that 'German industry has almost completed its comeback'.³⁹ It was suggested that 'Germany's varied products today challenge British goods all over the world', with the two countries clashing 'head on' in their export trade. The example of optical lenses and cameras was used to illustrate an area where German firms now dominated a formerly British market: 'Germany's dilemma today is Britain's danger signal tomorrow'.

These worries were only corroborated by evidence that the Germans, in stark contrast to their fate only a few years earlier, were now enjoying an abundance of

³⁷ 'Made In Germany', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 24 January 1949.

³⁸ *Restoration of German Cities*, 25 July 1949, *British Movietone News*, newsreel, Issue 52269, British Movietone News Digital Archive, <http://www.movietone.com>; *Money Changes Reform German Economy*, 25 July 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1419.09, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; *Europe's Biggest Poultry Farm Re-Opens*, 23 June 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1415.21, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

³⁹ 'Made In Germany' – Out To Capture World Market, 16 June 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1415.14, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

food and drink. In March 1949, David Walker's described his experience of Düsseldorf in the *Daily Mirror*, where locals could choose steak and eggs, sausages, Hungarian goulash, fresh onions or turtle soup, all with generous helpings of beer, cigarettes, and whisky.⁴⁰ In April, the *Daily Mail* reported that singers in the 'smart Hamburg restaurant where no Briton can afford to eat' had a new twist on an old classic: 'Don't Let's Be Beastly to the British'.⁴¹ The well-fed diners were said to be laughing, knowing that the British were 'no longer capable of being beastly to them'. A local businessman offered an even more incendiary analysis: 'My country is rising again – more fast than you know. Your country is going down. We Germans will be masters of Europe again in 20 years; or, if our conquerors behave as we expect, sooner.' While this was surely a fanciful account, if not an unqualified fabrication, it underlines the depths of British anxieties about Germany's apparent resurgence as well as the residual Germanophobia of the mainstream press. The sense that Britain had lost the upper hand, having failed to fully heed Noel Coward's prophetic warnings, was plain to see.

In June, the experiences of the *Daily Express's* science reporter, Chapman Pincher, received mention in the paper's editorial.⁴² Upon his arrival in Munich, a banking error had enforced him to live 'as a German' and use local currency rather than service vouchers. Chapman, preparing to 'rough it', was astonished to find 'a menu 15 inches deep, with a choice of 93 separate dishes' in the crowded Humplmayr's restaurant. It included twenty-one meat courses, such as a gigantic porterhouse steak that would have counted as a British family's fortnightly meat ration. This was in 'Hitler's own city', which the Allies had left 'ruined and conquered just four years ago'. The same month, Bill Arthur visited Cologne, presenting to the *Mirror's* readers a goading picture of Germany's allegedly newfound extravagance

⁴⁰ David Walker, 'This Way For Steak and Eggs', *Daily Mirror*, 1 March 1949.

⁴¹ Tom Pocock, 'Don't Let's Be Beastly To The British!', *Daily Mail*, 12 April 1949.

⁴² 'Opinion: Roughing it – the German Way', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 1949.

and luxury.⁴³ Arthur, a businessman by trade, had visited his long-term friend, Wilhelm Schmidt, several times since 1945 and, as had become customary, carefully prepared a selection of groceries to help Schmidt and his wife Elli make ends meet. This time, however, he was greeted with laughter:

“Food for me?” he said, “listen, I will show you something. We have everything. Just you come and eat with us Germans.” And from then on, I did – and I mean EAT.



Illustration 20: ‘For a Good Square Meal...I’ll Go Back to Germany’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1949.

There were, Arthur reported, grand portions of steak, pork chops, fish, eggs, trays loaded with Havana cigars and cigarettes, as much butter as you pleased – the options were apparently endless:

[the] Germans that I saw are eating well. The food is there for them – if they work. And the factories are open from 7am till 6pm. They’re working like beavers. The shops have chocolate, sweets, cream cakes and other luxuries. I even saw nylons. In my 1,350-mile tour I found post-war Germany flowing with milk and honey.

⁴³ Bill Arthur, ‘For a Good Square Meal...I’ll Go Back to Germany’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1949.

Arthur, who was expecting delivery of a food package from his German friend upon his arrival back in austerity-hit Britain, intended to return to Germany with his wife as to provide her with 'a good square meal'. The article, complete with a Bismarckian caricature of an over-indulgent German, struck at the heart of British anxieties about having lost the peace: the tables had turned and now it was the beleaguered British who apparently needed saving from undernourishment.

In December 1949, a story of administrative oversight seemed to corroborate these fears. The Ministry of Food, in recognition of the food gifts sent to Britain from America and elsewhere in the preceding years, decided to stamp all international letters with 'Thank You for Food Gifts'. This included, it turned out, letters to Germany, much to the indignation of John Boyd-Carpenter MP, who remarked in a parliamentary debate that:

for all our troubles and difficulties we are still a great power with a great responsibility in the world, and to see our country, even though in a trifling thing, appearing to demean itself in the eyes of those with whom recently we were at war and over whom we were victorious, seems to be a wrong thing to do.⁴⁴

A number of local newspapers picked up on the oversight, including the *Hull Daily Mail* whose editorial pessimistically (and mistakenly) suggested that Britain's failings vis-à-vis Germany were encapsulated in the 'ironic transformation' that had led to Germany sending 'hungry Britain' food parcels.⁴⁵

Dismantling

The mounting anxieties in the British press about Germany's economic recovery, and its repercussions for the integrity of the European peace, came to a

⁴⁴ Official Report, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 468 (1949), 21 October 1949, Col. 968-80.

⁴⁵ 'Misplaced Sympathy', editorial, *Hull Daily Mail*, 20 December 1949.

head amid German protests over the policy of dismantling factories and industrial concerns.

At Potsdam, dismantling had been devised as a means of acquiring reparations-in-kind while simultaneously reducing Germany's industrial and military potential.⁴⁶ But as early as 1946 the removal of industrial capacity and the loss of jobs amid ongoing shortages had provoked an incensed reaction in Germany, with criticism from the country's emerging political leaders and prompting strikes at factories targeted for demolition.⁴⁷ By the end of 1947, there was also dissension amongst representatives of the 'soft peace' lobby in Britain, with an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* suggesting that dismantling no longer made economic sense.⁴⁸ In November of that year, Victor Gollancz and Labour MP Richard Stokes, writing under the guise of Save Europe Now, called for the order to be rescinded lest it exacerbate German suffering:

Let us remember in time that there are 'crimes against humanity' less vile and spectacular than Hitler's, and a Court to try them of higher authority even than Nuremberg.⁴⁹

Gollancz condemned the policy for 'adding further to [the] unspeakable desolation' in Germany, arguing that the dismantling list had quickly become a 'robotic machine' devoid of reason.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ For a detailed assessment of the dismantling programme and its impact upon the German economy, see Alan Kramer, *Die britische Demontagepolitik am Beispiel Hamburgs 1945-1950*, (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1991), which argues that dismantling had a very limited impact upon economic recovery.

⁴⁷ 'German Says: Stop Dismantling, or You'll Have To Rebuild', *Daily Mirror*, 30 November 1946; 'Setting Limits to Dismantling in Anglo-US Zone', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 September 1947; S. Jonathan Wiesen, *West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past, 1945-1955* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 65.

⁴⁸ 'Dismantling', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 October 1947.

⁴⁹ Victor Gollancz and Richard Stokes, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1947.

⁵⁰ Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* 84, 89; Victor Gollancz, 'The Larger and the Smaller Lunacy', *New Statesman and Nation*, 7 December 1947.

As Alan Kramer has shown, very little dismantling had actually been carried out in the British Zone before 1948.⁵¹ Yet despite the shift of Allied policymakers toward economic reconstruction in the western Zones, official support for the policy of dismantling continued largely unabated through until 1949. This was primarily the result of the Anglo-American assent to French demands of inhibiting Germany's military potential.⁵² In the final year of the occupation, ongoing dismantling across the British Zone (where most of the work was being undertaken) provoked numerous demonstrations and protests.⁵³ In March 1949, Adenauer condemned the policy as a sinister plot to impede German competition, leading to the cancellation of his impending visit to London.⁵⁴ For the teams of dismantlers, both British and German, obstruction, verbal abuse, and physical attacks became something of a regular occurrence, necessitating the provision of armed troops to oversee operations.⁵⁵ The occupation authorities grew increasingly uneasy, publicly warning that 'resistance against dismantling workers is resistance against a military government order'.⁵⁶ They threatened wholesale factory closures and a number of German workers were hauled off to British military courts after refusing to complete their allotted tasks.

In the summer of 1949, as the election campaign for the first federal government got underway, the dismantling controversy became increasingly politicised, with all the mainstream parties exploiting popular anger towards the

⁵¹ Kramer, *The West German Economy*, 117-21.

⁵² Bark and Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 259.

⁵³ 'Demonstrations At Kiel', editorial, *Times*, 9 December 1948; 'Ruhr Men On The Carpet – Riot Act To Be Read', *Daily Mail*, 9 June 1949; 'Dismantling and Disgruntling', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 June 1949. For a detailed overview of the German response to dismantling, see Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 37-97.

⁵⁴ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: A German Politician and Statesman in a period of War, Revolution, and Reconstruction, Vol. 1: From the German Empire to the Federal Republic, 1876-1952* (Providence; Oxford: Berghahn, 1995), 429.

⁵⁵ 'Stares Stop the Crowbar Squad', *Daily Mirror*, 14 June 1949.

⁵⁶ 'We'll Stamp Out German Resistance,' Britain Warns', *Daily Mirror*, 13 June 1949; 'Works Shut If Dismantling Opposed, We Warn Germans', *Daily Mirror*, 15 September 1949.

policy. In early October, the inaugural West German parliament demanded an end to dismantling, with cross-party support.⁵⁷ Konrad Adenauer, the new Chancellor, was worried that 'dismantling' might soon have the same connotations for the German people as 'the Treaty of Versailles' had in the interwar years, while an SPD politician suggested that it was an invitation for Germans to re-embrace 'the worst kind of nationalism'. Adenauer wrote to the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, and the United States to warn against the great damage being done to German morale.⁵⁸ In November 1949, the Western Powers agreed to reduce the scope of the programme, although the notion that small-scale dismantling would continue (ultimately until 1951) provoked Kurt Schumacher to lambast Adenauer as 'Federal Chancellor of the Allies'.⁵⁹

These events met with a heated response in Britain and the issue of dismantling became a medium through which uncertainties and anxieties about the occupation and the future of Germany could be exercised. There was criticism of dismantling from high-profile politicians in both major parties, including Labour MP Richard Crossman and Winston Churchill as the leader of the opposition.⁶⁰ In the House of Commons, Churchill's condemnation of dismantling earned a rebuke from

⁵⁷ 'German Parliament Demands An End To Dismantling', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 October 1949.

⁵⁸ Bark and Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 259.

⁵⁹ 'Allies To "Slow Down" Dismantling', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 November 1949; 'Dr. Adenauer's Bargain – 90 per cent of Dismantling Demands Satisfied', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 November 1949; Thomas F. Banchoff, *The German Problem Transformed: Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Policy, 1945-1995* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 51. For an analysis of Adenauer's relationship with the Western Powers before his election victory, see Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, vol. 1, 358-432.

⁶⁰ Richard Crossman, 'Dismantling — or Loot?', *New Statesman and Nation*, 28 August 1948.

Bevin, who balked at the 'enormity' of such criticism from a former advocate of the Morgenthau Plan.⁶¹

Yet the British press remained, in the main, faithful to the rationale behind dismantling, lauding it as an essential means of security against future aggression. In many of the newspapers, the disruptive protests in Germany provoked an incensed response. 'Ruhr Workers Defy British', ran the *Express* in January 1949, noting that German workers who didn't disobey orders were being branded 'traitors of the Reich' and 'British lackeys'.⁶² The issue, according to an editorial in the *Times*, had opened up the Germans to 'irresponsible demagogy'.⁶³ By June 1949, even the *Manchester Guardian* saw cause for concern, with an editorial suggesting that German opposition to a policy earnestly endeavouring to safeguard Europe stemmed from political manipulation of nascent nationalism.⁶⁴

In the letter pages of the *Times*, Stuart R de la Mahotiere contended that dismantling must be maintained at all costs.⁶⁵ The Germans, he argued, were 'clever propagandists' with 'insidious' arguments, attempting to 'befog our reason with sentiment, as they did after the First World War'. The German people's agitation against dismantling was only the first stage on a path to another attempt at conquering Europe. It was rhetoric unambiguously redolent of *Black Record* and even incited a response from Vansittart's long-standing interlocutor, Victor Gollancz. He, along with his old ally Richard Stokes, intimated that the dismantling was a contemptible attempt by the British government merely to impede German

⁶¹ "'Unconditional Surrender": Mr. Bevin on Difficult Effects of War-Time Policy', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 July 1949.

⁶² 'Ruhr Workers Defy British', *Daily Express*, 4 January 1949.

⁶³ 'Demonstrations At Kiel', editorial, *Times*, 9 December 1948.

⁶⁴ 'Dismantling', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 11 June 1949; 'Dismantling', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1949.

⁶⁵ Stuart R. de la Mahotiere, 'Dismantling in the Ruhr', letter to the editor, *Times*, 15 June 1949.

economic competition.⁶⁶ Mahotiere retorted that the British were morally entitled to exploit their gains as a victor, suggesting that if they had entered Germany as 'victors with a just claim to some reward for sacrifices made' rather than in the 'garb of missionaries of a new order' then these issues would have been avoided.⁶⁷

By August, the ongoing protests in Germany and the evidence of the country's renewed self-assurance in political matters prompted more wide-ranging reflections upon the Allied occupation. Victor Gollancz wrote a starkly pessimistic letter to the *Times*, suggesting that 'on the morrow of the elections the German picture is darker, from a European point of view, than at any time since the end of the war'.⁶⁸ Even in the midst of the humanitarian crisis, he argued, there had been hope for a resolution of the 'German Problem'. But now, ongoing dismantling was 'poisoning greater and greater numbers of the German people' towards hatred of the Western Powers. It was his contention that the Allies, in eschewing his 'soft peace' approach, had spurned the only chance of fabricating a sustainable peace:

Do we want a Germany steeped in hatred and thirsting for revenge? [...] if not, time is desperately short – a matter not of years or months but of weeks and days. I have no wish to rehearse the whole tragic story of the Allied occupation. Just because the wickedness of Nazism had been so extreme and so corrupting, there was one chance and once chance only of our victory bringing health: and that was for the victors, in spite of every precedent, to be guided by what some would describe as Christian ethics and others as the elementary insights of commonplace psychology. We threw the chance away.

Gollancz's newfound adversary, Stuart de la Mahotiere, was quick to respond, suggesting that his analysis was 'based entirely on false premises'.⁶⁹ The notion that

⁶⁶ Victor Gollancz, 'Dismantling in the Ruhr', letter to the editor, *Times*, 16 June 1949; Richard Stokes, 'Dismantling in the Ruhr', letter to the editor, *Times*, 18 June 1949

⁶⁷ Stuart R. de la Mahotiere, 'Dismantling in the Ruhr', letter to the editor, *Times*, 18 June 1949.

⁶⁸ Victor Gollancz, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 17 August 1949.

⁶⁹ Stuart R. de la Mahotiere, 'Nationalism in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 19 August 1949.

German hostility to the occupiers stemmed entirely from dismantling was 'completely to ignore the facts and lessons of history'. While he agreed that the occupation had been a failure, it was naïve to suggest that this was because the Allied move towards reconciliation and reconstruction had come too late. For Mahotiere, the years of Allied rule had failed to accomplish the necessary reform of the German people, whose unchecked nationalism and anti-British disposition were rampant once more. It was suggested that the Germans were acting in a resentful and devious fashion as part of their drive towards sovereignty:

The first objective of all [German] party leaders at this stage is not to install a limping democracy but to rid their country of the trammels of occupation and mitigate the rigours of defeat.

The assumption that ending dismantling would end their remonstrations was, Mahotiere concluded, 'to attribute to the German mind notions of justice and fair play which it does not possess'.

It was increasingly apparent that the dismantling issue, coalescing with grander anxieties about the failure of the Allied occupation and the resurrection of German sovereignty, had revived some of the unmitigated animosities of wartime. In the coming weeks, numerous representatives of the 'hard peace' and 'soft peace' schools would put forth their opinions on the protests and their implications for Germany's ongoing political revival.⁷⁰ The major fault lines of the debate had hardly changed since the early 1940s, with disagreements over the nature of the 'German Problem' underpinning varying assessments of dismantling and the prudence of Anglo-German reconciliation. For Gollancz and his allies, this policy stood for all that

⁷⁰ In the following days, numerous commentators contributed to both sides of the debate, including Erik Blumenfeld, 'Nationalism in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 19 August 1949; Kenneth Pickthorn, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Times*, 20 August 1949; Gilbert Murray, 'Germany and Europe', letter to the editor, *Times*, 22 August 1949; T. Corbishley, 'Germany and Europe', letter to the editor, *Times*, 22 August 1949; E. A. Law, 'Germany and Europe', letter to the editor, *Times*, 22 August 1949.

had been wrong about the Allied approach to the 'German Problem' since the very beginning, favouring vengeance over reconciliation. Conversely, for those who had demanded a 'hard peace', the news of popular opposition to measures ostensibly designed to nullify Germany as a military power seemed to suggest that little had changed since 1945.

On 26 August, Rev. John Collins, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* to suggest that it was clear to Christians, who 'believe that there is always hope in a policy of reconciliation if it is founded upon real well-wishing', that dismantling should come to an end.⁷¹ There was, he contended, uncertainty as to 'whether Britain shall [...] follow a counsel of hope or one of despair' in Germany. For Collins, the prospect of 'full reconciliation' with the 'very many Germans who for years stood against the Nazi tyranny' was preferable to antagonism and mistrust. Yet this faith in the 'Other Germany' had, he acknowledged, provoked an incensed reaction:

Those who favour a continuation of the policy of dismantling accuse those of us who would have it discontinued of making our case on false premises, and of ignoring the facts and lessons of history [...]. Our opponents [...] seem wedded to the idea that the German people as a whole, unlike the British or French or other Europeans, is immutably stained with a peculiar inability to act in accordance with notions of justice and fair play, and that the only way to deal effectively with them is to treat them rough.

This letter invoked a response from Lord Vansittart himself, who warned that Rev. Collins' approach amounted to a new form of appeasement:

The policy of concession has been tried throughout the century under various names [...] and has so far cost 50,000,000 lives [...]. Britain has been ruined by Germany.⁷²

⁷¹ Rev. John Collins, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 August 1949.

⁷² Robert Vansittart, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 September 1949.

It was, Vansittart continued, abundantly clear that the occupation had failed to enact the 'hard peace' policies he had long advocated, thereby allowing Germany to rise once more without atonement or reprimand. This, he added in his characteristically piercing style, was not repudiated simply by an assertion of religious virtue:

Mr Collins may prefer a policy which has cost the world so dear; but he is not entitled to support it by claiming a monopoly of Christ. It might be shown that Christ was too wise to enjoin pardon without repentance, of which two wars brought none to Germany. I might then claim a similar monopoly of Divine support for a policy of firmness which is not discredited because it has never been tried.

Victor Gollancz, not to be outdone by his old foe, leapt to the defence of Rev. Collins: this 'great religious leader' was said to be utilising his sense of morality and Christian virtue to advise on precise details, rather than abstract generalities.⁷³ Vansittart took exception to Gollancz's interjection, accusing both men of betraying their own countrymen:

I doubt whether Christ should be brought into the technical details of policy towards Germany, such as dismantling, because I do not pretend to know what His views would have been on the issue. The Canon and Mr Gollancz seemingly think that they do, and that it would have been the German view. I should personally have thought that He would have had sympathy for those – unmentioned by the Canon and Mr Gollancz – who, having twice suffered immeasurable from German aggression, seek a minimum of security and reparation.⁷⁴

The *Manchester Guardian's* editor, perhaps all too aware of the interminable feuds that had previously inhabited the letter pages of the newspapers, abruptly declared the matter to be closed.

⁷³ Victor Gollancz, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1949.

⁷⁴ Robert Vansittart, 'Dismantling in Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 8 September 1949.

'These Germans...'

While calls for Anglo-German reconciliation from Gollancz, Rev. Collins, and others certainly chimed with the bearing of official policymakers, it was the anti-German analysis of Mahotiere and Vansittart which continued to find favour in the country's most widely-read newspapers. The notion of the Germans as unrepentant and inherently wicked conformed to existing prejudices of the middle- and mass-market newspapers, who had by-and-large maintained a consistently anti-German outlook since 1945. They interpreted the disobedience and protests of perturbed German workers as evidence that the occupiers had left German militarism and nationalism untouched or even as proof of the intrinsic aggression of the 'German mind'.

In early September, the story of a British officer who was 'beaten up' and his car overturned at the Ruhr-Chemie synthetic oil plant in Oberhausen provoked a particularly incensed reaction. The *Daily Mail* published an editorial entitled 'lest we forget', condemning the German people as historically uncivilised and warlike:

Europe is faced once more with an age-old question: can the Germans be either civilised or controlled? So far the answer has always been "no" [...]. German nationalism, that terrible thing which has brought fire, slaughter, and uncounted suffering to Europe, is again resurgent. German bellies are full, so German bullying begins. Two British Control Commission officials are beaten up by 200 Germans. Nazi newspapers are on the way back. Workmen strike against the dismantling of war plants.⁷⁵

The subject of dismantling even provoked an explicit attack on Gollancz along with his allies in the Labour Party and the media:

The British dismantling policy has been much criticised – and nowhere more than in our own Left-Wing Press. None is so anti-British as the Keep Left – or is it the Keep Daft? – gang when they have a chance of ingratiating themselves with the Germans.

⁷⁵ 'Lest We Forget', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1949.

The editorial then proceeded to go over familiar ground, reciting a pocket history of both world wars as to emphasise the long-standing deceitfulness of the German people. The only solution, it was concluded, was a firmer hand:

What are we to do with the Germans? It is easier to say what we should not do. It is futile, for example, to send troops into the place where the British officials were attacked and withdraw them the same day. We dare not be soft with the Germans. We want them in the European community, but not at the price of failing to remember their dreadful deeds. Three words should be in our minds: LEST WE FORGET.

Page 2 THE DAILY MIRROR Wednesday, September 7, 1949

These Germans...

★ WILLIAM CONNOR flew to the Ruhr to write the story behind THE PICTURE THAT SHOCKED BRITAIN

"JUDAS!" screams the great written letters daubed on the wall, "THERE'S A PLACE ON THE GALLOWS FOR YOU!"

Which Wall?
The one that surrounds the great Ruhr-Chemie synthetic oil factory at Oberhausen in Germany.

Which Judas?
Any of the ninety German workers who were escorted into the plant to begin dismantling under the orders of His Majesty's Government. Thus flames and smoulders the anger and bitterness of Germany against her conquerors.

★ ★ ★

THE Ruhr Valley is the greatest industrial centre in Europe. It is more richly endowed than our own Black Country and far more concentrated.

Five years ago this area was under the fait of Allied bombs. Remember the names—Essen, Dusseldorf, Gelsenkirchen, Bochum, Duisburg, Wuppertal, Dortmund? Great havoc crashed down upon these towns and famous works like Krupp at Essen were

without a spring—or rather, a gun without a trigger.

And Germany, unbound or unloosed, is a State unbecomable to the industrious, patriotic and martial Hun

★

"YOU British," I was told by one of the Ruhr industrialists (not a gloomy defeated individual, but a cheerful sharp-witted character if ever there was one) "are more like the Germans than any other race. Like us, you are hard-working, solid and technically well advanced. But also, like us, you happen to be on the spot."

"Which spot?" said I.

"The identical spot that we are on. We cannot exist without you, and we know that if the Allies get out of Europe, Russia will walk in and the Ruhr will be lost for ever. That's clear, isn't it?"

I said that I thought it was.

"But you British cannot exist without America. That's clear, isn't it?"

I said I thought it was.


"Well then, we depend on you. You depend on America. And America, if she is not going to throw away the fruits of her victory, the whole of her post-war foreign policy and the Marshall Plan, depends on both of us. Therefore, we are all on the same spot."

Quite clever stuff but

★

ONE BRITON—
and what they did to him

Picture shows a British dismantling officer in his car after it had been overturned by German workers in the Ruhr last week.



of the German workers—great though it undoubtedly is—do I remember the German slave labour plan?

I do.

And I recall that hundreds of thousands of men and women were forcibly deported from their homes in other countries to work in these same steel works and coal mines.

I remember, too, the horrible callous brutality towards foreign workers without number who were treated as slaves and forced to labour till they dropped.

★

It may be that these Goldmachers, these Spoilers and these Wenzels are all certified as being free from the Nazi taint. But whatever our de-Nazification courts declare, the record of the German race as a whole shows that they do not care very much for people of other lands.

Look at the map of Germany. Who first gobbled across into Austria? Who occupied Czechoslovakia? Who invaded Poland? Who leapt into Denmark and Norway? Who burst across their frontiers into Holland, Belgium, France, Russia and later Italy? Which nation crossed EVERY frontier on its perimeter save one—Switzerland? Deutschland!—the great Deutschland that was armed to the teeth by these same steelmasters and their unmy workers in the Ruhr.

★

NATIONALISM is aflame again in the midst of this immensely formidable nation which cannot be cut out of the heart of Europe. Somewhere we have not to live with these aggressive and unrepentant people. But nowhere did I hear expressions of regret or much conciliation from the Germans.

I heard plenty of criticism of the French, the Americans and the British—in that order and

Illustration 21: 'These Germans...William Connor Flew to the Ruhr to Write the Story Behind... The Picture That Shocked Britain', *Daily Mirror*, 7 September 1949

In the *Daily Mirror*, William Connor's story of the 'picture that shocked Britain' came under the headline 'THESE GERMAN...' ⁷⁶ German workers, employed by the British

⁷⁶ William Connor, 'These Germans...William Connor Flew to the Ruhr to Write the Story Behind... The Picture That Shocked Britain', *Daily Mirror*, 7 September 1949; 'Briton Beaten

authorities to complete dismantling assignments, had allegedly been greeted with graffiti condemning them as 'JUDAS! THERE'S A PLACE ON THE GALLOWS FOR YOU!'. This, Connor concluded, was indicative of 'the anger and bitterness' felt by Germany 'against her conquerors'. His article painted a troubling picture, highlighting the threat posed by Germany's economic and political revival.

In the first place, Connor informed his readers that the Ruhr, Europe's 'greatest industrial centre', was in much better shape than most people in Britain assumed. This, he warned, not only heralded the revival of economic competition but also offered the potential for a military resurgence:

Five years ago this area was under the hail of Allied bombers [...]. Great havoc crashed down upon these towns and famous works like Krupps at Essen were practically wiped out. But not all were destroyed, nothing like it [...]. The truth is that Germany is alive and stirring again, and nowhere more than in the iron guts of the Ruhr. There her heart beats strongly, the clump! Thump! Clump! Of the knocked-out gladiator getting ready to climb back into the arena again. Germany without the Ruhr is like a clock without a spring – or rather, a gun without a trigger. And Germany, unwound or unloaded, is a State unbearable to the industrious, patriotic and martial Hun.

Connor railed against the attempts of German industrialists to prevent further dismantling, alleging they were unabashed militarists tainted by collusion with the Third Reich. They, like the German people as a whole, were said to be intrinsically predisposed to war and aggression:

They cry out '*the task now is to save German economy and the German workers from a still greater misery which would be of absolutely no economical advantage to any other country in the world. May our warning not fall on deaf ears!*'. Deaf ears! I seem to remember some deaf ears during the seven deadly years from 1932 to 1939 when the German Ruhr worked night and day to re-arm Germany for the most atrocious war in history [...]. It may be that these Geldmachers, these Spolders and these Wenzels are all certified as being free from the Nazi

Up By German Oil Workers', *Daily Mirror*, 1 September 1949; 'Works Shut If Dismantling Opposed, We Warn Germans', *Daily Mirror*, 15 September 1949.

taint. But whatever our de-nazification courts declare, the record of the German race as a whole shows that they do not care very much for people of other lands. Upon reflection, it was clear, to Connor at least, that the Allied occupation had been a failure:

Nationalism is aflame again in the midst of this immensely formidable nation, which cannot be cut out of the heart of Europe. Somehow, we have got to live with these aggressive and unrepentant people. But nowhere did I hear expressions of regret or much conciliation from the Germans [...]. Dismantling inflames their anger, stokes their frustration and burns away the last hopes of reconciliation. This job should have been done three years ago, and it should have been completed while defeat was fresh upon them. As it is, any old excuse will do to defame the Allies [...]. What is certain is that Jerry (like Annie) still wants to get his gun.

William Connor's rhetoric was an extreme iteration of the residual Germanophobia that had been sustained, and in some instances even augmented, since 1945. His anxiety-laden analysis ran contrary to the prescriptions of Anglo-American policy, instead revitalising a Vansittart-infused reading of the situation. It stands as a prime example of the way in which the controversy surrounding dismantling had become a vehicle for the articulation of retrospective accounts of the Allied occupation and, in many instances, the perceived threat of a revived Germany.

Watch Out, They'll Cheat Us Yet!

In the final two years of the occupation, the prospective revival of German political sovereignty also prompted a variety of anxiety-laden responses across the British press. In March 1947, William Connor's regular Cassandra column in the *Mirror* had taken up the theme of responsibility, specifically that of the German people for the 'two World Wars and one European War in the past seventy years'.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ William Connor, 'Cassandra – Responsibility', *Daily Mirror*, 26 March 1947.

It alleged that even leading anti-Nazis such as Kurt Schumacher were seeking to find 'absolution for the Reich', finding a very willing audience in today's Germany and leading to searching questions about the future: 'will there be a third Teutonic Phoenix arising from the flames?'. Later that year, a *Pathé* newsreel detailed the destruction and dislocation that characterised postwar Berlin, a 'broken city', and wondered whether 'some new world-shaking warmonger' might 'arise from the rubble'.⁷⁸ In the same month, William Barkley's column in the *Express* featured a choice headline: 'Watch Out, They'll Cheat Us Yet!'.⁷⁹ Barkley, writing on Armistice Day, forewarned that any recurrence of appeasement through the political restoration of Germany was imprudent:

I lose no sleep worrying about Germany going down into the abyss. Nor does it disturb me that Germany is cut in two parts. I wish it were 22. How poignant are the memories of November 11, 1918. The clouds that had hung over us since the early years of the century were dispelled. Then, as the world was recovering, the cry went up that Europe could not prosper until Germany was rebuilt. So she was rebuilt, and another generation was convulsed in re-smashing her [...]. Some British Tories, and Socialists, too, who make a humane appeal to uplift Germany, nourish the ulterior motive of building a barrier against Bolshevism as the false guide Hitler proposed [...]. Keep fresh the memory of the German crimes.

In the midst of the Berlin crisis the following year, warnings in the British press about the restoration of German statehood continued largely unabated. The *Daily Mail* highlighted a report of the International Committee for the Study of European Questions suggesting that 'the majority of Germans, if free to vote, would vote Nazi' and that anti-Semitism had revived across the country.⁸⁰ In December 1948, the *Mail* published an editorial entitled 'Watch 'em', cautioning against naïveté of left-wing politicians in Britain.⁸¹ The Labour Party and their allies were said to be oblivious to

⁷⁸ *Pathé Pictorial Looks At Berlin*, 24 November 1947, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1355.21, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

⁷⁹ William Barkley, 'William Barkley's Notebook – Watch Out, They'll Cheat Us Yet!', *Daily Express*, 11 November 1947.

⁸⁰ 'Still Nazi in Germany', *Daily Mail*, 11 June 1948.

⁸¹ 'Watch 'Em', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 31 December 1948.

the threat of the German socialists, now proudly beating a nationalist drum, encouraging 'anti-British agitation', and commemorating German soldiers:

We do not blame the Germans for being true to their nature. But we do blame the shallow-pated, loud-mouthed ignoramuses in this country who ask us to believe that because the Germans have labelled themselves 'Socialist' they have therefore become noble.

Even some of the most ardent supporters of a 'soft peace' had become highly critical of the rationale behind Anglo-American plans for a West German state. Victor Gollancz had long rejected the imposition of a military government and favoured the restoration of German statehood. Yet in July 1948 he wrote to the *Manchester Guardian*, remarking that he was left 'feeling sick at heart in the very hour [we] are being fulfilled'.⁸² For Gollancz, taking a more 'sentimental' attitude towards the German people was foremost a moral choice, rather than a political one. The Realpolitik displayed by Allied leaders was simply further proof of the West's decay:

Is it because it is right to be decent to human beings as such that a wave of sentimental pro-Germanism [...] is now swelling? No: it is because in the changed circumstances the Russians are more dangerous to us than the Germans, and therefore it is the Germans we must woo as potential allies in a dreaded conflict [...]. In three short years the pariah nation, held criminally responsible, as a whole, for Auschwitz and Buchenwald, has become, as a whole, 'Christian and civilised' – with Auschwitz and Buchenwald forgotten. In 1945, they were to be fed 'as a matter of policy': in 1948 they are to be 'treated' as Christian and civilised because 'our interests converge'.

By January 1949, even the *Manchester Guardian's* editorial was expressing a degree of scepticism, suggesting that Germany's mainstream political parties were 'appealing to nationalistic sentiments' that 'three years of re-education could scarcely be expected to kill'.⁸³ The Germans, it was concluded, were proving unequal to their new responsibilities.

⁸² Victor Gollancz, 'Our Attitude to Germany', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1948.

⁸³ 'Western Germany', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1949.

In the following months, antagonistic anti-German rhetoric coupled with fretful reflections on the failure of the Allied occupation sporadically appeared in the press. In February, Brian Connell wrote in the *Daily Mail* of the 'guiltless Germans', condemning the 'build up [of a] latter-day counterpart of the post-1914-18 legend'.⁸⁴ The Germans were, he warned, being mistakenly characterised as 'a peace-loving, misjudged, harmless people, imposed upon by a series of vicious rulers'. In reality, Connell suggested, the Allies had failed to effect 'any significant change in the German social structure' and nationalism was blooming once again. At what stage this 'becomes transmuted into political power' was 'less easy to judge', but these two extreme positions were said to be 'already fishing gleefully in the muddy waters'. In April, a *Times* editorial cautioned of a 'marked increase in nationalism, disillusion, scepticism' amongst even 'the minority of Germans who believe in democracy'.⁸⁵ The Western powers, seen to have failed to agree to a consistent policy on dismantling, reparations, level of industry, or the Occupation Statute, had to shoulder some of the blame for such anti-democratic tendencies.

The renewed tide of Germanophobia prompted Victor Gollancz to write to the *Times*, identifying what he perceived to be an 'alarming' deterioration in Anglo-German relations:

The Germans accuse us of a determination to keep them in a position of permanent helotry: we, who only recently were patting their backs of their conduct in Berlin, accuse them of arrogance, unreasonableness, resurgent nationalism, and 'gross impropriety' in their attitude to the occupying Power. They play with the idea of non-cooperation: whereupon we remind them of their past sins and their potentiality for future evil [...]. Once again the chance of reconciliation is being lost, and another nail is being driven into the coffin of European peace.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Brian Connell, 'The 'Guiltless Germans' and the 'Wicked World'', *Daily Mail*, 23 February 1949.

⁸⁵ 'Policy For Germany', editorial, *Times*, 8 April 1949.

⁸⁶ Victor Gollancz, 'Anglo-German Relations', letter to the editor, *Times*, 6 January 1949.

Tellingly, his concerns met with complaint from Ian R. Christie, a historian at University College London, who reaffirmed a *Black Record*-style conception of Germany's past:

Mr. Gollancz bases his thesis on an interpretation of the German character to which I cannot subscribe. He assumes that Germans will behave 'reasonably', using that word in its English sense – that is to say, he believes that they will behave as we do. I consider that this conclusion is unfounded and that it ignores the lessons of at least a hundred years of German history. In effect, he denies what I hold to be amply demonstrated by the evidence – that the works of such men as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Fichte, and Treitschke were, and still are, representative of the German mental outlook; and that Bismarck and the advisers of William II in a limited degree, and Hitler to the fullest extent, expressed this outlook in political action.⁸⁷

The Election Campaign

There was evidently little enthusiasm for the prospect of West German statehood in the pages of the British newspapers. Even the upmarket broadsheets, staunchly supportive of reconstruction efforts thus far, were intermittently articulating anxieties that the Germans were unprepared or perhaps simply unable to embrace democracy. Yet when the German Basic Law was passed in May, it was met with a surprising degree of optimism.⁸⁸ In the context of the ongoing Berlin Airlift and the Cold War, the decision of the Western Allies to 'play their ace in Germany' was regarded in many quarters as pragmatic and sensible.⁸⁹ In the *Daily Mirror*, the constitutional arrangement was described as a 'heavy blow to the Russians', while the *Daily Telegraph* was optimistic about the future of West German democracy. The

⁸⁷ Ian R. Christie, 'Anglo-German Relations', letter to the editor, *Times*, 8 January 1949.

⁸⁸ For an extensive overview of the growth of democracy in West Germany and the election campaign, see Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 103-55.

⁸⁹ 'Allied Play Their Ace In Germany', *Daily Mirror*, 26 April 1949; 'German Policy', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1949; 'Towards a Genuine Democracy', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 1949.

Times editorial exhibited a sweeping change of heart, lauding the ‘good sense and political maturity’ that had accompanied discussions over the German constitution.⁹⁰

In the coming months, however, the British press once again exhibited some degree of trepidation at the prospect of Germany’s political revival. As the German election loomed closer, British journalists, politicians, diplomats, civilians, and military leaders alike began to reflect upon the Allied occupation. The obvious question was whether it had ultimately been a success – had Britain won the peace after all?

There were, as ever, a few devoted Germanophobes, not least the staunchly anti-German historian Hugh R. Trevor-Roper whose assessment of the West German constitution in *Picture Post* was deeply pessimistic.⁹¹ But it wasn’t just unrepentant Vansittartists who were questioning the integrity of Britain’s attempts to ‘win the peace’ in postwar Germany. In July 1949, even the *Manchester Guardian’s* editorial suggested that the dangers of social unrest, mounting nationalism, and mock-Europeanism were said to be clear to all observers.⁹² There was more than enough reason to view the new Germany with ‘a very alert and sceptical eye’, as it was ‘by no means certain that it will develop into the tolerant, just social democracy’. And the finger was pointed squarely at the shortcomings of the Allied occupiers:

Looking now at what we have built, now that we are about to return a great part of the edifice to the Germans, it is quite impossible to be so satisfied with our work [...]. [T]here are many snags and dangers in the developments which Western Germany is now undergoing. With its still largely apathetic political life and second-rate leaders, its semi-submerged nationalist movements and unabsorbed refugees, its gross social inequalities and growing unemployment-problems which seem aggravated rather than alleviated by returning prosperity and self-confidence [...] Perhaps this weakness was implicit in the whole attempt to govern Germany by a large Allied apparatus.

⁹⁰ ‘Portents From Bonn’, editorial, *Times*, 9 May 1949.

⁹¹ Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, ‘Will The New One Last?’, *Picture Post*, 14 May 1949.

⁹² ‘Above Criticism?’, editorial, *Guardian*, 22 July 1949.

In August, with the first federal elections on the horizon, *Picture Post* published an extensive survey of German voters.⁹³ There was, the article suggested, a great deal of uncertainty regarding Germany's political future – with outspoken nationalists and former Nazis vying with democrats, socialists, and communists for claims on the recent past and responsibility for the future. In the *Daily Mail*, a report on the 'road back' to democracy in Germany described the election as an 'unreal battle' between parties set to have a 'tough time' convincing the German people that representative government will work.⁹⁴ All of the German parties were said to be pledging, 'to frenzied applause', their intention to pursue German unity, to return land that now lay in Poland, to end dismantling and paying the costs of occupation⁹⁵, and to create a new German army – regarded by the *Mail* as 'portents for the future'.⁹⁶ The article suggested that far right parties were set to succeed, primarily because of the 4,000,000 ex-Nazis who were now eligible to vote. Meanwhile, even more menacing elements were said to be reviving:

Biding their time in the background, their increased activity and more frequent public meetings one of the most sinister aspects of German political life over the past months, former Nazis, professional officers, and the strong body of ultra-nationalists may yet become the principal force in Germany again.

This interest in the apparent re-emergence of political extremism in Germany extended far beyond the most virulently anti-German and sensationalist organs of the press. The alleged resurgence of anti-Semitism and Nazism were also broached in the upmarket newspapers, especially the *Manchester Guardian*.⁹⁷ This included

⁹³ 'What I Hope From My Vote', *Picture Post*, 20 August 1949.

⁹⁴ Brian Connell, 'Germany Takes Her Biggest Step Along the Road Back', *Daily Mail*, 11 August 1949.

⁹⁵ The costs of maintaining the occupation were estimated to be 36% of the federal budget in 1949, see Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, Vol. 1, 476.

⁹⁶ While this was certainly a sensationalist assessment of the election campaign, the mainstream parties did exploit popular anti-British sentiments in their favour, see Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, Vol. 1, 429.

⁹⁷ 'Anti-Semitism in Germany – Jewish Allegations', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 July 1949. Also see, 'Anti-Semitism in West Germany: British Jews Visit Minister', *Manchester*

suggestions of organised political fanaticism, including the emergence of the Deutsche Partei under the leadership of Dr Seeböhm. This marginal political force was said to be appealing to those who had 'suffered' under denazification, calling for a 'renewal' of the German Reich and contending that the war's victims had died for Germany's future.⁹⁸ In early August, the exploits of Otto Strasser to re-enter the political fray also inspired a *Manchester Guardian* article, under the headline 'Seeds of trouble: Scepticism as to the New German State'.⁹⁹ Strasser, a prominent early member of the Nazi party now exiled in Canada, was said to be working in alliance with the League for Germany's Renewal (otherwise known as the League of German Rebirth).¹⁰⁰ The article went on to allege that the Western orientation of Germany had obscured the clarity of Allied vision, 'so that the nationalist, anti-democratic tendencies in Germany are judged from the point of view of whether or not they are anti-Russian'. This was not yet a Nazi revival, but it was said to be eerily reminiscent of 1925 and 'the causes from which Nazism sprang': this 'lunatic fringe' represented a serious threat in a country where 'lunacy is more of a political asset [...] than in most countries' and could lead to 'serious trouble'.

These anxieties were augmented by a number of official reports: in July, the Institute of Jewish Affairs in New York reported that anti-Semitism was one of 'the strongest characteristics' of present-day Germany. Likewise, an American-led survey

Guardian, 30 September 1949; 'Anti-Semitism in German: MP For Trial? Speech in Defence of Hitler', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 December 1949; 'German Deputy Suspended – Anti-Semitic Speech', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 December 1949; 'Return of Nazism in Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1949.

⁹⁸ 'Restoring the Reich – Party's Programme: New Deal For Ex-Nazis', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 August 1949.

⁹⁹ 'Seeds of Trouble: Scepticism as to the New German State', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 August 1949.

¹⁰⁰ 'Attempts to Revive German Nationalism – Conference of Right-wing Politicians and Officers', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 June 1949; 'Did We Raise a Ghost In Germany?', *Picture Post*, 17 September 1949.

into the German media raised fears that a 'pro-Nazi press' was reviving.¹⁰¹ In late August, British Military Governor Sir Brian Robertson felt compelled to warn the Germans to curb the revival of Nazism and 'protect Democratic institutions from attack', drawing yet more attention to the appointment of Nazi-era editors at a number of right-wing publications.¹⁰² The *Mirror's* subsequent editorial cautioned against sentimentality or any erroneous belief in short cuts to democracy, calling for action by the Western powers if the Germans failed to stop the 'menace of Nazi nationalism' themselves.¹⁰³

The Fourth Reich?

In the August election, the unexpected success of the Christian Democratic Union (and Christian Social Union) (CDU/CSU) ushered in a centre-right coalition between the CDU/CSU, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), and the German Party (DP).¹⁰⁴ On 15 September 1949, Konrad Adenauer was nominated as the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, a position that he would hold until 1963. It signalled the first steps towards sovereignty, heralding a new era in the history of Germany and in the course of Anglo-German diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁵ But Adenauer's electoral success was met with a flurry of invective and trepidation from

¹⁰¹ 'Pro-Nazi Press Revival – British Fears', *Manchester Guardian*, 27 August 1949; Also see *3 Nations Sit In Europe's First Parliament*, 18 August 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1421.17, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

¹⁰² 'Curb Nazis, Germans Told', *Daily Mirror*, 31 August 1949.

¹⁰³ 'Nazis', editorial, *Daily Mirror*, 1 September 1949.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed overview of the Federal Republic's party system and the 1949 election campaign, see Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic*, 34-49, 70-2.

¹⁰⁵ Lee, *Victory in Europe*, 44-50. For a comprehensive overview of Adenauer's relationship with the West, see Ronald J. Granieri, *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, The CDU/CSU, and the West, 1949-1966*, (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2003); Christoph Hendrik Müller, *West Germans Against the West: Anti-Americanism in Media and Public Opinion in the Federal Republic of Germany 1949-1968* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

much of the British media, who questioned the integrity of the Bonn's democratic convictions and envisioned a foreboding future for Europe.

The day before the election had taken place, *Picture Post* had published 'The Two Germanys: a Warning', suggesting that the parliament was the Bonn Republic was discredited in the eyes of many Germans before it had even assembled.¹⁰⁶ It was an argument that anticipated the response of much of the British newspapers, whose anti-German prejudices showed no signs of abating. The *Daily Telegraph* was unconvinced at the prospects of democracy taking root in Germany:

When we hear of the projected reappearance of Nazi organs with many of their old associates, when we perceive again that curious kink in the German character which causes them to select Britain as the chief target of abuse, we are bound to ask what form of nationalism we are to expect, whether the new form of democracy will go the way of the Weimar form, and whether, in fact, what is emerging in Germany is a democracy without democrats.¹⁰⁷

A fortnight later, the paper re-iterated its concerns in another editorial, reasserting that Weimar had collapsed due to the inherent failings of the Germans and their political leaders.¹⁰⁸ Amid 'recrudescent nationalism' and the 'reinstatement of prominent ex-Nazis', the British people ought to wonder whether Germany's new democrats 'will be any more successful than their predecessors from 1848 onwards':

Extremists on the Right are all the bolder because their nationalistic mouthings against the Allies are echoed by the nominal moderates of the Social Democrat and Christian Democrat parties. If these two large parties continue as they did during the election campaign to attack the occupying powers for purely demagogic purposes, they will certainly find themselves outbidden by the self-appointed heirs of Hitler and Goebbels.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Two Germanys: A Warning', *Picture Post*, 13 August 1949. Also see, 'Warning On Germany', *Picture Post* 27 August 1949; 'The Danger In Germany', *Picture Post*, 24 September 1949.

¹⁰⁷ 'Thoughts On The New Germany', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 August 1949.

¹⁰⁸ 'Federal Germany', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 September 1949.

This scepticism was particularly palpable amongst those who had hoped for the socialist Kurt Schumacher's Social Democratic Party (SDP) to gain power. The *Manchester Guardian's* editorial was concerned at the rightward direction of German politics, especially at the prospect of small far-right parties taking part in Adenauer's coalition.¹⁰⁹ The result was said to be yet further proof that 'British policy in Germany has suffered a lamentable failure'.¹¹⁰

On the other hand, the *Daily Mail* was momentarily buoyed by the victory of a right-wing party, with its editorial demonstrating an uncharacteristic degree of sympathy towards the challenges that faced the new German government.¹¹¹ The paper implored British support for West Germany, where there was now the prospect of a 'bridgehead' to democracy. The result, it was argued, had come much to the disappointment of British and German socialists alike:

this fact has caused our Keep Daft gang here to quiver with alarm and dismay. When the election results came out they went off the deep end: 'a Black Day for Europe,' screamed one commentator. 'The results a little short of a disaster' [...]. The defeat of Socialism in Germany has led our Socialists to write off the new democratic experiment in advance. As usual, they only believe in democracy if their side wins. True, there are obvious reasons for caution, but none for defeatism. The rising tide of Nationalist feeling in Germany – largely sponsored by the Left-Wing Social democrats – should not blind us to the fact that the Bonn Parliament is as democratic an assembly as we are likely to see.

The following week, the *Mail's* Germany correspondent Brian Connell interviewed Adenauer himself, who utilised the platform to laud the democratic faith of the German people and his government's intention to put a halt to both right-wing radicalism and unfair economic competition.¹¹² Yet the *Daily Mail's* politically-orientated change of heart had its limits: the same week, a Kenneth Ames article

¹⁰⁹ 'To The Right', editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1949.

¹¹⁰ 'The German Outlook', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 August 1949.

¹¹¹ 'Bridgehead At Bonn', editorial, *Daily Mail*, 7 September 1949.

¹¹² Brian Connell, 'Give My Germany A Chance', interview with Konrad Adenauer, *Daily Mail*, 16 September 1949.

referred to the 'new Reich of Adenauer', where anti-British slogans were said to be chalked on the walls and German fastidiousness had returned with a vengeance.¹¹³ Later in September, the paper even granted a full-page spread to the notorious Otto Strasser, who condemned the West German state as a 'protektorat' on the path to political decay and instability reminiscent of Weimar.¹¹⁴ The paper's efforts to extol the virtues of Adenauer's new government were also, plainly, not appreciated amongst some of the paper's readership; one concerned reader argued that it was 'no time to haul down the British flag':

The Germans have been responsible in the past 100 years for three minor and three major wars, with the loss of millions of dead and millions wounded. These wars have been fought with increasing ferocity and brutality the last including torture and the mass massacre of prisoners. Maybe we'll soon be apologising to the Germans for winning the war.¹¹⁵

At the end of the year, Duff Cooper's end-of-year review in the *Mail* suggested a return to the paper's characteristic hostility towards Germany. In it, Cooper, a long-standing supporter of Vansittart, reflected upon the Third Reich as a popular dictatorship.¹¹⁶ He fired a warning shot to Allied politicians who, to his mind, were excessively focused on the Soviet Union:

These plain facts should convince the unprejudiced that the German problem, unless and until it has been solved must remain the most vital one for the future of Europe. Have we solved it by defeating Germany in two wars? What steps are we taking now towards its solution? [...]. [T]his modern nation born of blood and iron and the only one that loves war for its own sake. Just as Russia has no cause for making war so has Germany every cause [...]. All obtainable evidence shows that the Germans still venerate the name of Hitler, who has never been denounced by any of their present leaders. So they have ideological as well as economic reasons for war.

¹¹³ Kenneth Ames, 'Berlin Express', *Daily Mail*, 12 September 1949.

¹¹⁴ Otto Strasser, 'A Horoscope For Bonn', *Daily Mail*, 19 September 1949.

¹¹⁵ Horace Newte, 'No Time To Haul Down the British Flag', letter to the editor, *Daily Mail*, 14 October 1949.

¹¹⁶ Duff Cooper, 'Now On To Act 2 – Will It Be Peace On Earth?', *Daily Mail*, 31 December 1949.

But Cooper was by no means alone, with the final months of 1949 witness to a mounting tide of Germanophobia across much of the mass-market press. German attempts to seek representation at the Assembly of Europe were greeted with opposition in the *Daily Mirror*, which ran the headline 'The Same Old Hun – Germans try to get in by the backdoor'.¹¹⁷ In November, *Picture Post* speculated whether German history might 'take the same course as in the past?'.¹¹⁸ The response of the *Daily Express* was perhaps most hostile, with Charles Wighton drawing disparaging allusions to the Nazi past and excoriating Adenauer as a nationalist:

Black-uniformed German police sprang to attention with a military salute as a long, black limousine edged on to the Godesberg-Koenigwinter Rhine ferry this afternoon [...]. The limousine's elderly passenger was 73-year-old Dr Konrad Adenauer [...]. For the second time in 25 years the Germans have chosen an septuagenarian, a retired professional man to be their leader. The first time it was a general – the senile Hindenburg, who prepared the way for Hitler. Now it is ex-lawyer and civil servant Adenauer [...], a reactionary nationalist [...] under today's fashionable cloak of democracy.¹¹⁹

It was alleged that Adenauer held anti-British prejudices, dating back to his opposition to the first British Army of the Rhine in 1919 and augmented by his removal as the Mayor of Cologne by British occupation authorities in 1945. The government he was forming was expected to succumb to reactionary ideas:

Now in three weeks' time anti-British, grim, difficult Dr Adenauer will take office as Minister President (prime minister) of the new German Federal Republic. His Government will be anti-Socialist, and committed to leave the Ruhr war arsenal in the possession of still formidable German big business. Under strong pressure from widely differing wings of the Christian Democrats, Dr Adenauer is almost bound to follow the only policy acceptable to all – 100 per cent anti-Allied, and against the occupation.

¹¹⁷ Bill Greig and David Walker, 'The Same Old Hun – Germans Try To Get In By the Backdoor', *Daily Mirror*, 16 August 1949.

¹¹⁸ 'An End To Post-War Germany', *Picture Post*, 26 November 1949.

¹¹⁹ Charles Wighton, 'It's All As Well To Know The Kind Of Man They Want', *Daily Express*, 18 August 1949.

In September, Sefton Delmer's *Express* column, 'Can Germany Harm Us?', suggested that the 'Spirit of the Swastika' had returned to Germany.¹²⁰ German politicians, he argued, had made it clear during the election that they believed the German people 'hanker for a return of the drum-thumping, head-rolling leadership of Adolf Hitler or some other like him'. This had continued into the first parliament, with support 'for the strong-arm squads who beat up Germans working for the British' intended to appeal 'to the Nazi that lurks in every German's heart'. Delmer alleged that the Nazis, and Nazi publications, including a revived *Der Stürmer*, were once again coming out in to the open while the Allies stood helpless:

In my view, it is already too late for any scolding or appeasement – though no doubt our experts will try out plenty of both. When the new West German Government is formed under Dr Adenauer this week, Germany will have been safely launched on the road to Nazism.

Delmer also noted that current trends threatened a repeat of the interwar period, when the political elites of Germany had purposefully undermined the first British Control Commission:

The Germans resent dismantling. They resent the presence of the Allied Control Commission, whether it is in mufti or in uniform. They resent the Ruhr authority, the new international administration of this vital industrial area. They resent the presence of our soldiers. They will organise resistance – passive and active. In the name of patriotism the Government and the German public will once more connive at terrorism and violence. As a consequence, power will pass to the terrorists and chauvinists. And I don't care what they call themselves, they will be the same old Nazis again [...]. The new chapter in German history beginning this week is another Nazi chapter.

The Last of the Iron Men

As the Cold War came to dominate British policy in Germany, the impulse to enact a wholesale examination of German society and pursue war crimes

¹²⁰ Sefton Delmer, 'Can Germany Harm Us?', *Daily Express*, 12 September 1949.

prosecutions had quickly diminished.¹²¹ In January 1948, the British authorities quietly declared denazification to be complete.¹²² There was, as Donald Bloxham describes, a 'gradual dismantling of the legal machinery' relating to war crimes, coinciding with a series of quantum shifts in official policy regarding postwar Germany.¹²³ Yet in the British Zone the process dragged on until December 1949, when Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, a leading figure in the Wehrmacht High Command during the Second World War, was the defendant in the last British war crimes trial of the immediate postwar era. It was the closing act of a military occupation that, with the inauguration of the Federal Republic of Germany under the supervision of the Allied High Commission, had otherwise already ended.

In Britain, this politically sensitive case provoked an exceptionally clamorous public reaction, illustrating the complex interactions between policymakers, media, and public at the heart of the Anglo-German relationship. Manstein's hearing had transpired at a vital moment in the evolution of Britain's postwar foreign policy, with the nascent Cold War having inspired the rapid rehabilitation of Germany from pariah state to important ally. As a result, these public and media responses provide acute insight into the character of British public perceptions of Germany vis-à-vis official policy at the end of the 1940s.

Scholars have, until now, typically engaged with the Manstein trial as a touchstone of Britain's postwar international relations outlook regarding Germany

¹²¹ Daniel Cowling, 'Anglo-German Relations After 1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14 July 2017, 0022009417697808, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009417697808>.

¹²² 'In Brief – De-Nazification of British Zone of Germany is Now Considered Complete', *Daily Mirror*, 6 January 1948; Bloxham, 'British War Crimes Trial Policy', 105-6; Donald Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War: The Case of Erich von Manstein', *Patterns of Prejudice* 33, no. 4 (October 1999): 105, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132299128810687>; Priscilla Dale Jones, 'British Policy Towards German Crimes Against German Jews, 1939–1945', *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 36, no. 1 (January 1991): 339–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/leobaeck/36.1.339>.

¹²³ Bloxham, 'British War Crimes Trial Policy', 91-2.

and the balance of power in Europe.¹²⁴ In this reading we see how the realpolitik surrounding the hearing led to months of governmental deliberations over its political desirability that eventually, in 1953, secured the release of Manstein after he had served less than one-fifth of his original sentence. In other words, this trial, from its inception to the eventual reversal of its verdict, illuminates the complexities which emerged from Britain's changing political relationship with Germany amid the pressures of the Cold War.

As part of this analysis, British domestic opposition to Manstein's trial has been highlighted as a vindication and prime example of an apparent public consensus in support of Cold War realpolitik. We are shown how the Manstein case inspired prominent political figures, including Winston Churchill, to make parliamentary speeches denouncing the prospect of a trial. In addition, Labour MP Reginald Paget worked *pro bono* to defend Manstein in court, an emissary for those who rejected the prosecution as an injustice.¹²⁵ Moreover, critical letter-writing campaigns condemning the trial regularly featured in the national press. Donald Bloxham characterises reaction to the trial as an 'unprecedented hail of criticism', even while acknowledging that orchestrated opposition 'never achieved anything like mass

¹²⁴ See Kerstin von Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle: War Crimes Trials and Cold War Politics, 1945-1960* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009); J. H. Hoffman, 'German Field Marshals as War Criminals? A British Embarrassment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, no. 1 (1988): 17-35. Scholars have also considered on the legal basis of the Royal Warrant Trials, see A. P. V. Rogers, 'War Crimes Trials under the Royal Warrant: British Practice 1945-1949', *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 39, 04 (October 1990): 780-800. Otherwise the trial has been broached in biographical studies of Manstein or other interested parties, see Mungo Melvin, *Manstein: Hitler's Greatest General* (London: Orion, 2010); Alaric Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship: Basil Liddell Hart, Wehrmacht Generals and the Debate on West German Rearmament, 1945-1953', *War in History* 5, 3 (July 1998): 327-57; Graham Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*; D. M. McKale, *Nazis after Hitler: How Perpetrators of the Holocaust Cheated Justice and Truth* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012).

¹²⁵ Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 32; Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 224.

proportions'.¹²⁶ Kerstin von Lingen similarly suggests that this 'extremely unpopular' trial 'was held against a background of unrelenting criticism' illustrative of 'a united front of British opposition to the war crimes trials more broadly'.¹²⁷ Lingen contends that this hostility was actually something of a popular phenomenon, representative of a 'shift in British public opinion in favour of the German generals'.¹²⁸ David Cesarani has also argued that the British public were generally hostile to the trial, stating that 'by the time of the trial of senior German generals, including von Manstein, in 1948-49, there was actually a popular reaction against "dragging out" the process of retribution'.¹²⁹

We are led to believe, in other words, that the emergence of public opposition to war crimes proceedings in Britain was a reflection of the changed political context of the Cold War.¹³⁰ The apparent hostility to Manstein's prosecution is taken to be symptomatic of the evolving character of postwar Anglo-German popular relations, in which British wartime hostility towards Germany rapidly diminished in the face of the escalating conflict with the Soviet Union.¹³¹ The occupation, then, had overseen not only Germany's political rehabilitation, but also allowed for reconciliation between Britain and Germany more generally.

¹²⁶ Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 31; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 156.

¹²⁷ Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 211, 140.

¹²⁸ Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 142.

¹²⁹ David Cesarani, 'Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory of the Second World War', in Martin Evans and Kenneth Lunn, *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 30. Cesarani, however, cites only the opinion of Winston Churchill, Lord Hankey, and a small number of upmarket press publications criticising the trials as 'victor's justice' as evidence of this apparently popular reaction.

¹³⁰ This is the principal point made in Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 2; and Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 27.

¹³¹ Bloxham notes that 'the excess of Anglo-American Germanophobia was arguably unloaded in 1945' and uses Mass-Observation surveys to demonstrate diminishing levels of popular antagonism towards Germany, see Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 134, 154. A similar argument is made in McKale, *Nazis After Hitler*, 259-60.

Yet these studies, while recognising that media discourses are the most comprehensive means of assessing British domestic reactions to the trial, have only consulted a small subset of the pertinent source material, looking exclusively at the upmarket press: the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Manchester Guardian*. The oppositional voices identified within have been implicitly (and, at times, explicitly) awarded the status as *the* popular reaction to the trial. A broader scope of enquiry, drawing upon a greatly expanded body of sources, reveals a more complex picture of public and media reactions to the Manstein trial, demonstrating that indignation was by far from the only response.

A New *Dolchstoßlegende*

In the summer of 1947 American war crimes prosecutors presented the British government with ‘overwhelming’ evidence that four German officers held in British custody, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Colonel General Strauss, and Field Marshal von Manstein, were complicit in war crimes.¹³² The shifting geopolitical pressures associated with the evolution of a perceived Soviet threat, the cost of staging war crimes trials, and government sensitivity to political and public reaction all contributed to a prolonged period of indecision over whether to indict these four officers.¹³³ Tensions were mounting between the War Office and Foreign Office over the morality and political desirability of British war crimes trials when, in the spring of 1948, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany requested

¹³² Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 29; Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’, 18; McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 259; Wette, *The Wehrmacht*, 225–6. In the case against Manstein, a number of speeches, orders, and signed documents presented incontrovertible proof that he had, at the very least, known about the murderous activities of Ohlendorf’s *Einsatzgruppe D* in his area of command, as well as the assistance of the Wehrmacht in these crimes.

¹³³ Melvin, *Manstein*, 459.

the extradition of Manstein and Rundstedt.¹³⁴ This led, in early July, to Cabinet agreement on bringing these officers to trial; the reticence felt by some is evident in the simultaneous decision to call a halt to all other outstanding British war crimes proceedings by 1 September 1948.¹³⁵

The results of this political wrangling, which had been hidden from public attention, were now exposed. Historians have characterised the tone of initial public reaction to the announcement of a proposed trial as aggressively and unceasingly oppositional, beginning with a number of letters published in the upmarket press in August 1948.¹³⁶ Basil Liddell Hart was the instigator of this critical correspondence, defending these officers and lambasting the alleged ‘cat and mouse treatment’ and poor conditions these elderly and purportedly honourable men faced.¹³⁷ In the following months, numerous editorials and correspondents followed suit and invoked the trial’s repercussions for national identity, alleging that this apparent unseemliness threatened ‘British values’, had ‘a Nazi rather than a British flavour’, and was repugnant to a distinctively British sense of justice.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Deepening this imbroglio, the American Chief Counsel for War Crimes sought these two men, alongside Brauchitsch, to appear as witnesses in their own ‘High Command Trial’, see Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’, 22–3.

¹³⁵ The decision to proceed was in part due to the personal determination of Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, see Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’, 24.

¹³⁶ Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 32; Lingen, *Kesselring’s Last Battle*, 139–40; McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 260.

¹³⁷ For more on Liddell Hart’s personal motivations see Searle, ‘A Very Special Relationship’. Basil Liddell Hart, ‘Imprisoned Generals’, letter to the editor, *Times*, 16 August 1948; Basil Liddell Hart, ‘Imprisoned German Generals’, letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1948; Liddell Hart even quoted correspondence from Manstein himself, who made particular complaint that having ‘a negro at one’s bedside seems to me a perverseness of taste’.

¹³⁸ ‘Three Field Marshals’, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1948; Lord Parmoor, ‘Imprisoned Generals’, letter to the editor, *Times*, 24 August 1948; P.C. Loftus; C. K. Allen; T. S. Eliot; Osbert Sitwell; Kenneth Pick Thorn; Tweedsmuir; Collin Brooks; Douglas Jerrold; F. A. Voigt, ‘Imprisoned Generals’, letter to the editor, *Times*, 25 August 1948.

The implication of an all-embracing patriotic humanitarianism encouraged the momentary censure of politicians and public figures from wide range of political outlooks. Avowedly liberal or left-wing voices such as George Bell, Michael Foot, and J. B. Priestley aligned with right-wing political and military establishment figures, including Lord Hankey and the British Military Government in Germany.¹³⁹ Their opposition to the trials, ostensibly grounded in ethical concerns that included the untimeliness of a prosecution taking place four years after the end of the war, was voiced in both Houses of Parliament and in the correspondence pages of the upmarket press. These protests were exacerbated with the death of von Brauchitsch in October 1948 and a series of official medical reviews that declared von Rundstedt and Strauss unfit to face prosecution, leaving Manstein to be tried alone.¹⁴⁰ Some called for this remaining trial to be abandoned, while others merely sought to

¹³⁹ The opposition of the British military is highlighted in Melvin, *Manstein*, 459. This includes reference to an ostentatious party held in von Rundstedt's honour by soldiers of the British War Crimes Group in Germany as the Field Marshal travelled from Nuremberg to Hamburg, prior to their en-masse resignation in protest at his prosecution. Also see, W. Douglas-Home, 'Obedience in the Army', *Times*, 22 December 1949. For an example of the disparate outlooks involved see H. N. Brailsford, Michael Foot, Victor Gollancz, J. H. Hudson, R. T. Paget, J. B. Priestley, Russell, T. C. Skeffington-Lodge, R. R. Stokes, Leonard Woolf, 'The German Generals', letter to the editor, *Times*, 1 September 1948. This unusual assemblage led to disquieting associations between supposedly liberal humanitarians and far-right extremists, see Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 126–33; Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*. For Bell and Church of England, see Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust*; Tom Lawson, 'Bishop Bell and the Trial of German War Criminals: A Moral History', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 21, No. 2 (January 2008): 324–48; Tom Lawson, 'Bishop Bell and the Trial of German War Criminals: A Moral History', in *The Church and Humanity: The Life and Work of George Bell, 1883-1958*, ed. Andrew Chandler (Farnham; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2012), 134, 138; Churchill speech, 28 October 1948, House of Commons, quoted in R. T. Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*, (London: Collins, 1951) xiv. For other examples of perceived importance of this trial for the future of Germany, see 'Three Field Marshals', *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1948; T. C. Skeffington-Lodge speech in House of Commons, May 1949, quoted in 'Trial of F.M. Von Manstein: 'Will Not Be Abandoned'', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 May 1949; Lord De L'Isle and Dudley and Lord Bridgeman, 'Von Manstein', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 July 1949.

¹⁴⁰ The best overview of these medical reviews is in Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 33.

guarantee scrupulous procedural fairness and the upholding of 'British fair play' through the provision of a British counsel.¹⁴¹ To this end, and in lieu of official assistance, General Lord Bridgeman and Lord De L'Isle and Dudley set up a public subscription to cover Manstein's legal costs. Luminaries including Winston Churchill and T. S. Eliot contributed to the fund.¹⁴²

In addition, an improbable inaccuracy had exacerbated public concern for the fair treatment of these prisoners, who were routinely referred to as 'old and sick' or variants thereof.¹⁴³ The *Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, and a number of local newspapers all mistakenly declared Manstein to be the oldest of the four men at the advanced age of seventy-six in August 1948, yet at this time Manstein was in fact only sixty-one years old.¹⁴⁴ Quite how this error came to be made, and subsequently repeated numerous times over the next year, is unclear, although its initial concurrence with the War Office's statement and ubiquity suggests it may have been

¹⁴¹ 'The Manstein Case', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1949; this was backed up by the appeals of Manstein's German legal team Paul Leverkuehn and Hans Laternser during a trip to England in July 1949, see Paul Leverkuehn, 'Von Manstein's Trial', *Times*, 11 July 1949; the notion of 'fair play' was repeatedly invoked such as in Lord Simon, letter to the editor, 'Von Manstein's Trial', *Times*, 20 July 1949; Cyril Falls, 'A Window on the World', *Illustrated London News*, 13 August 1949.

¹⁴² The fund eventually reached £1,620, see 'Von Manstein's Trial', *Times*, 10 August 1949.

¹⁴³ For example Basil Liddell Hart, 'Imprisoned German Generals', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 September 1948.

¹⁴⁴ Erroneous references to Manstein's age include 'German Field Marshals', *Times*, 28 August 1948; 'Four German Generals War Crimes Charges Before British Tribunal', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 August 1949; H. N. Brailsford, Michael Foot, Victor Gollancz. J. H. Hudson, R. T. Paget, J. B. Priestley, Russell, T. C. Skeffington-Lodge, R. R. Stokes, Leonard Woolf, 'The German Generals', letter to the editor, *Times*, 1 September 1948; 'Three German Marshals to Face War Trial', *Daily Mail*, 28 August 1948; 'Brauchitsch Moved', *Daily Mail*, 25 September 1948; 'German Lawyers Can Defend Them', *Daily Mirror*, 28 August 1949; *Western Morning News*, 28 August 1948. Numerous newspapers persisted with this error as late as July 1949, see 'Ginger Boyle, R.N. Backs U-Killers', *Daily Express*, 6 May 1949; *Torbay Express and South Devon Echo*, 3 May 1949; 'And Then There Was One', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 May 1949, which sarcastically referred to him as 'a youngster of seventy-seven'; 'Churchill Sends £25 to Manstein Fund', *Sunday Pictorial*, 17 July 1949. Inaccurate references to Manstein's age have even appeared in recent historical scholarship, for example McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 259.

a case of official misinformation. In any case, adding fifteen years to Manstein's age unquestionably intensified discontent at his treatment.

In September 1948, new letters from Liddell Hart were published in the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* that acknowledged improved conditions of imprisonment and including thanks from Manstein himself.¹⁴⁵ Over the next year, prior to the commencement of the trial in August 1949, such disclosures ensured that the moderate and principled strands of humanitarian and political opposition largely dissipated. This would, in turn, gradually expose the radical and ideologically motivated character of the alliance, led by Lord Hankey, that remained steadfastly committed to overturning the government's decision to prosecute Manstein.

These fluctuations in the character of public opposition to the trial coincided with the growing prevalence of outspoken support for the prosecution of Manstein. In general, the mass-market press had showed little resentment towards the prospect of a trial and, in fact, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Daily Mail* all barely made mention of the decision to prosecute beyond brief factual reporting. There were, however, occasional indications that the attitude of their readership was unsympathetic to Manstein. For example, a letter published in the *Daily Mirror* from an anonymous 'disabled ex-WAAF' sardonically asked whether, in light of a subscription set up to support Manstein, someone might care to start a fund for her upcoming Pensions Appeals Tribunal.¹⁴⁶ The apparent persistence of public hostility

¹⁴⁵ Basil Liddell Hart, 'The German Marshals', letter to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 September 1948; Basil Liddell Hart, 'The German Generals', letter to the editor, *Times*, 21 September 1948. The commencement of the hearing would curtail the cogency of disapproval at its belatedness, while the appointment of an outspoken British counsel, the improvement of conditions of imprisonment, and later the establishment of Manstein's actual age pacified other sources of apprehension.

¹⁴⁶ Disabled ex-WAAF, 'Viewpoint: Appeal', letter to the editor, *Daily Mirror*, 15 August 1949. Other examples of outspoken criticism include 'Ginger Boyle, R.N. Backs U-Killers', *Daily Express*, 6 May 1949, in which the Earl of Cork and Orrery, an outspoken opponent of the trial, was lambasted for siding with German sailors who had allegedly murdered captive British sailors.

towards Germany was also acknowledged by the British government, whose earlier indecision over bringing the German officers to trial had been predicated partly on sensitivity to potential domestic criticism of 'letting them go free'.¹⁴⁷

By the summer of 1949, a number of these mass-market publications began actively advocating for the necessity of Manstein's prosecution. For example, Cassandra in the *Mirror* unequivocally backed the government's decision to prosecute, primarily out of a duty to Nazism's millions of victims.¹⁴⁸ Such forthright support was also evident in several local publications, such as Milton Shulman's *Nottingham Evening Post* article challenging the notion that the trial was 'un-British'.¹⁴⁹ This argument, he suggested, was simply a convenient cover for those who had imprudently rejected the whole concept of war crimes trials from their outset.

There are even indications that the upmarket press was far from wholly supportive of the critical opinions that had intermittently appeared in its correspondence pages. A *Times* editorial in August 1948 argued that if these men had 'committed acts against the recognised laws of war they should be punished'.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the paper also published two full-length opinion pieces, alongside a sympathetic editorial, on the topic of 'The German Officers' Corps' which emphatically reinforced the perceived legitimacy of the British government's decision.¹⁵¹ Their author, Brigadier-General John Hartman Morgan, was a veteran of

¹⁴⁷ Melvin, *Manstein*, 459.

¹⁴⁸ William Connor, 'Cassandra – The Simple Soldier', *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1949. This column even implied that Manstein was altogether fortunate, as the 'rather battered old chap' had 'no doubt heard that some of his closest colleagues died rather horribly at midnight in a Nuremberg gymnasium'.

¹⁴⁹ Milton Shulman, 'Should Von Manstein Stand His Trial?', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 25 August 1949. Shulman went as far as claiming that the subscription fund set up by the trial's opponents could be regarded as an affront to the fairness of the IMT proceedings.

¹⁵⁰ 'The German Field-Marshal', editorial, *Times*, 28 August 1948.

¹⁵¹ J. H. Morgan, 'The German Officers' Corps', *Times*, 2 November 1948; J. H. Morgan, 'The German Officers' Corps', *Times*, 3 November 1948; 'Hitler's Commanders', editorial, *The Times*, 3 November 1948.

the post-1918 occupation and warned that Germany once again faced the dangers of 'infantile paralysis' thanks to the 'overwhelming traditional prestige' of the anti-democratic officers' corps. He claimed that these soldiers were fashioning a 'new stab-in-the-back myth', blaming Hitler for the defeat of an otherwise victorious Wehrmacht and simultaneously depicting the regular army as chivalrous and opposed to the outrages of the Holocaust. This, it was argued, endangered the future peace and security of Europe by encouraging a 'legend of guiltlessness' in Germany. Consequently, the trial of Manstein offered the chance to present didactic proof to the potentially recidivist Germans that this 'ruthless military caste' had participated in 'crimes on a scale larger and more shocking than the world has ever had the misfortune to know'.

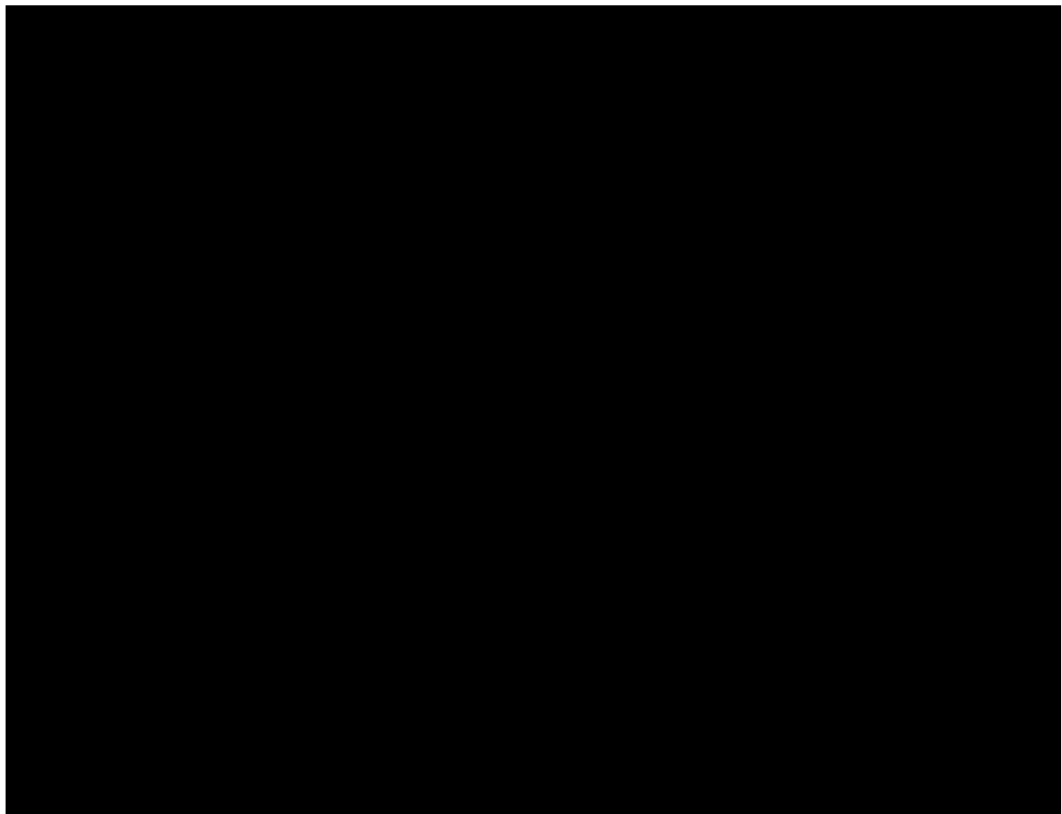


Illustration 22: 'Beware – The Germans Are Running True to 1918 Form', *Daily Express*, 18 May 1945

Morgan's analysis was nothing new, but rather the continuation of a theory that had emerged in the aftermath of the war. In May 1945, the *Daily Express* had published an article entitled 'BEWARE – the Germans are running true to 1918 form', warning against the promulgation of a new 'stab-in-the-back myth'.¹⁵² It was complete with a satirical cartoon of the Junker Military School, whose instruction on Germany's latest defeat was said to be 'different – only the same' as it had been in the aftermath of the First World War.

A Nation Living on Trust

Manstein's trial opened on 23 August 1949, with the court deliberating seventeen charges alleging the authorisation of mass atrocities against tens of thousands of prisoners and civilians during military campaigns in Poland and the Soviet Union. The prosecution, headed by Arthur Comyns Carr, argued that 'the accused gave himself unsparingly for almost five years of Hitler's campaigns to the service of [a] barbarous policy and was one of its principal executants'.¹⁵³ The case involved allegations of the direct and indirect participation of Wehrmacht troops and High Command in Nazi atrocities, including the mass murder and maltreatment of civilians and, in particular, Jews. 'These are,' summarised Comyns Carr, 'samples of a continuous record of crimes of every kind, probably without parallel in history'.¹⁵⁴ The court was convinced, finding Manstein guilty on nine of the charges, principally for his negligence in protecting civilians and POWs, and sentencing him to an eighteen-year prison term.

¹⁵² John Gaunt, 'Beware – The Germans Are Running True to 1918 Form', *Daily Express*, 18 May 1945.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Melvin, *Manstein*, 469. A full compendium of trial documentation is held at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Melvin, 474.

Manstein's defence team, led by Reginald Paget, had sought to delegitimise the trial as a flagrant misapplication of the law: a hypocritical episode of victor's justice that sullied the name of an honourable soldier. Paget referred to the British sinking of the French fleet at Oran and the Allied bombing of German civilians so as to emphasise British hypocrisy.¹⁵⁵ He summed up by asserting that an acquittal would 'honour England' and avoid the risk of turning Manstein into a new Joan of Arc.¹⁵⁶ Manstein was portrayed as a soldier acting under the orders of a malign dictatorship, himself incognizant of atrocities, tried by a court that had neither the adequate expertise nor legal right to make this a fair hearing. Paget labelled war crimes trials as 'fundamentally totalitarian' and disparaged the Nuremberg Principles as the work of 'prairie judges'.¹⁵⁷ These arguments reflected the outlook of the most hostile faction of political and military opponents to the trial, challenging the validity of the entirety of the Nuremberg Trials process. Yet his ideas were also reminiscent of the criticisms that 'soft peace' advocates, such as Victor Gollancz and George Bell, had levelled against denazification since the very start of the occupation. The belligerence of Paget's rhetoric provoked the official Polish observer to walk out, criticising the 'poisonous fascist, pro-Nazi, anti-Soviet, anti-democratic defence'. Paget also earned the repeated rebuke of the Judge Advocate Charles Arthur Collingwood for seeking to make the trial a political event.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Charles Wighton, 'General Shuts Manstein Court', *Daily Express*, 23 November 1949; Kenneth Ames, 'Manstein KC Quotes Montgomery', *Daily Mail*, 6 October 1949; 'Manstein: It was Necessary', *Daily Mail*, 8 October 1949.

¹⁵⁶ 'Manstein as Hector of The German Troy: Acquittal 'Would Honour England'', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 November 1949; 'Birthday Gift For Manstein', *Daily Express*, 25 November 1949.

¹⁵⁷ Kenneth Ames, 'Manstein, German Joan of Arc', *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1949; J. Cameron, 'Manstein – Do We Care?', *Daily Express*, 6 October 1949; 'Manstein's Trial', *Times*, 8 October 1949; 'War-Time Killing of Hostages', *Times*, 16 December 1949.

¹⁵⁸ 'Protests at Manstein Trial: Polish Observer Walks Out: British Counsel Attacks Defence', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 November 1949; 'Polish Protest at Manstein Trial', *Times*, 11 November 49; 'Manstein Judge Rebukes Paget', *Daily Express*, 13 December 1949.

The hearing certainly became a media spectacle, with almost all national newspapers, alongside major newsreels, offering daily coverage of the trial. This, as custom mandated, remained largely neutral and fixated on the arguments presented in the courtroom. The weight of incriminatory evidence put forth by the prosecution was therefore well publicised, undoubtedly helping to reinforce the legitimacy of the trial. However, on occasion, editors and columnists provided a more partisan interpretation of proceedings. It is remarkable, considering the controversies evident in the pre-trial period, that hostile voices were almost entirely absent from this discourse. In their place, mass-market newspapers such as the *Daily Express* were consistently sympathetic to the prosecution, augmenting their reportage with dramatic and unmistakeably damning headlines such as 'Manstein: We Shot Wives' and 'Beat The Women Up With Truncheons'.¹⁵⁹

The support given by the popular press to the prosecution was even more explicit in the numerous accompanying editorials and columns, as in a *Daily Mail* opinion piece from 29 November. This article, in reviewing the legal and political issues surrounding the Manstein case, reflected the emergent approval for the indictment: 'as at Nuremberg, you cannot listen long without becoming convinced that this is, after all, a serious search for truth. It is an attempt to extend the prevailing principles of justice to cover a new type of crime'.¹⁶⁰ Paget himself, recognising this shift in the tone of discussion regarding the trial and its verdict, would later reprimand the conduct of news reportage as quite simply 'not good'.¹⁶¹

Following the court's guilty verdict, much of the mass media concluded that, as the Field Marshal's guilt was now apparent to all, justice had been done. This case, as the final British war crimes trial, commonly provoked reflections on the entirety

¹⁵⁹ Charles Wighton, 'Manstein: We Shot Wives', *Daily Express*, 29 October 1949; 'Beat the Women Up With Truncheons', *Daily Express*, 1 November 1949.

¹⁶⁰ Alexander Clifford, 'This Manstein Trial Muddle', *Daily Mail*, 29 November 1949.

¹⁶¹ Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*, 81–2.

of a legal process which had set out in 1945 to comprehensively punish those responsible for the crimes of the Third Reich.¹⁶² Numerous articles extolled the virtues of prosecuting those from lower ranks who had committed atrocities and thereby, as a *Yorkshire Post* editorial remarked, avoiding the purportedly intolerable situation whereby Hitler's suicide would have left 'all the brutes guilty of outrages scot free'.¹⁶³ An editorial in the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, for instance, commended all 938 British trials for making considerable strides in proving the complicity of Wehrmacht soldiers and commanders in Nazi atrocities, as well as the specificity of Jewish suffering. It concluded that the didactic significance of the Manstein trial was particularly palpable, before imploring that not only must the Germans be mindful of these lessons but neither 'should we ever permit ourselves to forget [them]'.¹⁶⁴

Alongside this moderate advocacy for the trial there were more radical demonstrations of support for the arraignment of 'another Hitler warlord', often mimicking the wartime diatribes of Lord Vansittart. These were commonly expressed through cautionary stereotypes referring to the intrinsic militarism of 'a place where they have never had much sense of fun' and we even see renewed suggestions that the Third Reich had been a popular dictatorship.¹⁶⁴ This was particularly common in

¹⁶² See, 'Hitler's Commanders', *Times*, 3 November 1948, which argued that the evidence of Wehrmacht complicity in atrocities was convincing, 'but it will need reiteration if the Germans as a whole are to be made to understand what it means', and T. R. M. Creighton, 'The German Soldier', letter to the editor, *Times*, 26 September 1951, who suggested that the didactic value of the trial was at risk of being undermined by dark forces in Germany.

¹⁶³ 'Manstein Verdict', editorial, *Yorkshire Post*, 20 December 1949; 'Manstein Guilty', editorial, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 19 December 1949; 'Editorial', editorial, *Hull Daily Mail*, 20 December 1949; 'Review of the News', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 December 1949, quoting from *The Daily Dispatch; Another Hitler War Lord Found Guilty*, 22 December 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1433.04, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

¹⁶⁴ This quote comes from William Connor, 'Cassandra - A Sense of Injustice', *Daily Mirror*, 19 January 1950, but this sentiment was reflected elsewhere, see 'Review of the News', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 December 1949; *Another Hitler War Lord Found Guilty*, 22

the regional press, with the *Hull Daily Mail*'s editorial arguing that the sentence was a symbolic example for the millions of Germans who 'willingly, even gladly, followed Hitler on his hideous path', concluding that 'our sympathy is better reserved for their countless victims'.¹⁶⁵ 'Von Manstein has got no more than he deserved', stressing that 'there is no need [...] for anyone on this side of the Channel to wax sentimental because retribution has at last caught up with a man who plied his grim trade of death and destruction with such ruthlessness'. The paper went on to deride opponents of the prosecution for fashioning 'misplaced sentiment' that had encouraged the 'present tender handling' of the newly sovereign Federal Republic of Germany.¹⁶⁶

But the most popular national newspapers also offered a sensational response to the trial's verdict. In the *Daily Express*, foreign correspondent Charles Wighton described Manstein as 'an ordinary murderer whose crimes would make the Old Bailey quake' and a duplicitous 'thin-lipped Prussian disciplinarian' who inspired the loyalty of on-looking 'jack-booted and duel-scarred German ex-officers'.¹⁶⁷ The paper had previously quoted an unnamed British politician who wagered that, if acquitted, Manstein would be German president in ten years, illustrating the enduring vibrancy of fears over the resurgence of German militarism and dictatorship.¹⁶⁸ Cassandra, writing in the *Daily Mirror*, struck a similar tone,

December 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 1433.04, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>; Kenneth Ames, 'Stalingrad My Victory', *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1949; Charles Wighton, 'I Could Beat the Russians' Manstein: Hitler Stopped Me', *Daily Express*, 26 October 1949; Kenneth Ames, 'Manstein Lectures the Red-Tabs', *Daily Mail*, 22 October 1949.

¹⁶⁵ 'Editorial', editorial, *Hull Daily Mail*, 20 December 1949.

¹⁶⁶ 'Editorial', editorial, *Hull Daily Mail*, 20 December 1949.

¹⁶⁷ Charles Wighton, 'Germans Rush To Read 'Guilty Britain' Charges', *Daily Express*, 17 January 1950; Charles Wighton, '4-Hr Lecture By Manstein', *Daily Express*, 22 October 1949.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Wighton, 'He Gambles on Proving That He Is 'A Gentleman'', *Daily Express*, 4 October 1949.

asserting that the harmless-looking civilian spectators were the same ‘master race, roaring and raging behind their Mansteins...only five years ago’; ‘had they reformed?’, wondered the columnist, ‘I’M NOT SO SURE’ was his fretful response.¹⁶⁹ A *Pathé* newsreel reviewing the events of 1949 perhaps best exemplifies these anxieties, placing the Manstein trial within a broader narrative of Europe’s supposed cautious ambivalence regarding the rebirth of Germany.¹⁷⁰ Its narration suggested that the prosecution had stood as a ‘symbol of a Germany still under suspicion, a nation living on trust’, having roused popular uncertainties as to whether the newly-empowered Germans would head down ‘the road of the liberal-minded or that of the fervent nationalist’.

In the course of their reporting on the trial, the British media had recollected in detail the history of Nazi atrocities, Wehrmacht criminality, and long-standing Anglo-German antagonisms. This included the publication of vitriolic and stereotypical images of an apparently instinctive militarism or Prussianism, dovetailing with compelling anxieties about Germany’s resurgence. In turn, the trial had inspired a number of passionately apprehensive responses regarding the future of Germany, lamenting the apparent failure of the Allied occupation. These ideas were clearly distinct from, and in many instances entirely contradictory to, the outlook of British policymakers towards Germany.

It is apparent that most contemporary observers did not perceive the Manstein trial within the narrative of the Cold War, nor as a ‘British embarrassment’ or a relic of a nearly ‘forgotten era of history’.¹⁷¹ Rather, the impassioned and predominantly supportive discourse that accompanied the trial and its verdict signals

¹⁶⁹ William Connor, ‘Cassandra - The Last of the Iron Men’, *Daily Mirror*, 24 August 1949.

¹⁷⁰ *Summing Up No. 13 (Summer to Autumn 1949)*, Autumn 1949, *Pathé News*, newsreel, Issue 3476.03, British Pathé Archive, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>.

¹⁷¹ Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’; ‘Manstein Pleads Right to Court Martial: Defence Objection Overruled’, *Manchester Guardian*, 24 August 1949.

the immediacy of the German past in Britain as the occupation came to an end. For many in Britain, responses to the trial were built upon a long-standing and anxious Germanophobia and augmented by memories of interwar appeasement and Lord Vansittart's virulent anti-Germanism. These findings reiterate the conclusion that substantial sections of the British media (and, it may be inferred, a substantial proportion of their mass readership) remained sceptical towards the prospect of Anglo-German reconciliation. It is apparent that concerns regarding German recidivism, which coalesced with growing insecurities about Britain's place in the world and perceived inferiority to an old adversary, were commonplace. In short, the Manstein trial struck at the heart of unresolved anxieties over the so-called 'German Problem': how complicit were *all* Germans in Nazism's crimes and, ultimately, was West Germany sufficiently denazified as to be trusted as an ally?

Conclusion

The emergence of a sovereign West German state in 1949 was the conclusion of the Anglo-American shift towards a more reconciliatory, reconstructive policy towards Germany, something that had been underway since 1946. Yet the public contours of this change had not become clear until 1948, when the Berlin Blockade brought Cold War posturing into the open. This momentous event helped to usher in an anti-Soviet consensus amongst the British public and their political leaders which reached across ideological lines. But historians have mistakenly presumed that this shift in attitudes towards the Soviet Union came about alongside a concurrent change in British perceptions of Germany. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that this period saw a rapid repositioning of popular opinion in line with official thinking.

Rather, the rapid reinstatement of Germany's political and economic independence and the end of the Allied occupation provoked a substantial degree of

unease in Britain. In the most popular newspapers, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and *Daily Mirror*, the prospect of Germany's revival was regarded as a threat and perceived more readily within the framework of Vansittart's *Black Record* than that of the nascent Cold War. As evidence of Germany's burgeoning economy and political self-confidence emerged, most obviously with the controversy over dismantling, there were sensationalist outpourings at the perceived direction of the Bonn republic. The mass-market press, whose anti-German tendencies had by-and-large been maintained throughout the course of the occupation, were all too keen to emphasise the apparent danger of resurgent nationalism and militarism – sometimes with a rhetorical flourish reminiscent of Vansittart himself. Yet they were not alone: the *Manchester Guardian*, *Times*, and *Telegraph* also succumbed to Germanophobic anxieties when reporting on Adenauer's election. The impact of these reports upon public appraisals of the new German state was unquestionably profound, especially amongst the predominantly lower middle-class and working-class readership of the *Express*, *Mail*, and *Mirror*.

At the root of these anxieties stood the problematic legacy of the Allied occupation, which came under scrutiny as it reached its denouement. By 1949, official policy towards Germany had conclusively shifted from retribution to rapprochement, implicitly declaring the occupation to have been a success. Yet there seemed to be widespread acceptance in the British press and amongst prominent opinion-formers that the occupation had actually been a failure, not only damaging Britain's prestige but leaving Germany susceptible to a revived form of extreme nationalism. There remained a clear divergence over whether these failings stemmed from having been too hard or too soft towards the Germans, a direct legacy of the wartime debate. As the occupation of Germany came to an end, there was little sense in the pages of the mainstream press or amongst mainstream opinion that Britain had indeed 'won the peace'.

Conclusion

Britain Looks to Germany

This thesis has explored the most pervasive facets of Britain's political and public responses to the occupation of Germany, from the first projections of the postwar settlement in 1941 through to the establishment of a West German state in 1949. In the context of the Cold War and financial limitations, British policymakers were forced to radically reassess their position on Germany, moving from outright antagonism to alliance. Yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, the period of the occupation saw prevailing public and media attitudes towards Britain's former enemy take a starkly different path. The apparent failings of the Control Commission for Germany (British Element) came to dominate popular portrayals of postwar Germany, inviting disparaging assessments of Britain's standing as a national in decline. It became widely accepted across much of the mass-market press that the occupation had been a humiliating failure. This, coupled with a powerful *Feindbild* of Germany, aided the maintenance of anti-German hostility. By 1949, the discord between Britain's official and popular outlooks towards Germany was firmly entrenched, with much of the mass-market media continuing to replicate Vansittart's bombastic rhetoric of wartime. In hindsight, we can see that the Allied occupation of Germany was a vital juncture in the history of the Anglo-German relationship, not only ensuring the repositioning of Britain's diplomatic priorities but also helping to sustain a brand of popular Germanophobia.

In the midst of Second World War, a pervasive debate over the nature of the so-called 'German Problem' and its projected resolution emerged across British society. It centred upon a historicist analysis, examining the German past as to

ascertain the precise origins of Nazism and the most effective means of safeguarding Europe from future aggression. The debate touched upon contemporary political and ideological concerns, as well as the legacy of appeasement and the First World War, and momentarily came to enthuse a great deal of popular interest.

At the forefront stood two bitter adversaries, Lord Vansittart and Victor Gollancz, whose clashing diatribes developed into something of a culture war. Vansittart and his many followers were resolutely hostile to Germany, whose supposed 'black record' of authoritarianism and war had, they argued, culminated in the Third Reich. It was a view that found backing from much of the mass-market press, as well as a growing proportion of leading British politicians. Vansittart's *Black Record* had successfully revived the anti-German stereotypes of the First World War, providing a familiar and comforting means through which to comprehend Nazism. By 1945, there was a great deal of support for a 'hard peace', in which drastic reforms to German state and society would be applied in the course of a military occupation.

Vansittart's primary opponents were an assortment of liberals, socialists, Anglicans, and humanitarians who, first and foremost, sought recognition of the 'Other Germany'. The Third Reich, they argued, was a totalitarian terror state, alien to Germany's illustrious history as a nation of artistic and scientific achievement. Victor Gollancz and others vehemently rejected the crass, unrestrained rhetoric of Vansittart and his allies, proclaiming a more humane approach to the peace. In lieu of an anticipated, but unforthcoming, revolutionary uprising to overthrow Hitler, the 'soft peace' lobby advocated for a more reconciliatory and cooperative peace settlement in which non-Nazi Germans were to take the lead.

Britain's wartime debate over the 'German Problem' stood as a foundation for the occupation period and Anglo-German relations in the aftermath of war, with its legacy felt through until 1949 and beyond. This was the first attempt made in

Britain to comprehend and historicise the Third Reich in the context of the war and, subsequently, mass atrocities. The notion of what the 'German Problem' was and how, in turn, it should be resolved would have a significant influence upon subsequent assessments of the apparent success or otherwise of the Allied occupation. Moreover, the competing public conceptualisations of Nazism that emerged between 1941-45 would remain a powerful underpinning of subsequent attempts to understand the German past in the aftermath of the occupation. This wartime debate, and the subsequent occupation period, was a prism through which British approaches to Nazism after 1949, at least at a popular level, would be refracted.¹

In the late summer of 1945, the Potsdam Agreement enshrined a peace settlement in Germany much more closely aligned to Vansittart's analysis than that of his opponents. The four-power occupation encapsulated the prevailing zeitgeist of Britain's political and public sentiment, focused on the potential threat of recidivism and anxieties over the depth of Nazi acculturation. But it was an ambiguous and inherently flawed compromise, stipulating an unprecedentedly wide-ranging but imprecise course of treatment. This included including a comprehensive military occupation of an undetermined length, as well as denazification, re-education, demilitarisation, and strict economic controls.

In Britain, the Potsdam Agreement was greeted with a degree of relief, although the interest of the media and public media in the resolution of the 'German Problem' gradually subsided. There was nevertheless intermittent coverage of the Allied occupation, much of which lauded the effectiveness of British attempts in rooting out Nazism and militarism from Germany. This was, in part, the result of an expansive public relations campaigns undertaken by the British occupation authorities, who sought to maintain popular support for their work. Public opinion

¹ Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 322-35.

was felt to be vital to the maintenance of political interest in comprehensively tackling the 'German Problem', a lesson garnered from reflections on the short-lived post-1918 military occupation. Through the censorship of press coverage, the Public Relations/Information Services Control Group attempted to control the public image of the British occupation.

An escalating refugee crisis in Germany was a major concern to the British policymakers, who found themselves increasingly at odds with their Soviet counterparts. The rising costs of importing foodstuffs to the British Zone and maintaining the military occupation came amid growing concerns of overstretch. The Attlee government, forced to implement the much-reviled bread ration, sought to reduce their expenditure in Germany. It was not long before the peace settlement ratified at Potsdam was covertly disavowed, with British and American leaders tending towards a more reconstructive approach. But in Britain, with the transformed political outlook of the Western Allies hidden from view, the crisis elicited a different response. Victor Gollancz and George Bell led calls for a more empathetic response, but encountered widespread apathy towards German suffering.

It was, however, not the technicalities of military government policy or even the humanitarian disaster unfolding in postwar Germany that took centre stage in public portrayals of the occupation, but rather the British occupiers tasked with 'winning the peace'. In the first months of the occupation, revelations about the unruly behaviour of British personnel dominated media coverage and illustrated the limitations of official public relations endeavours. The ubiquitous flouting of the non-fraternisation ban brought lurid tales of sex and scandal, while there was growing evidence that the British enclave of postwar Germany was living in a lap of luxury – including the wives and children of servicemen who, it had been hoped, would offset the worst excesses of 'fratting'. Over the coming years, the British press would

continue to feature a constant stream of stories about corruption, fraud, racketeering, criminality, and debauchery plaguing the British Zone of occupied Germany.

There remained some cause for discord: Gollancz and others condemned the quasi-imperialist conduct of the British occupiers as further proof of the abatement of moral virtue in the postwar world, while many of the 'hard peace' lobby were expressly in favour of such a stern, anti-German ethos. But there was condemnation across the board at the apparent incompetence, greed, and misbehaviour of the British in Germany. Their shortcomings were widely regarded to be damaging British prestige on the world stage and risking the hard-fought victories of the war, with the mass-market press espousing self-critical assessments of Britain as a nation in decline. The costs of maintaining the occupation were, moreover, seen to be spiralling out of control, with complaints from politicians and newspaper editors alike that Britain was effectively paying reparations to their defeated foe.

In response, British officials intensified their public relations campaign, utilising in-house productions, ranging from documentary films to a public exhibition and CCG (BE) magazine, as well as close relations with the BBC. Yet their imprint on the public portrayal of the occupation was minor, unable to convincingly challenge the dominance of the mass-market press. In the summer of 1947, amid a balance of payments crisis and concerns that Britain was overextended across the globe, press criticism of the occupation came to a head. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* instigated a campaign calling for Britain to 'Get Out of Germany'. Their contention was not that the 'German Problem' had been resolved, but rather that Britain's ineffectual occupiers were making matters worse: while there was a risk that Nazism might return, at least the British taxpayer needn't pay for the privilege.

The campaign was the peak of British interest in the fortunes of the CCG (BE) and BAOR. It helped to reinforce the sense, at least amongst a substantial section of

the on-looking media and public, that the occupation was failing and further amplified a self-effacing analysis of Britain's standing on the world stage. It was, in many ways, an isolationist response to the nation's postwar predicament, demanding a retreat from Europe even at the potential risk of allowing a Nazi revival in Germany.

Meanwhile, British political and military leaders had continued, alongside their American counterparts, to pursue a path towards a more reconciliatory and reconstructive policy in Germany. While there was no sense amongst decision makers the Britain should abandon its obligations, it was hoped that a revived German economy and political state would lessen their financial burden and ensure Western security against Soviet expansionism. Yet Britain's clandestine soft-power policymaking, accompanying the beginnings of the Cold War, had allowed public and political positions to diverge considerably. The revised Anglo-American position only became public in 1948, allowing for a sizeable gulf to have developed between publicly-espoused policy and the actual intentions of decision makers.

When the Cold War came unmistakeably into being with the Berlin blockade in June 1948, the British press were keen to fall into line and embrace the official anti-Soviet position. But while the abrupt readjustment of media and public sentiment towards the Soviet Union was relatively straightforward, this was far from true in the case of Germany. The long-standing antagonism and bitter collective memories of two world wars stood in the way of any rapid public reconciliation or rehabilitation of Britain's new ally. The revival of the German economy, protests against dismantling, the first federal elections, and the final war crimes trial all triggered a surge of anti-German hostility across the British press – whose influence upon public perceptions of Germany remained profound. It even triggered a fleeting revival of the debate over the 'German Problem', as Gollancz, Vansittart, and others reflected upon the accomplishments, or lack thereof, of the previous four years.

There was, it was widely agreed, little in the way of security against a renewal of German political extremism or economic competition. As the occupation came to a close, the discord between the antagonistic public appraisals of Germany and the inclinations of official policy towards Anglo-German rapprochement was abundantly clear. This would subsequently become a defining characteristic of Britain's postwar relationship with Germany.

By 1949, a substantial section of the British media and public had come to regard the occupation of Germany as a lamentable failure, undone by the excesses and extravagances of the much-maligned British occupiers. This, coupled with growing concerns over Britain's weakness as a world power, had helped to preserve, perhaps even augment, antagonistic ideas about Germany and Nazism. The notion that *all* Germans were in some way collectively guilty for the crimes of the Third Reich, that there was something uniquely efficient, aggressive, warlike, and hostile about the German character, and that Germany's history was a long succession of conflict and wars, remained a prominent, if still contested, facet of British public and media perceptions of Germany. It is a conclusion which exemplifies the centrality of Germanophobia to notions of Britishness after 1945.

In the decades since 1949, Britain's role in the course of the Allied occupation has been largely forgotten within popular culture and collective memory alike. This is despite various official and unofficial attempts in the 1950s and beyond to characterise the Allied occupation as a 'miracle', a vital juncture in the fight against Soviet Communism and creation of a peaceful Germany.² In June 1996, following England's defeat by Germany in the semi-finals of Euro 96, Niall Ferguson even sought to proclaim a moral victory on the football field:

² Robertson, 'A Miracle?'. But this assessment has been repeated much more recently, see Schwarz, 'The Division of Germany', 152.

We British have achieved nothing more admirable this century than teaching the Germans how to beat us at our own game [...]. Nor is football the only thing we have taught the Germans this century. We have – after two great conflagrations – taught them economic liberalism and parliamentary democracy, too. Not bad going.³

And while Ferguson might be accused of clutching at straws, the very many legitimate accomplishments of the Allied occupation in the creation of a stable modern democracy in Germany are now well-documented by historians. The diminution of Britain's role in the occupation to little more than a footnote in public memory is, then, perhaps further proof of the perceived failure of this endeavour to contemporaries. This was no liberation of 'Other Germany' from totalitarian oppression, nor a wholly successful and magnanimous rehabilitation of the German people. It wasn't even perceived as the concluding chapter in a heroic narrative about Britain's success in two wars against Germany.

Rather, Britain's confrontation with Nazism between 1945-49 saw a significant section of the British media and public draw a radically different conclusion from their political leaders. Bevin, Attlee, and others oversaw the transformation of Britain's relationship with Germany. In line with America's Cold War posturing, Britain embraced West Germany as an ally against a new totalitarian threat. But for much of the British press and public, there was no such easy reappraisal of Germany: it remained, in the minds of many, a font of latent militarism, antagonism, and authoritarianism. The British occupiers, mismanaged and distracted by the bounty of

³ Niall Ferguson, 'Cheer Up It's Only a Game...', *Daily Mail*, 27 June 1996. Quoted in Gerald Hughes, 'Don't Let's Be Beastly', 23.

conquerors, had done little to effectively resolve the 'German Problem'. In short, the occupation of Germany had seemingly exposed Britain's various shortcomings, roused self-effacing criticisms of national decline, and even helped to sustain anxieties over the revival of German power. In retrospect, then, it's hardly surprising that many in Britain felt the country's apparently conclusive failure to 'win the peace' was best left forgotten.

Appendix One

Table 1: Readership of national daily papers: social-grades as percentage of total readership, 1956¹

	AB ²	C1 ³	C2 ⁴	DE ⁵
<i>The Times</i>	52	18	14	15
<i>The Guardian</i>	46	27	16	11
<i>The Daily Express</i>	17	20	34	29
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	21	23	29	27
<i>The Daily Mirror</i>	6	14	41	39

Source: This table has been adapted from the table found in Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 144-5.

¹ Though there are no accurate figures regarding the profile of newspaper readerships at the time of the trial itself, this data from 1956 (using the NRS social grade classification system) gives a strong indication of general trends.

² AB: professional, administrative, managerial (upper middle class and middle class)

³ C1: other non-manual (lower middle class)

⁴ C2: skilled manual (skilled working class)

⁵ DE: semi- or unskilled manual (working class)

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