

2010

# German enemy aliens and the decline of British liberalism in World War I

Ansley L. Macenczak

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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GERMAN ENEMY ALIENS AND THE DECLINE OF BRITISH LIBERALISM IN WORLD  
WAR I

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by  
Ansley Macenczak  
B.A., The College of Charleston, 2007  
August 2010

*For Mom, who always makes it look so easy.*

## Acknowledgments

Looking back over the past year when this project first began as a paper for my 7909 seminar, I have realized that my mission to finish this thesis was truly a group effort. Although I did all the writing and research, others had the much more difficult task of getting me through it and keeping me sane. I would like to take a moment to thank all of those that helped ensure this thesis became a reality.

This long and tedious process would not have been possible without the assistance of my wonderful committee at the History department. Professor Suzanne Marchand has been available as both thesis advisor and mentor since day one to guide me through the ins and outs of this project. Her door was always open, and she always seemed to provide constructive criticism and support at exactly the right time. Without the guidance of David Lindenfeld and Meredith Veldman, I would have absolutely no knowledge of Germany or Britain. Both were always available for questions and concerns. A special thanks especially to Dr. Veldman for breaking me of the evil passive voice. These three edited draft after draft to help me make this the best project possible. I also had a tremendous amount of help from Joseph Nicholson, the research librarian at Middleton who educated me on the vast amount of resources available at LSU and online. The sources provided by Mr. Nicholson guided the direction of this thesis and I would have struggled to find anything without his assistance.

My colleagues at the Academic Center for Student Athletes and my wonderful cohorts at the History department were invaluable throughout this process. My boss Ericka Lavender always seemed to have a sixth sense about my stress level, and would take time out to listen and provide advice or guidance. Kim Gedde, Leah Saal, and Chevanese Samms were all available anytime to listen to my rants and encourage me. I could not have done it without the massive

support of my fellow students Lauren Doughty, Eric Poche, Kat Sawyer, Jason Wolfe, Scott Berg and Rebecca Bond. The entire 7909 seminar class also deserves credit for providing such a safe atmosphere to bounce ideas and practice presentations. Each and every one of them motivated me to bring my best all the time. I must especially thank Erin Halloran, my friend and roommate, who supported me tirelessly through the good times and the bad. She made me laugh through it all and always managed to forgive me whenever I momentarily lost my mind.

My family has supported me throughout my academic career, and they came through for me yet again on the thesis. My parents and sister never once doubted that I would complete this project, even when I did, and I will never be able to adequately express my gratitude for this faith.

Last, but certainly not least, I need to thank Stephen who certainly bore the brunt of my stress and anguish on this project. He was patient and understanding when I was unavailable or mentally drained, and supportive and encouraging when it seemed an impossible task. I share this success with him.

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## **Abstract**

After the start of World War I in 1914, the British government began internment of enemy alien men, disrupting the large German population settled in the country. This move seemed to be in complete contrast in comparison to the lax immigration laws during the long nineteenth century, when Great Britain had one of the most liberal immigration laws of any country in Europe. The British public was proud of this tradition and Britain's image as an open haven for refugees and individuals seeking a better life. Foreigners were attracted to Britain by its liberal traditions, most clearly exemplified by the Liberal Party's espousal of limited government intervention and the protection of civil liberties.

This thesis will examine the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the Liberal Party experienced a crisis of ideals and a split and Britain experienced an economic depression which coincided with an increase in immigration. During these decades, foreigners became a convenient "other" for Britons to blame for economic problems, and pressure from the angry public forced governments to pass new legislation which contradicted previous open-door policies. The Aliens Act of 1905, one of the first pieces of legislation which provided officials with more power to turn away undesirable aliens and limit their movement around the country, was followed by the Defence of the Realm Act and the Aliens Restriction Act, which H.H. Asquith's Liberal government passed immediately following the declaration of war on Germany in 1914.

For the duration of the war Germans in Britain faced blatant discrimination and infringement upon their civil liberties, as dictated by the new wartime legislation. Most men were interned in large camps located on the Isle of Man, while women faced repatriation at the discretion of the government. At the conclusion of World War I, David Lloyd George's

coalition government decided to extend the new restrictions regarding immigration legislation, conveying how British liberal traditions were forever changed.



## Chapter 1: Stereotypes and Legislation in the Late Nineteenth Century

“Internment is a weapon used in wartime by governments to protect their own citizens against resident foreigners of enemy nationality,”<sup>1</sup> and European nations utilized this philosophy during World War I when approximately 400,000 people were interned.<sup>2</sup> The Liberal government, led by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, began internment operations of nearly 60,000 Germans living in Britain following the declaration of war against Germany in August of 1914. Many factors contributed to the policy of internment, including spy fever, or the fear that Germans in Britain might be acting as enemy agents, and a growing intolerance for German immigrants. The internment operation was out of character for Britain, at least for liberal Britain.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Britain, one of the most liberal and open societies in the world, had an open door policy of immigration that attracted people from all countries. How did this open, liberal society come to intern such a large number of people? Examination of governmental policy leading up to 1914 shows that the British government and society were becoming less liberal in the years before the war. A prewar decline in liberalism was noted as early as 1935 by George Dangerfield in *The Strange Death of Liberal England*.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis shows that the internment of enemy aliens in Britain should be viewed within the wider de-liberalization process that Dangerfield described. Chapter one examines Britain’s position with respect to European economics and politics, and the shifting attitudes towards immigration. Chapter two analyzes the government legislation and continuing shift in public

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<sup>1</sup> Yvonne M. Cresswell, *Living With the Wire: Civilian Internment on the Isle of Man during the Two World Wars* (Douglas: Manx National Heritage, 1994), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Stibbe, “A Question of Retaliation? The Internment of British Civilians in German in November 1914,” *Immigration and Minorities*, 23(2005), 2.

<sup>3</sup> George Dangerfield. *The Strange Death of Liberal England 1910-1914* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1935).

opinion away from the liberal policies of the nineteenth century. Chapter three explores the actual internment camps and legislation and the conclusion of the war, which solidified Britain's shift away from liberal immigration policies. By examining public and political responses to German immigration into Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and governmental policies and the internment camps themselves, the link between the decline of liberalism and the internment policies becomes clear.

Because of its vast head start in industrialization, Britain throughout the nineteenth century was “the workshop of the world” and the liberal leader both politically and economically. Liberalism was central to British culture and politics and those who espoused it emphasized limited government, individualism, self-reliance, civil liberties and free trade. Laissez-faire economics dictated the free movement of people as well as products, and Britain's sense of superiority and security negated any threats from abroad. Britain's liberal traditions emphasized the idea of freedom in all areas of life. This led to a permissive attitude towards issues such as political dissent and individual liberties. Many Britons became accustomed to these liberties and Britain became renowned worldwide for its freedoms.

Liberalism led to an open-door policy of immigration. This sense of openness, formed in opposition to countries with contrasting policies, became part of the British national identity, and British people looked on the free entry of refugees, political exiles, and migrants as a matter of pride. Bernard Porter states that from 1823 to the end of the nineteenth century, Britain neither expelled a single refugee or immigrant nor prevented any from entering the country, and was therefore considered one of the most dependable European nations for asylum.<sup>4</sup> This policy was maintained by the absence of any laws restricting entry. In the mid nineteenth century, Britain served as an unofficial haven for political refugees from the continent. As a *Saturday Review*

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1.

editorial stated in 1918, “For the last 300 years England has been almost an asylum for foreigners who fled from their own countries for economic or political reasons.”<sup>5</sup>

Immigration was mostly unproblematic in the mid-nineteenth century. Immigrants’ presence was not a matter of public concern during these decades because they constituted such a small percentage of the population; as Porter notes, “it was very much against the spirit of nineteenth-century Britain to regulate things which were harmless.”<sup>6</sup> The 1851 census showed only 50,289 foreigners registered, less than one percent of a population of approximately eighteen million.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean every member of the indigenous British population always welcomed immigrants, especially the 520,000 Irish and 130,000 Scots, but the open door policy conveyed Britain’s liberal self-image to the rest of the world.<sup>8</sup> In Porter’s words, “All these policies were supposed to demonstrate Britain’s moral and political superiority over her continental neighbors....”<sup>9</sup>

As David Cesarani has noted, however, the initial waves of nineteenth-century immigration took place in a world characterized by political stability and an expanding economy, and occurred on a small scale.<sup>10</sup> The world changed radically in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and German unification in 1871 disrupted the balance of power on the Continent. At the same time, other European nations and the United States began to close in on Britain’s industrial lead, and unemployment rose because of the Great Depression in Trade and Agriculture that began in 1873 and continued into the 1890s in some regions of Britain. British wheat farming collapsed completely, while central industries of cotton

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<sup>5</sup> “On Aliens,” *The Saturday Review*, 125(June 8, 1918), 504.

<sup>6</sup> Porter, *The Refugee Question*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain During the First World War* (Providence: Berg Publishers Limited, 1991), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Porter, *The Refugee Question*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Porter, *The Refugee Question*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> David Cesarani, “Citizenship and Nationality in Britain,” in *Citizenship, Nationality and Migration in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 61.

textiles, iron and coal all struggled to compete with Germany and the United States.<sup>11</sup> From 1873 onwards, then, British industrial growth began to falter, profits fell, and trade became sluggish.<sup>12</sup>

These decades also witnessed important political changes. In the 1880s, William Gladstone inadvertently led the Liberal Party to a split. In 1881 Gladstone's government passed the Irish Land Act, providing greater security to Irish tenants, but interfering with absolute rights of property for landowners. Then in 1885, Gladstone became a proponent of Irish Home Rule, which proposed to create an Irish parliament in Dublin to deal with Irish matters. Many Liberals, as well as almost every member of the Conservative Party, saw Irish Home Rule as a threat to the unity of the British Empire. The vote over the Home Rule Bill, among other issues, led to mass defections from the Liberal Party in 1886.

The Liberal Party split between Gladstone's supporters and Liberal Unionists, who joined with the Conservative Party in defeating the Home Rule Bill. According to Porter, Home Rule forced a debate over the interpretation of liberalism, was it more important to protect individual or economic rights.<sup>13</sup> Gladstone firmly believed that "the burdens of self-rule could teach responsibility to the Irish," and was willing, at least in the eyes of his opposition, to sacrifice the property rights of British landowners in Ireland to make Home Rule a reality for Ireland.<sup>14</sup>

Liberal Unionists feared that if these landowners were sacrificed, then "no property was safe,"

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas William Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles: 1870 to Present* (Chicago: Lyceum Books Inc., 2008), 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850-1982: Delusions of Grandeur* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 33-34.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard Porter, *Britannia's Burden: The Political Evolution of Modern Britain 1851-1990* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc. 1994), 102.

<sup>14</sup> Heyck, *The People's of the British Isles*, 70-71.

and left the party to protect the economic rights of these landowners and to defend the British Empire.<sup>15</sup>

The 1880s proved to be a decade of intense change for the British, and several issues proved that Britain had become more internally divided and more vulnerable to international challenges.<sup>16</sup> Conflict over Irish Home Rule continued, while the emergence of the Social Democratic Federation in June 1880, the foundation of the Fabian Society in 1884, and both growing union memberships and the rising number of strikes signaled a socialist challenge to liberal politics. All these events took place against the background of trade stagnation and growing unemployment. In addition, Britain's imperial supremacy seemed threatened by colonial rebellions in the Transvaal and Egypt and new imperial competition from Germany, as Bismarck annexed South-West Africa, the Cameroons, Togoland, Tanganyika, and north-eastern New Guinea. Even the liberal idea of free trade came under attack as some political leaders such as Joseph Chamberlain called for tariff reform to protect British industry. Calls for "fair trade" received some support. For example, in December of 1887 a demonstration was organized by the National Association for the Preservation of Agriculture and other industries to "protect against the ruin of British industries through unrestricted foreign competition."<sup>17</sup>

The downward trend continued in the 1890s. The economic depression persisted in many regions as industrial and commercial stagnation combined with increasing unemployment. International conflicts such as the Boer War, where British forces succeeded only because of their superior numbers and brutal tactics, disrupted the international stability on which the liberal ideal of free trade depended. The Boer War also forced Britain to move away from its hands-off policy of colonial administration and it heightened animosity between the British and Germans.

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<sup>15</sup> Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles*, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Porter, *Britannia's Burden*, 77.

<sup>17</sup> "British Industries and Foreign Competition," *The Times*, December 9, 1887.

After the German Kaiser congratulated the President of Transvaal on successes against the British army, the British government and public regarded this as hostile behavior.

Events like the Boer War and the growing competition for colonial empires showed that Britain could no longer maintain the policy of isolation from alliances with other European nations. In 1904 an Anglo-French entente was reached. Although the entente dealt exclusively with colonial matters, Porter notes that it inadvertently committed Britain to Europe, and tipped the balance of power.<sup>18</sup> British leaders were beginning to shift away from a policy of isolation. This shift threatened Germany; in German eyes, the entente was an instrument of “anti-German policy.”<sup>19</sup> Germany had already committed to a naval buildup in the late nineteenth century which the British took as a sign of aggressive intent.<sup>20</sup> This new distrust “made plain the saturation of the international atmosphere with something evil and ominous--ominous for the...the peace of Europe as a whole.”<sup>21</sup>

While some Conservatives challenged the liberal commitment to free trade, many Liberal leaders argued the time had come to modify the liberal mistrust in state action. Many in the Liberal Party now considered it necessary for the government to take a more active role in addressing certain imbalances within the state. This shift was motivated by “New Liberalism,” which began in the 1870s and advocated legislation such as unemployment insurance, health insurance, and a minimum wage throughout the period between 1880 and 1914. According to Robert Edward Dell, this shift was necessary; “we have to build up upon the ruins of the old Liberalism a new party of progress with new methods and new aims suited to new

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<sup>18</sup> Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, 74-75.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Crozier Long, “Germany and the New Reign: A Letter From Berlin,” *Fortnightly Review*, 88(July 1910), 174.

<sup>20</sup> Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, 74-78.

<sup>21</sup> Long, “Germany and the New Reign,” 176-177.

conditions....”<sup>22</sup> In 1906, the Liberal Party regained a majority in the House of Commons. The new government moved quickly to introduce “New Liberal” legislation including free meals in elementary schools, old age pensions, labor exchanges to improve unemployment, the Trade Boards Act of 1909, the Children’s Charter of 1908,<sup>23</sup> and the National Insurance Act in 1911.

All of these factors led to the erosion of British liberal traditions, or, as Porter puts it, “the pure milk of mid-Victorian liberalism was becoming diluted a little; not getting weaker necessarily, but changing its mix.”<sup>24</sup> Signs of this dilution included the growth of state bureaucracy, more aggressive forms of nationalism, and the loss of sensitivity on questions such as freedom of the press and speech. One case that illustrates these points is the conviction of German socialist Johann Most in 1881 for a newspaper article he published applauding the assassination of the Russian tsar. Porter notes that the liberal vision was beginning to fade:

There were signs of decay elsewhere: like the trade union legislation of 1906 which protected unions against ordinary legal liability for contract-breaking, the 1905 Aliens Act which undermined a principle, of free immigration, which had stood in Britain for nearly a century...all in different ways offences against traditional liberties, and signs, perhaps, of the enormous pressures-external and internal-that the structure of British liberal society was coming under at that time.<sup>25</sup>

Against the backdrop of heightened economic competition and political rivalries, Britain experienced a dramatic increase in immigration. According to Arnold White, editor of *The Destitute Alien in Great Britain* (1892), it seemed as though “they roll in one after another, wave after wave, and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and of passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting.”<sup>26</sup> A mass influx of Eastern European Jews proved to be Britain’s first

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Edward Dell, “Cleaning the Slate,” *Monthly Review*, 7(1902), 68.

<sup>23</sup> Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles*, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, 68.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold White, “Pauper Foreigners: To the Editor of *The Times*,” May 30, 1887.

experience of sustained mass immigration. From 1881 onward, Jews migrated to Britain en masse in response to Russian pogroms. The number of immigrants in Britain had more than doubled in 1881, reaching 118,031.<sup>27</sup> This Jewish influx added to the problems brought on by the depression of the 1870s, and contributed to a negative perception of aliens. A letter written to *The Times* in 1887 stated “surely the wiser course for our rulers is to see that England is no longer the rubbish heap on which discarded elements of Continental societies may be shot with impunity.”<sup>28</sup> As we have seen, the Jewish immigration coincided with “a conjunctural crisis in Britain,” in which the economy stalled and unemployment rates rose.<sup>29</sup> David Saunders claims that these issues of unemployment and depression, linked to immigration, caused an erosion of public confidence in the government, forcing politicians to be more responsive to public opinion.<sup>30</sup>

Between 1882 and 1905, the coincidence of mass immigration with heightened political rivalries, economic depression, and high unemployment resulted in the development of a stronger British identity.<sup>31</sup> Immigrants provided a convenient “other.” Comments made in newspapers conveyed the public’s acknowledgement of Britain’s “liberal traditions” regarding immigration, but when this tradition began to adversely affect native Britons, many expressed apprehension about the vast number of immigrants arriving with no means of subsistence, “the direct result of this doctrine of free trade in paupers....”<sup>32</sup> Things that attracted foreigners to Britain included the absence of military conscription, indiscriminating poor laws, and the quest

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<sup>27</sup> E.C.K. Gonner, “The Foreigner in England,” *Fortnightly Review*, 45(1889), 833.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold White. “Pauper Foreigners: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, May 30, 1887.

<sup>29</sup> David Cesarani, “An Alien Concept? : The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society Before 1940,” in Cesarani and Kushner, *The Interment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*,” 28.

<sup>30</sup> Saunders, “Aliens in Britain and the Empire During the First World War,” In *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the War*, edited by John Herd and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1985), 100.

<sup>31</sup> Cesarani, “Citizenship and Nationality in Britain,” 61.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold White, “Pauper Immigration: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, March 26, 1887.



for an overall better standard of living. In addition other advantages included “free trade and stable government, civil and religious liberty, immunity from wars and social and political disturbances, vast manufacturers, extended commerce, the practical monopoly of carrying trade of the world...” all of which native Englishmen fought to defend.<sup>33</sup>

Asquith admitted certain problems “connected with the manner in which these people lived and worked against which we ought to take precautions.”<sup>34</sup> He argued that immigrants took jobs, worked for less pay and in worse conditions, and brought problems such as crime and sanitation issues into British society. Immigrants worked for substantially less wages than native Britons, which especially affected unskilled workers, leading one critic to compare the employment of aliens in the tailoring trade as serfdom. Moreover, immigrants’ numbers were also increasing quicker than native Britons’. Between 1861 and 1881, census data revealed that the native population increased twenty percent, while the foreign population increased approximately forty percent.<sup>35</sup> Complaints poured into newspapers about the “traditions of England” conveyed to foreigners about “sympathy for distress in every form.” The burden of this tradition was shouldered by workers and not “by that portion of the community able to indulge in the luxury of the sentiments....”<sup>36</sup>

New questions arose regarding citizenship. For example what stake would new immigrants have in their adopted country?<sup>37</sup> This question came into play many times as World War I drew closer. According to the Naturalisation Act of 1870, foreigners only needed to reside in Britain for five years to obtain a naturalization certificate. Many citizens proposed new legislation to deal with this lax standard. Some asserted the government should tax foreigners

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<sup>33</sup> “Pauper Immigration: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, April 13, 1887.

<sup>34</sup> “Mr. Asquith at Reading,” *The Times*, January 20, 1905.

<sup>35</sup> Gonner, “The Foreigner in England,” 834.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold White, “Pauper Foreigners,” *The Times*, May 30, 1887.

<sup>37</sup> Cesarani, “Citizenship and Nationality in Britain,” 62.

who remained in the country for more than six months, while others wanted them taxed at ports of arrival. They argued that immigrant taxation would turn many potential aliens away because many would not be able afford to enter the country. Arnold White led a deputation of several MPs and other London residents to the Home Office in December of 1887 to recount various offences of immigrants, and to ask that new legislation be presented. The issue would finally be dealt with in 1905 with the Aliens Act.

Until the early twentieth century, as Panikos Panayi has shown, Britons had a generally positive image of Germans, especially in comparison to their hostility towards the Irish and Russian Jewish immigrants.<sup>38</sup> From the 1840s to the 1870s, a high number of Irish immigrants arrived in Britain and were subjected to animosity in the form of street violence, while we have seen hostility surrounded Russian Jewish immigrants who arrived from the 1880s onwards. German immigrants did not initially experience the hostility of the Jews and Irish because there was never an influx of German immigrants comparable to the size of the other groups. There were also more positive images of Germans spread throughout British society.

For example, “Anglo-Saxonism” emphasized the common heritage between the English and Germans.<sup>39</sup> The Victorian quest to understand the racial origins led to the development of theories of Anglo-Saxon racial affinity, where were supported by several prominent British politicians, including Sir Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>40</sup> Anglo-Saxonism emphasized the strong connections between Germans and Britons.<sup>41</sup> It also emphasized that the Germanic race, which supposedly included most of the British, was superior to all others, and that English

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<sup>38</sup> Panikos Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain During the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), xix.

<sup>39</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 203.

<sup>40</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 211.

<sup>41</sup> Steven W. Siak, “The Blood That is in Our Veins Comes From German Ancestors: British Historians and the Coming of the First World War,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 30(1998), 227.

political and religious institutions were special and carried a burden of leadership in the world community.

A second example of the positive image of Germans in British culture is that of German scholarship. Steven Siak argues British historians considered German scholarship prestigious, something manifested in favorable depictions of Germans in English textbooks. Historians were not the only ones to ascribe to the Anglo-German racial cohesion; Siak provides examples of politicians, financiers, labor leaders and clergy who invoked the idea as well. An Anglo-German Friendship Society was formed in 1905 to continue a relationship between the two races.

At the turn of the century, however, a new resentment, “Germanophobia,” expressed increased hostility towards all things German in Britain. As a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* put it, “in fundamental characteristics no two nations resemble one another more closely than the English and the German...however...these natural allies have become estranged.”<sup>42</sup> Panayi notes four main sources of hostility and prejudice against Germans before the outbreak of World War I: stereotypes created through literature, journalism, and scholarly research; hostility towards poor immigrants; discrimination against individual trades dominated by Germans; and political hostility. He argues this hostility, however, must be placed in the perspective of declining Anglo-German relations from the 1870s on.

British politicians of both political parties worried about the ramifications of German unification in 1871 for European hegemony. Bismarck was equally wary of Britain “because he regarded her as ‘active in the propagation of revolutionary principles’....”<sup>43</sup> Britons felt Bismarck was hostile to liberal principles: “there is a great deal in modern Germany which is hateful to honest Englishmen, and will always be hateful to them, so long as they retain their

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<sup>42</sup> “Politik: Anglo-German Relations,” *Edinburgh Review*, 210(1909), 447.

<sup>43</sup> “Politik,” 451.

love of free institutions, of fair-play, and a fine sense of national and individual honour.”<sup>44</sup> As German naval and military strength grew, many Britons feared that Germany threatened Britain’s global dominance. As Panayi stresses, the relationship between Britain and Germany did become tense during periods of growing commercial rivalry and German naval buildup. For example, a contributor to the *Review of Reviews* argued “Germany’s fitful foreign policy, as well as the unwonted methods by which she strives to realise it, have for the past few years proved a continual source of uneasiness to other Powers, and occasionally a grave danger to the world’s peace.”<sup>45</sup>

Yet some Germans, especially those with higher economic standing-- including businessmen, bankers, and industrialists-- moved throughout British society with ease. This fact indicates the continued strength of tolerant attitudes.<sup>46</sup> British academics also continued to defend Germany. The historian J. Holland Rose justified Germany’s naval buildup by stressing the obstacles Germany faced. Other historians viewed the naval expansion as an example of the strong German character, or a way to defend growing commercial interests. The academic defense of Germans continued up until the beginning of World War I. For example, historian James Bryce stated, “The two nations, German and British, were of kindred race, and linked by many ties. To the German people, even now we feel no sort of enmity.”<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for the many Germans living in Britain, much of the British population did not share this sentiment.

Initial manifestations of hostility towards German communities in Britain began following the Kruger Telegram in 1896, when Kaiser Wilhelm II supported Transvaal’s

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<sup>44</sup> [Anonymous]“Lloyd-George, The Blenheim Spaniel, and the Hotel Porter, ” *The Academy*, (August 1908), 205.

<sup>45</sup> “Anglo-German Rivalry: Perfidious Germany!,” *Review of Reviews*, 38(October 1908), 344.

<sup>46</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 201.

<sup>47</sup> Bryce, *Neutral Nations and the War*, (London, 1914) 5-6; in Siak, “The Blood That is in Our Veins.”

resistance of Britain.<sup>48</sup> This telegram “came as a thunderclap at a time of national soreness...No actual damage came from it-the harm it did was to make us suddenly look up our causes of quarrel with Germany, and that with none too benevolent an eye.”<sup>49</sup> Some Britons took the telegram as a sign of Germany’s colonial ambitions in Africa. Mobs attacked Germans and their property throughout London.<sup>50</sup> By 1900, the situation had grown worse, as the passage of the German Naval Bill, which was to double the number of German battleships and seemed to undercut Britain’s imperial strength. In 1904, when Britain signed the entente cordial with France, a decidedly Germanophobic atmosphere developed throughout Britain, and was perpetuated through events such as the Moroccan crises of 1905 and 1911, and the naval panic of 1908-1909.

German immigrants were also subject to social hostility in the decades before World War I. For example, there was much speculation in periodicals such as the *London City Mission Magazine* that Germans were immoral drunkards. There was also negative backlash against German street bands, which created noise and hazards on the streets of London. Panayi quotes journalist Joseph Banister, who viciously attacked Germans,

From Germany we receive swarms of gambling-house keepers, hotel-porters, barbers, “bullies”, runaway conscripts, bath-attendants, street musicians, criminals, bakers, socialists...that they, too, maybe live luxuriously on the British public...who are without an inclination or the ability to make a living in “Yarmany”, or have not enough patriotism to fulfill their military obligations, proceed to inflict themselves on this country.<sup>51</sup>

In 1889, the Select Committee on Emigration and Immigration reported concerns about the growing size of the German population in Britain. In 1903, the Royal Commission on Alien

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<sup>48</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 233.

<sup>49</sup> “Politik,” 455.

<sup>50</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 233.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph Banister, *England Under the Jews*, London, 1901, pp. 8-9, quoted in Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 222.

Immigration described fears about the lives and actions of Germans especially fear of crime and the stereotypical “German swindler.”<sup>52</sup>

Germans in Britain also experienced economic hostility. Leopold Katscher articulated this antagonism, “[Germans] are naturally the horror of all the English...for the Germans are satisfied with lower salaries, and are therefore preferred, not only by their own countrymen, but frequently also by English employers.”<sup>53</sup> This economic hostility was linked to growing German economic power.<sup>54</sup> This fear reached a peak in the mid 1890s with the publication of *Made in Germany* by E.E. Williams, a book which emphasized the growing number of German goods in Britain.

Paranoia about an imminent German military invasion also kept many on edge. After 1871, various novels painting Britain as Germany’s next victim abounded, alerting people to the supposed weaknesses in Britain’s security.<sup>55</sup> Novels, such as *The Battle of Dorking* published in 1871, described the invasion of Britain by the militaristic Germany. German-born governesses, band members, tailors, and waiters were particularly targeted as supposed infiltrators. German clerks were also targeted as a result of spy fever because they sometimes had access to sensitive business materials which “disclose every weakness in our armour and show where openings offer for the protected wedge of German commerce to enter.”<sup>56</sup> Paranoia was so prominent that in 1887 a “Special Branch” of London Metropolitan Police was created partly in response to the

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<sup>52</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 223.

<sup>53</sup> Leopold Katscher, 1887, quoted in Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 224.

<sup>54</sup> “Politik,” 455.

<sup>55</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 232.

<sup>56</sup> Watchman, “Some New Facts About German Commercial Tactics.” *National Review*, (March 1910), 84-86; quoted in Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 227.

growing number of political refugees in Britain, attracted by “the existence of Britain as a safe asylum for men and women.”<sup>57</sup>

There were many examples of paranoia in the media. For British journalists, Germany became an obsession, especially during the era of so-called spy fever from 1907-1910.<sup>58</sup> Panayi argues that the journalistic change in tone represents a shift in political views and the development of the “Radical Right,” which consisted of mainly Conservative Unionists. This group emphasized nationalism and Germanophobia, and while it did not evolve into a political party, it was able to influence attitudes towards Germans in Britain.<sup>59</sup> For example in August 1908, *The Academy*, a weekly literature journal, published fears that

It should turn out that for years past Germany has honeycombed Great Britain with her spies, that every British port is overrun with young Germans, all trained soldiers, ready at the word of command, and the moment that war is declared between the two countries, or a few moments before, to wreak...the utmost damage and mischief possible, to throw old-standing disorganisation into new and more paralysing confusion....<sup>60</sup>

Some even feared balloonists, the supposed 50,000 German waiters and bandsmen, and “there are even nervous people who would be almost disappointed... if they did not see German troops holding the Tower and the Bank of England within the next year or two.”<sup>61</sup> According to one article from 1908, certain activities aroused immediate suspicion about foreigners, including wandering around important towns taking photographs, vacations at east-coast resorts, sea fishing, and cycling through the Epping Forest.<sup>62</sup> Another, also from 1908, claimed that in peace

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<sup>57</sup> Bernard Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790-1988* (Boston: Unwin Hyma, Ltd, 1989), 102.

<sup>58</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 243.

<sup>59</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 239.

<sup>60</sup> “Lloyd-George, The Blenheim Spaniel, and the Hotel Porter,” 205.

<sup>61</sup> “Politik,” 449.

<sup>62</sup> “The Spy Mania,” *The Times*, August 21, 1908.

times, spies might serve in more “humble capacities,” such as waiters, then return to Germany for annual army trainings and to disclose any information they might have uncovered.<sup>63</sup>

Invasion novels now had Germans as the invaders instead of allies of Britain. The most famous of these novels was William Le Queux’s *The Invasion of 1910*, where German armies invade Britain and overrun the entire country. Le Queux’s novel placed attention on the internal enemy, spies. In the preface, Le Queux explains his purpose in writing “is to illustrate our utter unpreparedness for war...to show how, under certain conditions which may easily occur, England can be successfully invaded by Germany....”<sup>64</sup> He explains that he consulted the highest authorities, whose identities he cannot divulge, and traveled 10,000 miles across the country to examine military positions, landing places, railway connections, and telephone and telegraph communications to gather information regarding a potential attack. In this fictional conflict, Le Queux explains how the British manage to fight back, but not before a terrible massacre of Germans occurs in London. He ends with a decree, “The British nation had been warned against the danger; it disregarded the warning...weakness merely reflected the moral tone of the nation....”<sup>65</sup> As a result some readers began to adopt the fear that Britain would be caught unprepared for a surprise attack. For example, a reader of *The Times* admitted that the spy scare occurred at an opportune time because some MPs had discussed “defence-stripping” which would leave the nation unprotected.<sup>66</sup>

Walter Wood’s novel, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, published in 1906, describes German spies who who invade England. One year later, E. Philips Oppenheim published *The Secret* which focuses on German waiters and other German employees working against Britain. In

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<sup>63</sup> “The Spy Scare,” *The Times*, July 17, 1908.

<sup>64</sup> William Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910: With A Full Account of the Siege of London* (London: Everleigh and Nash, 1906), vi.

<sup>65</sup> Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 549.

<sup>66</sup> “The ‘Spy Scare,’” *The Times*, July 17, 1908.



1909 the spy-novel trend continued with Le Queux's *Spies of the Kaiser*, where he stated that over five thousand German operatives worked in Britain: "No sane English person can deny that England is in grave danger of invasion by Germany at a date not far distant."<sup>67</sup> This book follows protagonist John James Jacox, a barrister and self-described detective, details the intricate plans of the reported network of German spies working on London.

In order to combat this fear, many denied that there was any cause for concern. For example, journalist Charles Lowe examined the evidence used to justify fears about the potential for a German invasion. He found the assertions ridiculous, writing in the *Contemporary Review*,

Unscrupulous spy-sensations of our Yellow Press constitute acts of criminal levity against the peace of two kindred nations—a poisoning of the wells of public truth—and that, too, at a time when each country is only too ready to believe the worst of the other. Such conduct is none the less a public crime for its being beyond the reach of Public Prosecution.<sup>68</sup>

Another journalist stated that it should not be surprising that foreign spies should be in Britain, for surely Britain had spies of its own attempting to ascertain valuable knowledge in other countries. The author also noted that the public was foolish to think that the government would not carefully guard real secrets.<sup>69</sup> The *Westminster Review* also published an article by Henry Sewill, which proclaimed that a German invasion would be logistically impossible. Sewill stated that first and foremost, Britain's naval fleet was enormously superior to the German's, rendering any potential landing on the British shore improbable. It would also be difficult for Germany to keep invasion plans a secret because of the large measures necessary to launch an invasion, in addition to trying to concealing plans from allies, especially Italy which was a good friend to Britain. Germany could not depend on the neutrality of Russia, France, Belgium, or Holland if

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<sup>67</sup> William Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England* (London: Brendon and Son, LTD, 1909), ix.

<sup>68</sup> "The Folly of the Anti-German Panic Mongers," *Review of Reviews*, 41(January 1910), 47.

<sup>69</sup> "The Spy Mania," *The Times*, August 21, 1908.

an invasion of Britain did occur, and these countries might mobilize for war, forcing Germany to assemble more men. German invaders would be overwhelmed with equipment such as wagons to carry ammunition, rations, horses, and transports to carry soldiers. If Germany could overcome all of these obstacles, it was doubtful that they could make it to London without being discovered by British troops.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless Asquith's Liberal government clearly took espionage seriously. The years between 1909 and 1911, saw the development of MI5 and MI6, the Official Secrets Act, intercepts of certain categories of mail, and the establishment of a register for aliens living in Britain. The Official Secrets Act of 1908, which supplemented the same act from 1889, defined various misdemeanors which became felonies when a person "intended to communicate to a foreign state any information, document, sketch, plan, model, or knowledge."<sup>71</sup> According to Porter, these "developments marked a crucial stage in the transformation of Britain from a relatively open liberal democracy into the far more restrictive one we have today."<sup>72</sup> Some supported the use of this new legislation. For example, *The Times* insisted, "The time is not suited for that easy-going spirit which suspects nothing, and which thinks that it is un-English and inhospitable to act after the manner of other States, and to be prudent and vigilant...."<sup>73</sup> Others, however, recognized that the act would "interfere with the legitimate enterprise and freedom of the Press, and that the Government should have no such design."<sup>74</sup>

In 1909 Asquith created a sub-committee under the Committee of Imperial Defence to "Consider the Question of Foreign Espionage in the United Kingdom." Though the evidence

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<sup>70</sup> Henry Sewill, "A German Invasion and the Real German Peril," *Westminster Review*, 176(August 1911), 134-140.

<sup>71</sup> "The Official Secrets Bill," *The Times*, May 9, 1908.

<sup>72</sup> Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 120.

<sup>73</sup> "Espionage and Good Sense," *The Times*, September 29, 1910.

<sup>74</sup> "The Official Secrets Bill," *The Times*, May 20, 1908.

was shaky at times, the Committee did accept that German espionage had to be dealt with, leading to the creation of MI5, the British Secret Service Bureau. The findings of the committee also led to the creation of another sub-committee, under Winston Churchill, which analyzed the “treatment of Aliens in Time of War.” This committee made two important innovations that structured the treatment of German aliens during World War I. First, the committee established an alien register, which consisted of approximately 11,000 Germans by 1913. Second, the committee created the first draft of the Aliens Restriction Act, which formed the substance of governmental policy against German aliens during World War I.<sup>75</sup>

Negative sentiments toward aliens continued to appear before the outbreak of World War I. According to David Cesarani, the decline of liberalism led to “anti-alienism,” which became both a popular and a political movement. Cesarani argues that anti-alienism emerged as a response to the first large wave of immigration to reach Britain. This large wave, and the negative reaction to it, was able to override the earlier liberal tradition of asylum. Cesarani traces the anti-alien movement to the 1860s when foreigners became linked to crime, political unrest, revolutionary politics and anarchism.<sup>76</sup> Government legislation provided a state apparatus for enforcing anti-alien policies, which allowed the movement to maintain its momentum going into World War I.

Anti-alienism helped the British construct a common identity. Cesarani asserts the public viewed the Alien Act as the government’s admission of an alien problem.<sup>77</sup> Public opinion linked aliens to crime and degenerate behavior. In books, Germans were presented as spies disguised as bankers, waiters, and evil industrialists. This type of propaganda fueled a popular hatred of Germans. Negative propaganda also provided the British with a convenient social

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<sup>75</sup> Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 249.

<sup>76</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 25.

<sup>77</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 32.

“other” that could be blamed for social problems. Propaganda such as this prepared British society for the internment operations of World War I; few were surprised or upset about internment. The experiences of the first decade of the twentieth century normalized the stereotype of Germans as villains.

Following the outbreak of war, few defenders of Germany could be found in Britain. Siak points out that Liberal MPs were generally known to have pro-German sympathies, but as party policy changed, so did the MPs’ opinions of Germany. The former “intellectual and spiritual communion” with Germany lapsed.<sup>78</sup> Academics managed to hold out until 1914, but then the swift reinterpretation of German history began. The tone became distinctly anti-German. Instead of extolling the common background of the Anglo-German race, historians and other scholars now referred to Germans as “barbaric Huns” who were bloodthirsty and militaristic.

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<sup>78</sup> “Politik,” 457.

## Chapter 2: Legislation Against Enemy Aliens

Negative public opinions towards immigrants, and the anti-alien movement, continued into the twentieth century. Conservative Prime Minister Balfour could not ignore it any longer. As a result, he created the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1902. The Commission proposed restrictions on the entry of aliens and recommended the establishment of prohibited areas where immigrants could not live. The creation of the Commission endorsed the connection between aliens and crime, thus supporting negative public opinions about aliens.<sup>79</sup> In 1904 the Balfour government supported the Commission's proposals and attempted to implement its recommendations through a Conservative Party bill, but it was denied by the Liberal opposition during the vote. If passed, the bill would have empowered immigration officials to exclude criminals, prostitutes, the destitute, and those deemed a threat to the public good from entering the country at their discretion. A special court would have been created to deal exclusively with the expulsion of aliens and the establishment of prohibited areas.

In 1905, many of these provisions were passed as part of the Aliens Act. "Undesirable immigrants" could be turned away by three-man immigrant boards, under the direction of the Secretary of State. Those considered undesirable included those that could not prove support for themselves and any dependants, the mentally ill or physically infirm that would likely become dependent on the state or a detriment to the public, those sentenced in a foreign country for an extradition crime, or anyone that "has an expulsion order made against him."<sup>80</sup> The act also empowered the Secretary of State to expel undesirable aliens as he saw fit and prevent reentry upon discovery of a criminal conviction, unsanitary living conditions, or the absence of gainful employment. The provisions passed were less severe than those proposed the previous year, and

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<sup>79</sup> Cesarani, "An Alien Concept?," 30.

<sup>80</sup> "Legislation of 1905: The Aliens Act," *The Times*, December 25, 1905.

Cesarani asserts that growing public support of anti-alienism swayed many members of the Liberal Party to support the bill. The Aliens Act also permitted asylum for religious and political persecution, something that helped gain Liberal support. According to Cesarani, “The passing of the Aliens Act was a landmark in the decline of liberal England.”<sup>81</sup> This policy effectively ended open immigration and provided the political mechanisms to enforce immigration controls. From this point forward politicians and civil servants gained experience in dealing with immigration matters, such as who would be denied entry into Britain, and set many precedents for the future.<sup>82</sup> The Home Office, under Sir Edward Troup, carried anti-alienism forward by enforcing the Aliens Act, showing how a country which had been so open could begin down the path towards the internment of World War I. The Home Office began secretly registering aliens, a step that aided interment operations during the war years.<sup>83</sup>

Another piece of government legislation which propagated fear and distrust of aliens, and also demonstrates the decline of liberalism in Britain, was the Official Secrets Act of 1911. This Act was aimed at curtailing the fear of espionage, and provided the police with greater authority to enter homes and search and seize material, and make arrests. The accused were presumed guilty until proven innocent, and it was much easier to prosecute those accused of espionage. According to Tammy Proctor, this act not only linked foreignness “to treason, espionage, anti-government activities, and subversion, but also labeled it a moral “disease” in British society that had to be cured.”<sup>84</sup>

World War I was a defining movement for Asquith and the Liberal Party. It seems that some publications were hopeful that the war would lead the opposing political parties to set aside

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<sup>81</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 31.

<sup>82</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 31.

<sup>83</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 34.

<sup>84</sup> Tammy Proctor, *Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 32.

any differences for the duration of the war.<sup>85</sup> Party members were divided over how to handle the war; some pushed for neutrality at all costs, while others, including Henry Dalziel who later played an active role in the internment operation, demanded a strong war effort, “even if it meant greater coercion and controls.”<sup>86</sup> The Asquith government’s involvement with new legislation, such as the Defence of the Realm Act, and other restrictions on aliens, threatened fundamental liberal ideals. On April 20, 1915 Asquith formed a Coalition government, although Liberals retained key offices. In December 1916, following months of conflict over Asquith’s handling of the war effort, David Lloyd-George became Prime Minister. This led to more conflict within the Liberal Party.

Public opinion influenced policy formation, as Panikos Panayi emphasizes. In his study of public opinion regarding Germans in Britain during this period, Panayi argues that “rampant Germanophobia of the First World War was part of the general move towards the right in British politics during the years of the war and their aftermath.”<sup>87</sup> Panayi places the blame on the Asquith government because it never initially rejected internment as an option. The Asquith government responded to public riots and acts of violence against Germans by altering alien policy at the start of the war in 1914, again following the Lusitania sinking in May 1915, and again in 1918 when determining immigration policy as the war neared its conclusion. Panayi maintains that public support was crucial for the war effort to be successful. The British population needed to have confidence in the government’s actions. Therefore, it was crucial that the Asquith government keep the public on its side by addressing public concern over alien problems.

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<sup>85</sup> “Notes of the Week,” *The Academy*, (August 8, 1914), 171.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931* (New York: Longman, 1995), 12.

<sup>87</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 4.

Anti-alien sentiment increased following Britain's declaration of war against Germany on August 4, 1914. A group of twenty two suspected spies were immediately rounded up. The House of Commons quickly passed the Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A) in order to "secure public safety and the defense of the country," which provided the Asquith government with the power to enact many changes and override personal liberties.<sup>88</sup> D.O.R.A. was modified constantly, providing the government with a wide range of powers. For example, Regulation Thirteen gave the government power to arrest anyone acting in a suspicious manner without other probable cause.

On August 5, 1914, only a day after D.O.R.A.'s passage, the government passed the Aliens Restriction Act, which allowed the British government to control the movement of people classified as "enemy aliens." This act was based on plans from the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was organized in 1904 and comprised the Prime Minister and senior cabinet officials.<sup>89</sup> All citizens of the German Empire were classified as enemy aliens, while all other foreigners were classified as alien friends. Only two members of Parliament expressed any apprehension over the Aliens Restriction Act: Asquith and Reginald McKenna, the Home Office Secretary, "saw the emergency controls over aliens as a regrettable necessity...."<sup>90</sup> The tradition of asylum was also questioned as the declaration of war no doubt prompted many to attempt to enter Britain, as aliens "are an unqualified menace in war time."<sup>91</sup>

Immediately, orders were distributed by Secretary McKenna that no aliens were permitted to enter or leave Britain at will. They were required to go through specific ports and required to have a permit. All aliens who remained were required to register at their local police

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<sup>88</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 46.

<sup>89</sup> J.C. Bird, *Control of Civilian Enemy Aliens in Great Britain, 1914-1918* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 14.

<sup>90</sup> Bird, *Control of Civilian Enemy Aliens in Great Britain*, 42-44.

<sup>91</sup> "Notes of the Week," 172.



station where they had to provide their nationality, occupation, appearance, residence, and especially, service in any foreign regime. If someone refused this registration process, he could be arrested and taken to court. One German man, who had lived in England for thirty years, was arrested for refusing to register for fear of the negative stigma it would bring his British wife and children.<sup>92</sup> Fear of espionage continued despite this new government legislation. *The Times* reported the “ingenuity” of German spies, who taped telephone wires, used pigeon carriers, and infiltrated all areas of society by working as governesses and the like.<sup>93</sup> The same article also shows another aspect of the de-liberalizing trend:

Correspondents have suggested that a watch might well be kept on naturalized Germans and Austrians. It would be most unfair to assume that the bulk of these are anything but loyal to their adopted country, but it is disquieting to know that there are several authentic cases of naturalized Germans who have gone back to Germany to fight against us. It is scarcely necessary to state that such action is treasonable.<sup>94</sup>

By September 9, 1914, 50,633 Germans and 16,141 Austro-Hungarians had registered.<sup>95</sup> Their lives became increasingly affected by the stipulations of D.O.R.A and the Aliens Restriction Act. The government designated prohibited areas where enemy aliens could not live or visit, especially areas around defense works, army or naval establishments and coal supply stations, or military bases for fear that they might be spies giving secrets of the British war effort to the enemy. Aliens were not permitted to own weapons of any sort, photographic equipment, maps, or means of private transportation. Council orders forced the closure of clubs frequented by enemy aliens. German newspapers could not be circulated without the approval of the Home Office. Because many Germans attempted to adopt more British-sounding names, the government passed a special order that prevented any enemy alien from using a name assumed

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<sup>92</sup> “Enemy Aliens: Aldershot Organist Charged,” *The Times*, October 27, 1914.

<sup>93</sup> “The Alien Enemy: Internment of Suspects,” *The Times*, September 2, 1914.

<sup>94</sup> “The Alien Enemy: Internment of Suspects,” *The Times*, September 2, 1914.

<sup>95</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 49.

since the beginning of the war. All of these measures, combined with anti-German protests and other public responses such as the boycott of German shops, vandalism and harassment, endangered the Anglo-German community. Panayi compares the lives of enemy aliens living outside the camps to those interned which demonstrated how both groups faced adversity.<sup>96</sup> Internment camps were located throughout England and Scotland, in addition to the two largest camps, Knockaloe and Douglas, which were located on the Isle of Man. Enemy aliens living outside the camps had trouble finding employment and faced strict controls on civil liberties. Those in the camps faced similar problems. Either way, the German communities were inalterably disrupted.

Paul Cohen-Portheim, an Austrian writer who traveled in Britain each summer, recorded the events of the war in his memoir *Time Stood Still: My Internment in England*. His story conveys the best and worst parts of British policies toward foreigners before, during and after the war. The contrast between the openness with which he was able to move about the country prior to 1914, and the way he was treated after the war began, provides the process of internment with a human narrative and perspective. The memoir of Major Paul Stoffa, *Around the World to Freedom*, also conveys the horrors of internment. Stoffa was arrested when the British navy stopped a ship on which he was traveling from the United States to Britain. Stoffa was held in a London jail for six days while being questioned about his identity. He eventually confessed to being a major in the Austro-Hungarian army. He was first interned at Alexandra Palace. While being transported to this camp, he explained, “We were soon the center of attention on the platform, and I could not blame the people for staring at the hollow-eyed, un-shaven and unkempt wretch, who certainly looked a most repulsive object: a typical criminal, I daresay,

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<sup>96</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 60.

most of them thought, looking at me.”<sup>97</sup> Cohen-Portheim also experienced a shock when being transported to Knockaloe camp: “They spat, they insulted, they jeered, they threw things...Only one face stood out from the crowd, horribly real, that of an old woman...She grimaced furiously and shouted... ‘Biby-killers [sic]....’”<sup>98</sup>

On August 7, 1914, the Home Office under Home Secretary Reginald McKenna decided to begin internment of males between the ages of 18 and 42, or men considered to be of military age, who were suspected of being dangerous to the safety of Britain. Internment “is a precautionary measure which does not imply suspicion against any individual alien who is arrested,”<sup>99</sup> and McKenna’s goal was to prevent these men from joining enemy military forces. Cohen-Portheim recalled,

The Germans in England, the foreigners of enemy nations in all countries, must not be allowed to join the belligerent forces of their countries of origin and they must not be allowed to endanger the safety of the countries they happened to have been in when war broke out. They were therefore rounded up and locked away in camps because that was the easiest way of dealing with the problem.<sup>100</sup>

The Civilian Internment Camps Committee was established through the Department of State to “organize and superintend the arrangement for keeping internment alien enemies other than combatant prisoners of war.”<sup>101</sup> *The Times* reported arrests and subsequent internment of Germans in Manchester, Bradford, Coventry and Reading. Among those arrested were “waiters, clerks, shopkeepers, foreign correspondents...well-known business men, several professional gentlemen, one of whom has been received in county society, and a publican.”<sup>102</sup> The

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<sup>97</sup> Paul Stoffa, *Around the World to Freedom: Being the Escapes and Adventures of Major Paul Stoffa (of the Hungarian Army)*, 173.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still: My Internment In England 1914-1918* (Oxford: Kemp Hall Press, 1931), 29-30.

<sup>99</sup> “Enemy Aliens: Treatment in the Camps,” *The Times*, October 24, 1914.

<sup>100</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 70.

<sup>101</sup> B.E. Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War* (Douglas: Brown and Sons Limited, 1920), 59.

<sup>102</sup> “The Alien Peril: Strong Action by the Police,” *The Times*, October 22, 1914.

Committee was initially led by Sir William Byrne, Assistant Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, and subsequently by Sir John Pedder, an Assistant Secretary at the Home Office. Cohen-Portheim recalled that there were many newspaper reports about internment. Although the articles never described what took place, British citizens were very excited at the prospect of interning Germans, especially once spy-mania reappeared.<sup>103</sup>

Many feared that the government was not taking the enemy alien threat seriously. For some the internment operations did not go far enough, all enemy aliens should be interned because they could not “help sympathizing with her [Germany’s] cause and wishing it success.”<sup>104</sup> The same rules should apply to all enemy aliens, and without wholesale internment, “is it not surprising that many should feel a want of security?”<sup>105</sup> Any enemy aliens at liberty might also permit any who were spies to remain free. Stories poured in to *The Times* about supposed spies surveying and making maps of England, spy rings, and a planned invasion.

Initially, the government also interned those who had no means of financial support, because many lost their employment at the outbreak of war.<sup>106</sup> However, the internment of only some of the military-age portion of the enemy alien population was not radical enough for some. Various MPs demanded this policy, despite Home Secretary’s McKenna’s plea that the government not “treat mere nationality as an offence.”<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, many other MPs did not agree, stating that nationality should at least be considered probable cause for suspicion, especially in times of war. In fact,

They had a right to ask that every man or woman of German birth should be regarded with suspicion. We should begin with the idea that if they had the chance they would

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<sup>103</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 13.

<sup>104</sup> “Enemy Aliens Among Us,” *The Times*, October 19, 1914.

<sup>105</sup> “Enemy Aliens: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, October 20, 1914.

<sup>106</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 14.

<sup>107</sup> “House of Commons: Internment of Enemy Aliens, Home Secretary and His Critics,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

help their own country and damage us, and it was our business to prevent them getting that chance if we possibly could.<sup>108</sup>

The internment system was unorganized, and the government was forced to hold these men as “prisoners of war” because the men could not be detained under civil authority unless they had committed a crime. This fact shows how unprepared the government was to deal with civilian internees. The lack of preparation in the process of civilian arrests led to problems in the beginning of the internment process.

Who was to take the lead in organization? In the House of Commons on March 4, 1915, an MP proposed that all actions concerning enemy aliens should be concentrated under one office. There was, however, much debate on who should take on this role. Home Secretary Reginald McKenna declined responsibility for interment operations, stating that full obligations rested with the War Office and Lord Kitchener. He also stated that the Home Office was at the disposal of the War Office, which was responsible for all internment policies.<sup>109</sup> On May 12, 1915, Home Secretary McKenna denied responsibility for the internment or release of enemy aliens, claiming that the War Office would take the lead.<sup>110</sup> However, the Home Office administered the largest internment camps on the Isle of Man, and was also responsible for the internment and release of enemy aliens. The War Office administered camps for actual prisoners of war. The Admiralty and Board of Trade were responsible for coordinating the repatriation of enemy aliens, but Military Intelligence had to be consulted before a prisoner was released or repatriated.

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<sup>108</sup> “House of Commons: Aliens and Suspected Persons, The Opposition Leader,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>109</sup> “House of Commons: The Responsibility for Interment,” and “The Home Secretary’s Reply,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>110</sup> “The Government and Aliens: The War Office Responsible,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

Frequent confusion occurred because of the multiple offices involved. For example, in November of 1914, Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, decided that enemy aliens could be released from internment camps. From November until April 1915, approximately 3,000 prisoners were released.<sup>111</sup> The War Office was meant to deal solely with military prisoners of war, not enemy aliens, and many of the enemy aliens released by the War Office could have been interned again under another office. *The Manchester Guardian* observed that “Had it all been thought out in advance, our policy might have been more consistent,” also noting that the internment practice “is more severe than that in force at any time since civilization began.”<sup>112</sup> The article also noted four key changes that prompted this severe policy: the use of the wireless telegraph, the large number of Germans in Britain, the organization of espionage, and the German system of conscription, which made all German males of a certain age potential enemies on the battlefield.

The confusion regarding control of the internment operations led to many innocent victims being incorrectly imprisoned. For example, *The Manchester Guardian* reported the case of a British man imprisoned simply because he had a German father.<sup>113</sup> Throughout the war there was increasing concern regarding the status of naturalized aliens, whose liberties were invaded by the new legislation. There was often a broad interpretation of the powers given under D.O.R.A, especially regarding the status of naturalized Germans. Naturalized Germans had the same legal rights as any British citizens, but this did not exempt them from the same suspicions as enemy-alien Germans. On May 19, 1915, this issue was discussed by several MPs who wanted the War Office to have ability to treat both groups the same, despite the obvious

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<sup>111</sup> Panayi, “An Intolerant Act By An Intolerant Society: The Internment of Germans in Britain during the First World War,” quoted in Cesarani and Kushner, 57.

<sup>112</sup> “The Government and Enemy Aliens,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>113</sup> “British Subject with German Parents: Wrongful Conviction Quashed,” *The Manchester Guardian*, January 7, 1915.

difference in citizen classification.<sup>114</sup> By 1916, it seems as though naturalized Germans were treated as enemy aliens, as evidenced by the case of Mr. A. Zadig. Zadig, a railroad contractor in London, was interned without trial despite being a naturalized citizen. His case reached the King's Bench Division in 1916, and the Attorney General argued,

That it was necessary in the public interest that in some cases persons who were British-born subjects should be subjected to this invasion of their liberty...The government should have the power of saying that this or that man might become a dangerous man at any movement, and of curtailing his liberty.<sup>115</sup>

The judge concluded that D.O.R.A. was passed to protect national interests and public safety, and that it did grant the courts the power to arrest any citizens, even British ones, without cause.<sup>116</sup> This shows the continued decline in the liberal tendencies in Britain.

Many felt there was more to fear from naturalized Germans since they were technically not subjected to the same restrictions as enemy aliens. For example, *The Manchester Guardian* published a statement from a government official,

I am quite convinced in my own mind that the Germans of whom the people are nervous are not technically enemy aliens at all, but naturalised Germans, and if there is any danger to be apprehended from the German element in this country it is probably rather from that quarter that one would expect it-that is, from naturalised Germans and the Germans born in this country who are not subject to restrictions, and who do not come into this question at all.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to the confusion over the treatment of naturalized Germans, there was also uncertainty over efforts to distinguish friendly aliens and enemy aliens. Friendly aliens were subjected to the same restrictions of enemy aliens, even though they were not interned. For example, Belgians who had immigrated to Britain since the outbreak of the war were placed

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<sup>114</sup> "Enemy Aliens: Peers and Naturalised Germans," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 19, 1915.

<sup>115</sup> "Naturalised Persons and Internment: Important Decision in High Court," *The Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1916.

<sup>116</sup> "Naturalised Persons and Internment: Important Decision in High Court," *The Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1916.

<sup>117</sup> "German Aliens: A Possible Danger," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 29, 1918.

under similar restrictions as Germans. They, too, were required to register and were prohibited from designated areas even though they were clearly not on the side of the Germans.<sup>118</sup> It was very difficult to determine which aliens should be considered dangerous, and which supported the British cause. In December 1914, the Home Office admitted the accidental internment of Czech aliens, and permitted the London Bohemian Committee to have them released from internment camps. The public was not sensitive to the differences between the various alien nationalities, especially Belgians and Poles who spoke German but were not enemies.<sup>119</sup> The press was also aware that not all enemy aliens exhibited pro-German sentiments,

There were many persons who, though technically enemies, were as British in feeling as any member of the House. He knew of one case, the father of seven sons, everyone of whom was fighting for this country. He had before him persons of German nationality who were bitter enemies of Germany, and as strong admirers of this country as the mover of the resolution himself. With the knowledge which was in the possession of the Government how could they carry out a policy of universal internment? It would be inhuman, without adding one title of strength or advantage to this country.<sup>120</sup>

By September 23, 1914, approximately 13,600 German men, 10,500 of whom were civilians, were interned. The government was forced to suspend internment operations because it had run out of places to keep prisoners, but operations were resumed in October in response to anti-German riots. Panayi suggests that the October riots were in response to the German invasion of neutral Belgium and the atrocities that occurred there.<sup>121</sup> Violence began on October 17 when a German shop in Deptford High Street was vandalized and set on fire. Multiple shops were vandalized in similar fashion until approximately midnight when the police asked for army assistance to control the angry crowd of 5,000. Similar events occurred again the following

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<sup>118</sup> Saunders, "Aliens in Britain and the Empire During the First World War," 103.

<sup>119</sup> Cesarani, "An Alien Concept?," 36.

<sup>120</sup> "House of Commons: Aliens and Suspected Persons, The Home Secretary's Reply," *The Manchester Guardian* March 4, 1915.

<sup>121</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 225.



night. George Melsheimer's butcher shop was vandalized by a large crowd despite the displayed documentation of his naturalization in 1909. A week later there was another riot in Crewe, where a small number of naturalized Germans lived. Public opinion played a crucial role in enacting internment policy.<sup>122</sup> However, the camps were filled to capacity yet again and internment was suspended for the second time on October 22. Spy fever continued. *The Manchester Guardian* published an opinion that a German spy network was to blame for Germany's successful advance into Belgium. If this occurred in Belgium, it was likely to occur in Britain as well. Any Germans with patriotic feeling could assist in a German advance, which was cause for concern and government intervention.<sup>123</sup>

An example of the paranoia in the media is an article by Sir George Makgill, the Secretary to the Anti-German Union, entitled "The War of Liberation: The German Invasion," which appeared in the *English Review*. He explained how German secret agents infiltrated important military and industrial regions in France before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. He claimed agents were employed as agricultural laborers, farmers, servants, waitresses, and commercial and industrial offices. "No department of life but has been made to subserve the ends of German espionage. Now, are we to believe that Germany, which has for years schemed to overthrow England, has neglected like preparations here?"<sup>124</sup> Makgill stated the Anti-German Union had intelligence that tracked the number of Germans in England; and their information proved that German residence patterns formed a design around London, seaports, naval bases, and railway lines. He went further, stating that not only did Germans live in these strategic areas of Britain, but they also occupied tactical positions in these important areas. For example, a

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<sup>122</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 72.

<sup>123</sup> "House of Commons: Aliens and Suspected Persons, The Army of Spies in Belgium," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>124</sup> Sir George Makgill, "The War of Liberation: The German Invasion," *English Review*, (1915), 481.

German might be the postmaster in town, or the electrician, capable of tapping wires at night, or own a house about a railway line, making it possible for him to close a tunnel. Makgill stated that these coincidences afforded Germans, even naturalized ones, the opportunity “of assisting their Fatherland.”<sup>125</sup>

William Le Queux shared Makgill’s concerns. In *Britain’s Deadly Peril* published in 1915, Le Queux asserts that the Asquith government was deliberately keeping information from the public as well as implementing inadequate measures to deal with the enemy alien problem. In a chapter entitled “The Peril of the Enemy Alien” he examines multiple cases where both the Home Office and War Office display, at least in Le Queux’s opinion, insufficient reactions to potential illegal activities by Germans. For example, a woman “related to more than one in power in Germany” was reportedly still living on the eastern seaboard, illegal under D.O.R.A.<sup>126</sup> Her case was reported to the War Office, and action was ordered. However, she was never removed. Another case occurred in Sussex, where Le Queux observed mysterious signaling which could be seen on the coast. Upon further investigation, he found the light was coming from a manor house inhabited only by a few servants, one of whom was German. The report he made to the Department of War office went unacknowledged, much to his shock and dismay.

Makgill made similar observations regarding the strategic placement of German residences, which he assumed were in preparation for an “altogether not impossible” German invasion from across the Channel.<sup>127</sup> He asked,

Are we prepared to stake the safety of our country on a ‘scrap of paper’ which any foreigner who has resided here a few years can obtain for three or four guineas, or on the oath of allegiance taken by men of a nation which has openly broken every obligation

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<sup>125</sup> Makgill, “The War of Liberation,” 485.

<sup>126</sup> William Le Queux, *Britain’s Deadly Peril: Are We Told the Truth?* (London: Stanley and Paul, 1915), 98.

<sup>127</sup> Makgill, “The War of Liberation,” 485.

and committed every crime?...are we to assume that all are there by mere chance, and that there is no design in their distribution?...mere coincidence cannot account for the facts.<sup>128</sup>

In response to claims that many Germans in Britain were naturalized and part of the community, Makgill again pointed to secret agents in France who were instructed to blend into the community. He stated there was a similar situation in England where many naturalized German citizens were established members of society who contributed to charities and involved themselves in local sports clubs. In fact, Makgill claimed naturalization itself was a shameful act. Germans could have no pure motives for renouncing their native land; the shift in allegiance must be either for personal gain or to attack England. Therefore, a naturalized German should automatically be under suspicion...In a time of war all foreigners are suspect.”<sup>129</sup> This suspicion of Germans was echoed by many newspaper articles during the war. For example, on May 12, *The Manchester Guardian* wrote,

If there was a Zeppelin attack on London-and everybody expected that the attempt would be made-he [Sir Henry Dalziel] had not the slightest doubt that thousands of Germans now at large had their posts allotted to them...Germany would stick at nothing...and the Germans here would consider they were doing service to the Fatherland if they could deal us a death-blow in the heart of the Empire.<sup>130</sup>

In May 1915, Britain experienced the worst riots and violence of the entire war. Some MPs claimed that the government was not taking the enemy alien problem seriously enough. “The reason for the laxity which they have shown was that they did not believe there was any real danger... the Government had not sufficiently realised the seriousness of this danger...and had not taken every step which they might have done to make it as small as possible.”<sup>131</sup>

According to Cohen-Portheim, “In a day the whole situation was changed. There was a frenzied

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<sup>128</sup> Makgill, “The War of Liberation,” 485-86.

<sup>129</sup> Makgill, “The War of Liberation,” 488-489.

<sup>130</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

<sup>131</sup> “House of Commons: Aliens and Suspected Persons, The Opposition Leader,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

outrage from all the cheap press for internment of all enemy aliens[=]enemies of humanity: there were riots and disorders....”<sup>132</sup> On May 7 a German submarine sank the Lusitania, a British passenger ship off the coast of Ireland, and the first riot occurred in Liverpool the next day. In total, riots would cause over £200,000 worth of damage.<sup>133</sup> Much of the Lusitania crew was from Liverpool, so it is not surprising that it was one of the first towns to react towards German communities.

Newspapers published articles proclaiming that all aliens must be interned because they and their property were no longer safe. The German military’s lack of distinction between combatants and non-combatants, such as the innocent passengers killed on the Lusitania, made it nearly impossible “to keep our English practice of distinguishing between combatant and non-combatant and of assuming every man to be innocent of wrongdoing until he is proven to be guilty. This referred specifically to enemy aliens, who were now, by some, automatically assumed guilty of helping the enemy.”<sup>134</sup> Liverpool also existed in a “fractious ethnic harmony until the declaration of war in August 1914,” when “ethnic hatred erupted...and Germans...came to be identified as ‘the enemy in our midst.’”<sup>135</sup> Many of the Germans in Liverpool had lived there for generations, but this did not prevent them being labeled as enemies.

Naturalized Germans and British-born citizens who were German by marriage, businesses and people with Germanic names were attacked, their businesses vandalized and boycotted. In Manchester, a shop was vandalized, even though the proprietor stated he had been a naturalized citizen for twenty-seven years, and had owned his shop for twenty.<sup>136</sup> An article

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<sup>132</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> Nicoletta F. Gullace, “Friends, Aliens and Enemies: Fictive Communities and the Lusitania Riots of 1915,” *Journal of Social History*, (2005), 346.

<sup>134</sup> “The Enemy Alien,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 14, 1915.

<sup>135</sup> Gullace, “Friends, Aliens and Enemies,” 346.

<sup>136</sup> “Manchester and Salford: Many Shops Raided,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* which stated that “Working men could not be expected to work beside Germans who were sniggering and laughing, congratulating themselves upon the great tragedy that happened last week.”<sup>137</sup> The Smithfield Market in London declared a boycott of all Germans, naturalized or not, making it likely their business would have to shut down.

Nicoletta Gullace attributes the ability of many British citizens to turn on their neighbors to the reports of German atrocities, which exacerbated the hatred towards citizens of German descent. The fact that many of the victims were women and children also intensified negative emotions and actions towards Germans. Author D.H. Lawrence wrote “I am mad with rage...I would like to kill a million Germans....”<sup>138</sup> A surviving passenger on the *Lusitania* stated “I hated the race that made war on women, and war on children, and I would have given everything for revenge.”<sup>139</sup>

Summarizing the emotions of people in Liverpool, *The Times* reported “Can there be any wonder...the feeling of bitter enmity against the Germans should be exacerbated beyond restraint.”<sup>140</sup> *John Bull*, a widely circulated weekly journal, published an article by Horatio Bottomley who called for “a vendetta-a vendetta against every German in Britain, whether ‘naturalized’ or not.”<sup>141</sup> In *The English Review*, Makgill wrote “These interlopers are a source of personal and public danger and anxiety, and in the public interest they must go; and the rich and naturalized alien, too, must go. There is only one safe place for him-an internment camp.”<sup>142</sup> Gullace states that violence against Germans provided Liverpool residents with an enemy within reach that they could strike out at, “an image of Germany that was reassuringly vulnerable,

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<sup>137</sup> “The Government and Aliens: The New Situation,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Gullace, “Friends, Aliens and Enemies,” 348.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Gullace, “Friends, Aliens and Enemies,” 348.

<sup>140</sup> *The Times*, 8, 10 May 1915, quoted in Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 229.

<sup>141</sup> Horatio Bottomley, *John Bull*, 15 May 1915, viewed in Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 233.

<sup>142</sup> Makgill, “The War of Liberation,” 489.

reachable and powerless...welding their ethnically diverse neighbors into an imagined community...one that elided the butcher down the street, with the U-boat captain who sank the Lusitania, and ultimately the Kaiser himself.”<sup>143</sup> This violence sometimes affected the innocent. For example, in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, a man reported that the Lancashire home of an English widow of a German, with two sons serving in the British army, was ransacked and destroyed by an angry mob. According to this letter,

One of the worst features at present is the attempt of many people of better education to excite violent feeling against any person ‘with German blood in his veins’...Purity of aim and intensity of purpose are needed to save the country from a bastard patriotism...the worst ‘enemies within our gates’ are the ruffians who take part in and those who encourage such cowardly outrages on innocent people....<sup>144</sup>

Of course, not all were happy about the internment operation. For example, in a letter to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian* one reader wrote, “What is happening to England?...Surely her citizens at home can find a higher expression of their patriotism than a misguided persecution of the defenceless, many of whom have made the supreme sacrifice for giving their sons to fight for their country of adoption....”<sup>145</sup>

Riots and vandalism continued until May 15 in London, Liverpool, Manchester and South Yorkshire, among others. Though a direct link between media and public outcry cannot be proven, more riots did occur the same day that Bottomley’s article appeared in print. On May 11, the House of Commons discussed how to react to the violence against Germans. Sir Henry Dalziel and Lord Charles Beresford made speeches urging the government to take additional action to intern enemy aliens because, “If you have bad laws, or no laws at all, the people will take the law into their own hands...Intern these men as soon as possible, and before the people

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<sup>143</sup> Gullace, “Friends, Aliens and Enemies,” 352.

<sup>144</sup> “Letter to the Editor of the *The Times*,” *The Times*, May 15, 1915.

<sup>145</sup> “To the Editor of *The Manchester Guardian*,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 15, 1915.

make you do it....”<sup>146</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* published an editorial explaining that Asquith agreed to review the interment policy because “recent events” made it necessary to “look beyond merely military considerations.”<sup>147</sup> On May 12 rioting continued, and newspapers, including the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, ran editorials urging the government to take action against enemy aliens. In the House of Commons on May 12, a petition signed by 250,000 women pleaded with the government to intern all enemy alien males of military age and remove the remaining enemy aliens, both men and women, from the coast.

On May 13 Asquith made a statement to *The Times* declaring that the government would consider internment on a more comprehensive scale than before. However, *The Times* noted that there was no intention to create legislation against naturalized Germans and Austrians because “changes in the law would be needed to discriminate against those who are legally British citizens, and the Government do not intend to introduce any fresh legislation on the subject.”<sup>148</sup> On May 13 Asquith acquiesced and stated, “We propose that in existing circumstances, *prima facie*, all adult males of this class [non-naturalized Germans] should, for their own safety, and that of the community, be segregated and interned, or, if over military age, repatriated.”<sup>149</sup> The reaction was so terrible that Germans in Bradford presented the town mayor with a signed protest,

We men of German birth who have adopted Great Britain as our home and are naturalised British subjects protest in the strongest possible terms against the inhuman manner in which the German Government has waged war against non-combatants including women and children, culminating in the sinking of the Lusitania. We wish hereby to place on record our horror and indignation at the outrages.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Hansard*, fifth series, LXXI, 11 May 1915, quoted in Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 77.

<sup>147</sup> *Hansard*, fifth series, LXXI, 11 May 1915, quoted in Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 77.

<sup>148</sup> “Anti-German Riots: Cabinet Plans,” *The Times*, May 13, 1915.

<sup>149</sup> Herbert Asquith, May 13, 1915, quoted in Panayi, “An Intolerant Act by An Intolerant Society,” 58.

<sup>150</sup> “Bradford Germans Protest: Horror and Indignation at German Government’s Methods,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

A meeting for naturalized Germans was planned in Manchester in order to allow the men a chance to state their abhorrence at the German methods and convey their solidarity with the British cause. “Up to the present most of the naturalised subjects seem to have taken it for granted that their British sympathies were understood...in view of recent events they are probably well advised in emphasizing their British sympathy.”<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, these displays of camaraderie could not halt what was to come, despite the Home Secretary statement that “he did not believe the House would desire that the certificate of naturalisation solemnly given should be treated as a mere scrap of paper.”<sup>152</sup>

From then on, all aliens, including Cohen-Portheim, were interned, at the rate of 1,000 per week.<sup>153</sup> Contributor to *The Observer*, Henry Lucy, applauded the new government legislation because without it, civilians would deal with the enemy aliens “with an impulse and instinct of human nature.”<sup>154</sup> Asquith established an Advisory Committee composed of two High Court judges and four members of Parliament. The Advisory Committee was responsible for determining exemptions from internment and repatriation, as well as making decisions concerning aliens that were categorized under D.O.R.A. regulation 14B. A blatant violation of civil liberty, regulation 14B stated that the Home Secretary could intern “any person of hostile origin or associations’ on the recommendation of a competent naval or military authority or of one of the advisory committees.”<sup>155</sup> With Americans acting as intermediaries, both the British and Germany governments agreed to repatriate women, children, elderly men, and ministers in the fall of 1914. No policy was created until 1917 for the repatriation of men for fear that many

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<sup>151</sup> “The Naturalised Subject: British Allegiance To Be Emphasized,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1915.

<sup>152</sup> “Alien Enemies: Naturalised Germans,” *The Manchester Guardian*, June 30, 1916.

<sup>153</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 78-80.

<sup>154</sup> Henry Lucy, “The Enemy Within Our Gates,” *The Observer*, May 16, 1915.

<sup>155</sup> Defence of the Realm Regulations Consolidated and Revised to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1917, quoted in Panayi, “An Intolerant Act By An Intolerant Society,” 59.



would join enemy forces. But the public, and many in the government, supported the repatriation of as many enemy aliens as possible, so Asquith's cabinet, and the German and Austrian governments, agreed to finance the transport of any who could not afford the fare. Bird estimates that by December 1914, approximately 7,000 women and children had left Britain. During the period following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, repatriation efforts were increased and nearly 10,000 left the country.<sup>156</sup>

Despite the implementation of this new policy of internment, many MPs were critical of the Home Office, and complained it was not doing enough to secure Britain. In the initial days of the internment operation, riots continued when people saw that the police did not intern all aliens. For example, reports emerged from north London that German shops were vandalized and robbed. On May 16, in a meeting of the House of Commons, Sir Henry Dalziel suggested stronger measures against enemy aliens. The Under-Secretary for War was not prepared to announce a new internment policy, however, continuing the confusion over which government branch had responsibility.<sup>157</sup> In June 1915, Sir John Simon took over as Home Secretary, and immediately had to answer questions in Parliament as to why the internment operation was moving so slowly.<sup>158</sup> A year later, in June 1916, MPs stated that the Home Office "lagged behind public opinion, which demanded that every enemy alien should be interned or repatriated," unless there was a compelling reason for leniency.<sup>159</sup> The Home Secretary responded that only 6,500 enemy alien males were granted exemptions by the Advisory Committee, a number too great for many in Parliament.

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<sup>156</sup> Bird, *Control of Enemy Alien Civilians*, 173-174.

<sup>157</sup> Lucy, "The Enemy Within Our Gates," May 16, 1915.

<sup>158</sup> "Enemy Alien Dangers: Rapid Progress with Internment," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 18, 1915.

<sup>159</sup> "Alien Enemies: Home Office Criticised," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 30, 1916.

Cohen-Portheim disagreed with the logic for the internment of all enemy aliens, instead implying that Asquith was reacting to popular opinion which had become a major force behind Liberal Party legislation. He stated,

Originally there had been some sense in it: the Government had interned those whom they knew to be, or believed to be, dangerous, and they had to be guarded. But later on, as a result of press-campaigns, or nervousness, of some people's vindictiveness or else by way of reprisal they had laid their hands on many thousands who they knew to be perfectly harmless... There was no justification for all this, but there was a reason: it was much the simplest thing to do.<sup>160</sup>

According to B.E. Sargeant, Secretary and Treasurer of the Isle of Man government, "The Imperial Authorities were incessant in their demand for additional accommodation to meet the round ups of alien enemies, made time to time, as public opinion expressed itself in pronounced and violent form."<sup>161</sup> The enemy aliens being collected for internment had little idea what to expect. Cohen-Portheim asked a police officer what to pack for his internment, and the officer replied, 'I would pack as if you were going for a holiday,' It was to be a protracted holiday....<sup>162</sup>

In the decade before World War I, the Liberal government took a decisive step away from the previous open-door policy of immigration with the Aliens Act of 1905. After World War I commenced, Asquith's government continued to pass legislation that moved increasingly farther away from the liberal principles that had governed the party for so long with the Defence of the Realm Act which interfered directly with the civil liberties of aliens and naturalized citizens. Many in the party thought that these acts were necessary to manage the growing public dissatisfaction.

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<sup>160</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 79-80.

<sup>161</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 77-78.

<sup>162</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 21.

### Chapter 3: The Internment Camps

The internment operation exposed the Liberal Party to an entirely new type of government intervention. Although Asquith and then Lloyd George might avow that the internment of aliens was for their own safety, the fact was that thousands of men who had committed no crime were simply imprisoned. Although the British conducted an internment operation in South Africa during the Boer War, this was the first occurrence of a comprehensive internment in Britain. The consequences were extensive for both the men interned and their families left behind, and even for British civilians in Germany, who also faced internment. When the war finally ended in 1918, the German population in Britain, and both the Liberal Party and liberal ideals, was irrevocably altered.

Although the Home Office opened many camps throughout the country, the two largest camps were located on the Isle of Man, and will therefore receive the majority of analysis. The Isle of Man was an ideal location for the British to set up additional internment camps, and in September of 1914 representatives from the Civilian Internment Camps Committee traveled to the island to determine if it could accommodate civilian internees. The island comprises 227 square miles of land, and in 1914 had a population of 50,000. As a self-governing British Crown Dependency, the Manx government remained loyal and willing to work with the British government. The island had two sites with enough space to house a large number of men; little time and effort was needed to make the areas ready for prisoners. In total, approximately 29,000 prisoners were interned in Douglas Camp on the east side of the island and Knockaloe Camp on the west side during the war.<sup>163</sup> The Manx government was responsible for “the erection,

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<sup>163</sup>Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 3.

maintenance, equipment, and civil administration of the internment camps.”<sup>164</sup> The camps were maintained with imperial funds and help from the Destitute Aliens Committee.<sup>165</sup>

The Destitute Aliens Committee, later combined with the Civilian Internment Camps Committee, was a subsidiary body of the Home Office, composed of representatives from the Home Office, Local Government Board, War Office, and Metropolitan Police.<sup>166</sup> Immediately following the initial passage of D.O.R.A. and mandatory registration, Home Secretary McKenna appointed the Destitute Aliens Committee to focus exclusively on the treatment of enemy aliens and issues such as repatriation, accommodation, and financial assistance.<sup>167</sup> The Committee was responsible for controlling and coordinating donations from charitable societies for internees in addition to the other responsibilities previously mentioned. This was not the only committee that attempted to aid distressed aliens. For example, the Special War Distress Committee wrote to *The Manchester Guardian* for assistance for the 1,000 cases since the beginning of the war.

On September 22, 1914, the first enemy alien prisoners arrived on the Isle of Man to begin their internment.<sup>168</sup> Their destination was the Douglas Camp. Commandeered by the British government earlier in September, Douglas was originally Cunningham’s Holiday Camp, a holiday retreat site for young men from both Britain and Ireland since 1894. Cunningham’s Camp was selected for an internment camp because of the various structures already onsite. The camp included a dining hall and many tents where the prisoners were to be housed with straw mattresses. The men lived eight to a tent, double the four that usually stayed there. Joseph Cunningham, deprived of his Holiday Camp income, was contracted to supply the camp and

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<sup>164</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 13.

<sup>165</sup> Margery West, *Island at War: The Remarkable Role Played by the small Manx Nation in the Great War 1914-1918* (Laxey: Western Books, 1986), 86.

<sup>166</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 107.

<sup>167</sup> “The Alien Enemy: Care of Destitute Aliens,” *The Times* September 2, 1914.

<sup>168</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 62.

cater the food for the prisoners. Within three weeks of the first prisoners arriving, the camp was filled to capacity.<sup>169</sup> Manx volunteers were employed to guard the prisoners in the camps, in addition to escorting prisoners between the entry harbors and camps.<sup>170</sup>

A wide variety of prisoners from various professions and various economic classes were interned together. According to Sargeant, “There were managers of hotels, chefs of fashionable London restaurants, eminent musicians, business men, hairdressers, waiters, seamen, and representatives of numerous other callings.”<sup>171</sup> The division between rich and poor was replicated inside the camps, and a hierarchy developed quickly at Douglas Camp based on religion and on financial means. The “Privilege Camp” was composed of 400 to 500 men who paid ten shillings per week.<sup>172</sup> This section of Douglas was considered one of the most comfortable internment camps among the prisoners; internees could even pay extra for private accommodations and the employment of other prisoners as personal servants.<sup>173</sup> The second, and largest, section in Douglas was “Ordinary Camp.” Men in Ordinary Camp had more trouble finding income to supplement internment life. The last section housed Jewish men, who were provided with special considerations such as a kosher butcher and a location to celebrate Jewish holidays.

At Douglas Camp, prisoners attempted to keep life as normal as possible. Waiters for the camp were chosen from those employed in that occupation before the start of the war. Sports were permitted; the prisoners had access to a swimming pool, live music at mealtimes, and evening concerts. Despite all these options, morale was naturally very low. Not only had the

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<sup>169</sup> Jill Drower, *Good Clean Fun: The Story of Britain's First Holiday Camp* (London: CTD Printers, LTD, 1982), 41-42.

<sup>170</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 24.

<sup>171</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 79.

<sup>172</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 9.

<sup>173</sup> West, *Island at War*, 87.

men been taken away from their families, but they had no idea how long they would be interned.<sup>174</sup>

By October 1914, the mood at Douglas Camp became even more depressed as it became clear that the war would not be over as soon as everyone anticipated. Camp administrators halted the evening entertainment because it was becoming blatantly anti-British. It was a rainy month, so tent life was cold, wet and muddy for the prisoners. Colonel Madoc, the superintendent of Douglas camp, immediately realized the problem associated with the internees' living quarters.<sup>175</sup> The group of prisoners responsible for constructing new wooden bungalows decided to strike, forcing the internees to continue living in tents. In November, prisoners were making impassioned speeches at mealtimes and singing German patriotic songs, much to the dismay of the guards. Complaints about the food, which had worms in it, began to pervade the camp administration. On November 17<sup>th</sup> a hunger strike began. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the waiters refused to enter the kitchen, the men sang German songs at dinner, and displayed a German flag. The next day the men started a riot by refusing to wear their identification badges in the morning. Another riot began during the lunchtime meal. Soldiers in the dining hall began firing and six prisoners were killed. Camp officials censored this information from the press for several days. An inquest into the prisoners' deaths found "that the five deaths were caused by justifiable measures forced upon military authorities by the riotous behavior of a large section of the prisoners interned."<sup>176</sup> After these riots, the conditions at Douglas camp began to slowly improve, but representatives from the Civilian Internment Camps Committee visited the island to look for a suitable location for another site to help eliminate overcrowding at Douglas Camp.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Drower, *Good Clean Fun*, 42.

<sup>175</sup> West, *Island at War*, 86.

<sup>176</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 65.

<sup>177</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 65.

Construction on Knockaloe camp began soon after on the west side of the Isle of Man at Knockaloe Moar, near the town of Peel.<sup>178</sup>

To avoid depression, the men at Douglas Camp attempted to carry on life as normal. The prisoners celebrated Christmas in 1914. Many carried on their pre-war occupations, while others found employment around the camp. The camp was large enough for some men to open their own businesses, such as a barbershop, tailor shop and laundry service. The *Camp Echo* newspaper was founded, and had a large number of subscriptions. Artists were commissioned for paintings, and trained musicians even put on music concerts. The prisoners were allowed to walk outside the fences with an escort of Isle of Man volunteers until May 12, 1915, when these excursions were halted after prisoners cheered when they read newspaper reports on the sinking of the *Lusitania*.<sup>179</sup>

By 1916, ironically, 85 percent of men in the camps had regular employment compared to the high level of unemployment in Britain before and after the war.<sup>180</sup> There was a camp hospital, mail room, school, and library. Over a thousand men attended classes at the camp school in disciplines like languages, typing, and art. The camp administration allowed the men to contract their labor out at local farms and building sites for jobs such as farming, rock quarry work, and drainage,<sup>181</sup> since many of the men from the Isle of Man had joined the war effort by enlisting, therefore causing a labor shortage. The prisoners worked for nearly nothing (sixpence an hour) and worked forty-six hour weeks. Confident vacation travelers would return once the war was over, Joseph Cunningham used prisoners to make improvements to the holiday camp. He was not mistaken, for the camp reached an all-time high popularity in the years immediately

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<sup>178</sup> Drower, *Good Clean Fun*, 45-46.

<sup>179</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 64-65.

<sup>180</sup> Drower, *Good Clean Fun*, 49.

<sup>181</sup> West, *Island at War*, 90.

following the war.<sup>182</sup> The patrons did not seem to mind they were living in a former internment camp.

Despite the return to stability, and seeming acceptance of their current fate, some men refused to settle. In total, there were ninety-eight attempted escapes; none were ever successful.<sup>183</sup> The only way off the Island was by boat, and every harbor was on high alert once a prisoner was reported missing. The man who came closest to escaping was Georg von Streng in June 1916. He attempted to swim out to a steamer in Douglas Harbor, but he could not reach it before it departed and was apprehended. It was his fourth escape attempt.<sup>184</sup>

Knockaloe Camp, near Peel on the western side of the Isle of Man, was opened to help with overcrowding in Douglas Camp in early 1915. Knockaloe covered 22 acres and had three miles of internal roadways. It was initially designed to hold 5,000 men, but by 1918 approximately 23,000 were interned there.<sup>185</sup> The British government had to take on much more construction to prepare Knockaloe for prisoners than in Douglas camp. Water mains and drainage systems had to be installed before any prisoners could be moved there. The Manx government organized a large civilian staff, furniture, clothing, and stores before the camp opened. It also constructed a new railway to transport prisoners directly from Peel, and opened a camp bank.<sup>186</sup>

Twenty-three compounds held approximately 1,000 prisoners each. Each compound included four camps as well as a hospital and medical staff, and each camp had the resources to create separate hospitals for the treatment of venereal disease and tuberculosis.<sup>187</sup> Cohen-

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<sup>182</sup> Drower, *Good Clean Fun*, 50.

<sup>183</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 61.

<sup>184</sup> Drower, *Good Clean Fun*, 47-48.

<sup>185</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> West, *Island At War*, 92.

<sup>187</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 80.



Portheim was taken to the hospital for flu, and these resources contributed to a low mortality rate among the prisoners.<sup>188</sup> However, Knockaloe still inspired a sense of dread among new arrivals.

According to Stoffa:

I soon discovered why the camp at Knockaloe inspired such dread amongst the inhabitants of the Alexandra Palace. Here internment was reduced to its simple elements: barbed-wire, huts, mud...no permanent buildings and no visitors, it was the home of make-shift, grim, cold and monotonous.<sup>189</sup>

According to Cohen-Portheim, Knockaloe was composed of fifty percent sailors; forty percent waiters, barbers, tradesmen, and servants; and ten percent businessmen.<sup>190</sup> Prisoners were given daily rations, and they could purchase extra at the canteen, except alcohol. Rationing was enforced in 1917, and again in 1918, due to the food shortages on the Isle of Man and in Britain, but prisoners were also permitted to receive food from relatives. A special officer was employed by Knockaloe Camp to deal solely with censoring the massive amounts of prisoner mail. Each letter, postcard, and parcel had to be translated and examined, and Sargeant reports the use of invisible ink and hidden messages found in various types of food, such as walnuts.<sup>191</sup> According to Cohen-Portheim, prisoners were forbidden to write about the war or camp conditions.<sup>192</sup>

Like Douglas Camp, Knockaloe had many theaters, with musicians well represented. Herr Sterball, a former member of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in London, commanded forty musicians in the camp orchestra. The Knockaloe *Lager Zeitung* (Camp Gazette) was published monthly and reached a circulation of approximately 700 copies. All of the proceeds went to aid prisoners with no other form of income. The prisoners also contributed to almanacs and

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<sup>188</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 73.

<sup>189</sup> Stoffa, *Round the World to Freedom*, 232.

<sup>190</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 44.

<sup>191</sup> Sargeant, *The Isle of Man and the Great War*, 71.

<sup>192</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 43.

produced Easter cards.<sup>193</sup> There were also many opportunities for exercise including boxing and wrestling clubs, cricket, tennis courts, and gymnastics. According to Cohen-Portheim, “we were now marched twice a week...All sorts of games were played; football...the birthplace of German boxing...”<sup>194</sup> Each camp formed its own football team, and the men had inter-camp matches. As in Douglas, each camp had its own theater where they performed plays and had multiple orchestras. The school at Knockaloe was more extensive than the one found at Douglas due to the much larger population there, and by 1917, featured seventeen different types of classes.

At Knockaloe, 72 percent of prisoners had work as boot-makers, tailors, joiners, plumbers, woodworkers, gardeners, latrine men, police, coal and railway workers, construction and agricultural work parties.<sup>195</sup> Prisoners at Knockaloe also began a large furniture-making business. The furniture made there was exported through the Friends Emergency Committee and, ironically, sold to families who had lost everything in France.<sup>196</sup>

The mass internment that was ordered in 1915 caused much confusion, and several problems. Both Stoffa and Cohen-Portheim mention acquaintances that clearly should not have been placed in internment camps. Schulz, a Mexican citizen, who spoke little English and no German, was interned with Cohen-Portheim simply because his name was German. Another was Billie, an English boy raised in Australia who was on his way to England from Belgium, but had no passport. Found sketching buildings at the port in Southampton after disembarking from his boat, he was promptly arrested. These examples show the inadequate job the British government did in determining who was a threat to the war effort. The British government

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<sup>193</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 28.

<sup>194</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 57.

<sup>195</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 21.

<sup>196</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 25.

acquiesced to popular demands to intern everyone instead of making decisions on a case-by-case basis.

The camp divisions were a “microcosm of the tensions in the wider society and also the political rivalry between sections of the German population.”<sup>197</sup> Stoffa alludes to divisions not only by wealth, but also by nationality, “Society at large and the Central Empires in particular were faithfully reflected in this microcosm.”<sup>198</sup> He states that Germans took the lead in camp affairs, and patronized the Austrians who lacked cohesion. The Hungarians were the artistic, small group, and they received special privileges from the camp director.

Cohen-Portheim also discusses hierarchies that formed at Knockaloe due to preferential treatment. He claims conflict arose because people were being punished without having committed a crime, and could not face their true enemies: the soldiers who are keeping them imprisoned.<sup>199</sup> In the first year of Cohen-Portheim’s internment, he claims that men were tolerant of each other because they were certain the war could not last much longer. By 1918, nerves were frayed and the years had passed by endlessly; therefore, men began to take out their frustrations on each other<sup>200</sup> since there was no other alternative. Cohen-Portheim states, “The moneyless distrusted all the moneyed...the sailors loathed the waiters and barbers...the camp was breaking into hostile factions...They had nothing else to do but grumble or quarrel!”<sup>201</sup>

One affliction suffered by men in both the Douglas and Knockaloe camps was referred to as “barbed-wire disease.” The symptoms included “moroseness, avoidance of others, and an aimless promenading up and down the barbed-wire boundary of the compound like a wild animal

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<sup>197</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,”35.

<sup>198</sup> Stoffa, *Round the World to Freedom*, 190-191.

<sup>199</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 38.

<sup>200</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 53-54.

<sup>201</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 56.

in a cage.”<sup>202</sup> An in-depth study of this disease was conducted by Swiss doctor A.L. Vischer, who studied the mental conditions in multiple prisoner camps during World War I. Barbed-wire disease came out of restrictions in habits and space, limited variations in diet, separation from loved ones, constant supervision, and an utter lack of privacy.<sup>203</sup> Another important cause of the disease resulted from the prisoners not knowing how long their internment would last. Vischer cites many letters found in the Knockaloe newspaper, *Lager Echo*, which convey the hopelessness and depression that many of the men felt. So many were afflicted with this condition that at the 1917 Hague meeting between Germany and Britain, they discussed sending prisoners so afflicted to neutral countries for internment.<sup>204</sup> They also discussed “provisions for the improvement of camp conditions in regard to food, employment, and for selecting the fairest way, and with special regard for the sick and wounded, the men chosen for repatriation or for the internment in neutral countries.”<sup>205</sup> Unfortunately no agreement was ever reached between the two nations until 1917.

According to Vischer, civilian internees were especially susceptible to barbed-wire disease because “to such people restraint comes very much harder than to officers and men who by their barrack life are prepared to some extent the leveling influence of the uniform with its exclusion of individuality....”<sup>206</sup> According to Cohen-Portheim, “In 1918 and 1919 Knockaloe apparently contained hordes of completely brutalized or broken men....”<sup>207</sup> When asked why he was walking around camp looking ‘like a wild beast’ by the camp Commandant, one prisoner replied, ‘You have put me in a cage like a wild beast haven’t you.’<sup>208</sup> Cohen-Portheim

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<sup>202</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 19.

<sup>203</sup> A.L. Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of Prisoners of War* (London, 1919), 27-28.

<sup>204</sup> Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, 53.

<sup>205</sup> Panayi. *The Enemy in our Midst*, 89.

<sup>206</sup> Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, 55.

<sup>207</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 34.

<sup>208</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 52.

discusses how the men felt useless, how their existence was aimless and their imprisonment endless, and worst of all, how one could never be alone. These feelings explain his memoir title, *Time Stood Still*; as the monotony of life in the camp continued for years, it seemed that for some, at least, lost all consciousness of time.

Camp organizers did not want morale to remain low, because low morale might lead to acts of defiance. According to Vischer, the more favorable type of internment camps were labor camps, “where the men are not so thickly aggregated and are engaged in agriculture.”<sup>209</sup> Camp organizers were likely unaware of Vischer’s study, but they did eventually discover that occupied prisoners were happier prisoners. Improvements were attempted by both camps to help prisoners avoid barbed-wire disease and depression by keeping them busy and by providing work opportunities. Not only did this provide prisoners with needed distractions, but it also gave the prisoners an opportunity to earn money for improving their living situation in the camps. The Friends Emergency Committee visited the camps and provided books, tools, equipment, and materials for work to aid the prisoners.<sup>210</sup>

In June of 1916, British Home Secretary Herbert Samuel visited the Isle of Man to inspect the internment camps, and he was pleased with what he observed.<sup>211</sup> Samuel was not the only dignitary to visit the camps during the war. From 1914-1916 the American Embassy, as a neutral nation, looked after the interests of German and Austrian prisoners. In 1917, after the United States officially joined the war, the Swedish and Swiss legations took responsibility for German and Austrian internees’ interests. The Home Office invited journalists to observe conditions on the Isle of Man, and George Leach of the *Manchester Guardian* wrote in October of 1916: “We stood on the hillside surveying the wide stretch of Knockaloe camp, the great and

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<sup>209</sup> Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, 56.

<sup>210</sup> Cresswell, *Living With the Wire*, 19.

<sup>211</sup> West, *Island At War*, 95.

strange cosmopolitan town where the streets are formed of double-ribbed barbed wire and where the compounds, for all their spaciousness, look like enormous cages without tops.”<sup>212</sup>

British authorities constantly argued that the prisoners interned in Britain were receiving the same treatment as British civilians interned in Germany. In fact, many believed the Germans were receiving better treatment; in early 1915, *The Manchester Guardian* reported a complaint by Lord Beresford that “British prisoners in Germany were treated as convicts, while German prisoners in this country were treated as if they were an honorable foe...”<sup>213</sup> Two months later the paper reported that “on the whole the interned prisoners are fairly content with their lot.”<sup>214</sup> William Le Queux condemned this supposed superior treatment of German prisoners because of the terrible treatment British prisoners were reportedly receiving.<sup>215</sup> According to Cohen-Portheim, “That sufficed as an explanation of anything during the war...”<sup>216</sup> Some members of the British press, especially Lord Northcliffe, stated that German internees were receiving “foolish generosity,” while British prisoners in German internment camps “were being treated abominably.”<sup>217</sup> Lord Northcliffe owned multiple newspapers including *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, and *Weekly Dispatch*, and was very critical of the Asquith government. These types of false reports caused the British people to be angry with the government, but also caused them to be proud of “such a show of characteristically British magnanimity...”<sup>218</sup> These sentiments convey attitudes felt by the British population before the decline of liberalism; clearly not all of it had been stamped out yet.

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<sup>212</sup> West, *Island At War*, 97.

<sup>213</sup> “House of Commons: The Treatment of Prisoners,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>214</sup> “Rounding-Up the Aliens: Conditions in the Internment Camps,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 15, 1915.

<sup>215</sup> Le Queux, *Britain’s Deadly Peril*, 117.

<sup>216</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 71.

<sup>217</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 74.

<sup>218</sup> Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 74.

It is important to understand how the women and children of enemy aliens were affected during World War I. Although women were not subject to the same internment policy as male aliens, they were suspect and subjected to the suspension of many civil rights. Their lives were irreparably altered by the government's actions over the course of the war. Legally, women and children were defined by their husband's official status. The anti-liberal trend that was permeating British policy towards emigration in the late 1860s also affected policy regarding a woman's nationality. Prior to 1870, marriage did not change a woman's status. However, the Naturalisation Act of 1870 stated "A woman shall be deemed to be the subject of the state of which her husband is for the time being a subject."<sup>219</sup> This Act also revoked women's right to naturalization, and the consent to marriage with an alien was also a de facto consent to expatriation. This policy was reinforced under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act (BNSA) of 1914 which stated that women, despite their nationality at birth were defined by their husbands; "the wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject, and the wife of an alien shall be deemed to be an alien."<sup>220</sup> This renewal of this act was unpopular, as showcased by a letter to the editor of *The Times* which states that the law ties women "with a heavy chain which binds them as chattels to follow their husband's choice of nationality."<sup>221</sup> This letter also pleaded that the government allow women the right to choose nationality for themselves. The BNSA also instituted a five year residency requirement for naturalization to prevent a mass influx of immigrants during the war.

Chapter two examined the intense measures taken by the Home Office against enemy aliens through D.O.R.A., and these measures affected women and children as well, although in

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<sup>219</sup> Page M. Baldwin, "Subject to Empire: Married Women and the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act," *The Journal of British Studies*, 40 (October 2001), 526.

<sup>220</sup> Baldwin, "Subject to Empire," 522.

<sup>221</sup> "British Wives and Foreign Husbands: Rights of Married Women," *The Times*, June 16, 1914.

different ways. Their civil liberties and freedom of movement were suspended. A woman who did not obtain a permit before traveling more than five miles from her home, was arrested and sent immediately to prison.<sup>222</sup> When Asquith amended the interment policy in May of 1915, there was no organization or plan in place to deal with the process for repatriation.

Approximately 7,000 enemy alien women were repatriated by early 1915, and single women were sometimes imprisoned while awaiting repatriation.<sup>223</sup> Not only were women subject to the D.O.R.A. and Aliens Restriction Act, but they were often left in precarious financial positions when their husbands were interned. The government did little to help the women and children left behind. The Home Office did create a Destitute Aliens Committee, which was renamed the Civilian Internment Camps Committee in 1916, but this organization was ineffective. Private organizations provided assistance when possible. For example, the Society of Friends provided aid for the interned men and their wives and children left behind. Significantly, this organization also made contact with a similar organization in Berlin. Another organization was the Society for the Relief of Distressed Foreigners, which was established in 1847. These two organizations reportedly attempted to spread positive news regarding the treatment of enemy aliens.<sup>224</sup>

The Home Office did document complaints and attacks against German women and children.

Some British-born women were imprisoned on espionage charges and D.O.R.A. violations, and spy fever did include fear of female operatives working for Germany. For example, Martha Earle, who attained British citizenship through marriage, was arrested and subsequently imprisoned following the confiscation of letters to her sister in Germany, which were found to provide information through a secret code.<sup>225</sup> Other women imprisoned on

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<sup>222</sup> "Enemy Aliens: In the Courts," *The Times*, October 24, 1914.

<sup>223</sup> Proctor, *Female Intelligence*, 33.

<sup>224</sup> "Reprisals of Good: Assistance for Alien Enemies," *The Times*, September 29, 1916.

<sup>225</sup> Proctor, *Female Intelligence*, 29.



D.O.R.A. violations included Milly Rocker, the wife of author Rudolph Rocker, and an interned enemy alien, who was imprisoned for her radical political views. The wife of D.H. Lawrence, who was German by birth, was forced to relocate with her husband due to D.O.R.A. restrictions on where Germans could legally reside. Registration was required through 1919, and property might be confiscated as security for the German war debt.<sup>226</sup> Without legal British nationality, employment and civil rights were also limited. A crucial loss for many feminist organizations was the loss of enemy alien women's franchise, which many had worked hard to attain in the preceding decades.

There were different public perceptions of British-born wives who gained alien status through marriage versus foreign women who gained British status. Various media outlets printed many demonstrations of sympathy for British women forced into poverty and exile because of their marriage to an alien. On September 6, 1918, the *Manchester Guardian* printed

It counts for nothing that they have fathers, brothers, or sons in our armies. It counts for nothing that they are of English birth, have brought up families in England, and can speak no word of German...As it is, their homes have been broken up, the bread-winner is taken away, the wife and mother is allowed [12s.] a week for herself and [3x.] for each child, and employment is difficult to get because of her name...The reality includes a hapless English woman, and still more hapless English child, deprived of husband and father, of income, home, and comfort, an finally driven by poverty to a land where they will be held even more alien than here....<sup>227</sup>

The Home Secretary even admitted that a woman may or may not adopt her husband's sympathies. *The Manchester Guardian* took this sentiment a step further by stating that according to "rational justice" people should be dealt with according to their actions, not the actions of their associates.<sup>228</sup> *The Times* published correspondence between Sir Henry Dalziel, head of the Advisory Committee, and Sir George Cave, Home Secretary following Reginald

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<sup>226</sup> Baldwin, "Subject to Empire," 534.

<sup>227</sup> "The Exile of English Women," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 6, 1918.

<sup>228</sup> "Technical Enemy Aliens," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 12, 1918.

McKenna. Dalziel was appalled that reports surfaced that British-born women were being forcibly deported to Germany. Cave strongly denied that the Home Office had implemented any such policy, stating that the only British-born women who returned to Germany did so voluntarily because some “found that life here is made intolerable for them....”<sup>229</sup>

The editor of the *The Times* received many letters imploring relief for the British-born wives of Germans. *The Times* also printed a letter to the editor by author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which proposed that the government turn present separations of British-born wives and their enemy alien husbands into divorce. He reportedly received letters from women begging to escape from their terrible situation.<sup>230</sup> This letter had many opponents who suggested the idea “is a suggestion to which no thoughtful person can lightly give adherence....”<sup>231</sup>

There was a negative portrayal of women that became British by marriage, and their allegiance to the Britain was constantly questioned. New organizations, such as the Anti-German Union, called for the internment of all aliens, both male and female, excepting British-born females married to aliens. Media and entertainment reflected this negative image. For example, Gullace discusses the *The Female Hun*, a play produced in 1918, which depicts an evil German female spy, who manages to marry an unsuspecting British General, thus becoming a British citizen. However, the new legal status does not change the woman’s allegiance to the Kaiser, and she actively tries to steal plans for an airplane and information about British attacks on Germany. “Punch,” a satirical cartoon magazine, also fueled anti-German sentiments by portraying women as spies. *The Manchester Guardian* published editorials explaining how dangerous enemy alien women could become,

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<sup>229</sup> “British-Born Wives of Germans: No Enforced Deportation,” *The Times*, September 14, 1918.

<sup>230</sup> “British Wives of Germans: An Outcome of the War,” *The Times*, September 23, 1917.

<sup>231</sup> “Separation and Divorce: To the Editor of *The Times*,” *The Times*, September 4, 1917.

Something should be done to the alien women who were living in the prohibited area, because women were just as capable as men of conveying information by signals. The internment of women would be quite a new practice. The general ground upon which men were interned was that they were dangerous, likely to be dangerous, or possibly dangerous. But in the case of women it would be practically impossible to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, and all women of German nationality would have to be interned. That would be impractical. There were many persons who, though technically enemies were as British in feeling as any member of the House.<sup>232</sup>

In 1918 a deputation representing seventeen different women's organizations, organized by the National Union of Women Workers, visited Home Secretary Cave to urge an amendment to the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act providing women with the right to retain their nationality upon marriage to an alien. This group included members from British Dominion's Woman Suffrage Union, the Fabian Women's Group, and the National Adult School Union. This group stated that many British-born women married to aliens did retain their nationalist feelings for Britain.<sup>233</sup> Many of these women's organizations campaigned for equal nationality laws, including the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), the National Council of Women, the Six Point Group, the Women's Freedom League, and the British Commonwealth League, the Women's Co-Operative Guild, and the Women's Guild of Empire. These groups urged parliament to provide women with "the same choice of nationality as a man."<sup>234</sup> MPs requested that women of British birth retain their nationality regardless if their husbands were considered enemy aliens.<sup>235</sup> During the war years, British-born wives of enemy aliens were permitted to resume British nationality through naturalization procedures implemented in 1918. The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Bill was renewed in 1918

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<sup>232</sup> "House of Commons: Aliens and Suspected Persons, The Responsibility for Interment," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1915.

<sup>233</sup> "Aliens' British Wives: Empire Nationality Law Needed," *The Times*, September 12, 1918.

<sup>234</sup> Baldwin, "Subject to Empire," 529.

<sup>235</sup> "House of Commons: The Married Woman's Case," *The Manchester Guardian*, July 20, 1918.

with new provisions for women. However, women's legal status did not change until 1948, when Parliament permitted women to retain their nationality regardless of marriage.

British civilians in Germany were subjected to similar measures after the start of the war. Like the British, in July 1914, the German government did not have a developed plan for internment of enemy aliens. The government did effectively hold enemy aliens prisoner in the country by preventing all foreign ships from leaving ports without explicit permission from the navy and taking control of all railways. However, Matthew Stibbe states that it was understood that the government was unconcerned with enemy alien civilians, and did not see them as a security risk, and would permit them to return home following the army's mobilization.<sup>236</sup> Like the British, the Germans initially struggled with determining who would lead internment or repatriation operations. The German interior was divided into twenty-four army corps districts during wartime, whose orders superseded the government in Berlin, making any unified response difficult. The German Foreign Office, the Reich Interior, Naval Offices, police, provincial governors, and Prussian Interior and War Ministries were all involved in the decision over internment policies. If enemy aliens were not interned, the army needed to decide what rights they would retain, or how they would be classified. Especially in the case of students or detained tourists, the government would become financially responsible.

The German government was not oblivious to the possibility of British internment operations against Germans in Britain. *The Times* published an article from the *Cologne Gazette* which stated "He [Britain] is now quite out of control, and yet will not see that he himself and his actions are to blame for the loss of his safe insular comfort...."<sup>237</sup> According to the Prussian Interior Minister, regarding enemy aliens, "Any attempts to make their situation more difficult

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<sup>236</sup> Stibbe, "A Question of Retaliation?", 6.

<sup>237</sup> "Through German Eyes: The Hysteria of War," *The Times*, November 10, 1914.

should be avoided-not least in consideration of the interests of Germans living in enemy countries.<sup>238</sup> Reprisals were an issue that the British also worried about, and according to *The Times* the German government was willing to take action against British civilians upon hearing about the treatment Germans were receiving in internment camps.<sup>239</sup> *The Observer* reported on November 1, 1914

Measures will shortly be taken in Germany if England is not prepared immediately to release all German prisoners...with a view to obtaining better treatment for the German prisoners of war on the ground that the German Government will probably yield to the pressure of public opinion and will take reprisals.<sup>240</sup>

*The Manchester Guardian* refuted German claims that the British were allowing enemy alien women to starve and be subjected to harassment by the rest of the population. The same article discusses the formation of the Central Council of the United Alien Relief Society, which was supported by the Home Office. This organization provided relief in the form of medical treatment, clothing, aid with repatriation, and food.<sup>241</sup>

On November 6, 1914 the German government ordered the internment of all British male civilians between the ages of 17 and 55, to prevent these men from joining British armed forces. Four to five thousand British civilians were sent to Ruhleben camp, a former racetrack outside of Berlin, which held the majority of British civilian prisoners for the duration of the war. These civilians included sailors trapped in German ports, students, businessmen, and tourists. Approximately one-fifth of interned British civilians were called “Scheinengländer” and had been living in Germany for years and likely considered themselves loyal Germans.<sup>242</sup> Matthew Stibbe offers several reasons to explain the German policy of internment: retaliation against

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<sup>238</sup> Prussian Minister of Interior to all provincial governors, 20 August 1914, B1.37-8. Cf Jahr, “Zivilisten als Kriegsgefangene,” in Stibbe, “A Question of Retaliation?,” 7.

<sup>239</sup> “Through German Eyes: The Talk of ‘Reprisals,’” *The Times*, November 10, 1914.

<sup>240</sup> “Enemy Aliens in England: Threat of German Reprisals,” *The Observer*, November 1, 1914.

<sup>241</sup> “British Aid for Distressed Enemy Aliens,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 6, 1915.

<sup>242</sup> Stibbe, “A Question of Retaliation?,” 4.

British policies, frustration over military failures at the outbreak of the war, and an attempt to restore morale on the home front.<sup>243</sup>

Christoph Jahr also supports the conclusion that Germany's internment policy was a reaction, at least in part, to Britain's. However, there were far fewer civilian men of military age in Germany than in Britain. Stibbe estimates that only 4,000 of the British interned were of military age, in comparison with approximately 32,000 Germans of military age interned in Britain.<sup>244</sup> These numbers help explain why the British government showed little interest in prisoner exchange with Germany, the number of prisoners that would be conscripted into the Germany army was simply too great.

A series of agreements between the British and Germans between September and October 1914 permitted women and children under 17, doctors, priests, and men over 55 to return to Britain if they wished. However, there was pressure to implement internment policies in retaliation for the harsh treatment Germans in Britain were receiving, especially following violence against Germans in Deptford on October 18-19. Israel Cohen, a British correspondent for *The Times*, describing the atmosphere in Germany:

The horizon gradually darkened. Disquieting stories began to appear in the daily press of the arrest and internment in England of all Germans of military age. Liberal papers... began to yield to the popular clamour and declared that if the stories about Germans in England proved to be true, it would only be right to adopt similar measures against Englishmen in Germany....<sup>245</sup>

In fact on October 31, 1914, the Deputy Chief of General Staff issued an ultimatum to the British authorities: unless all interned Germans in Britain were released by November 5, all British citizens in Germany would be interned immediately.

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<sup>243</sup> Stibbe, "A Question of Retaliation?", 2.

<sup>244</sup> Stibbe, "A Question of Retaliation?", 4.

<sup>245</sup> Israel Cohen, *The Ruhleben Prison Camp*, 21-22 quoted in Stibbe, "A Question of Retaliation?," 12.

Civilian internment did commence in November 1914. Civilians were arrested, usually in their homes, and held in local police stations before being transported to Berlin. In January 1915, the German government extended internment to citizens of British colonies. The population at Ruhleben camp had already reached approximately 4,000.<sup>246</sup> Stibbe states that internment measures were portrayed as part of the war effort to increase the bargaining power of Germany. Unfortunately for Germany, this method backfired, as there were no more British civilians to intern after 1915, while Britain did not reach the height of its internment program until after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915.<sup>247</sup> Not only was this plan ineffective, but in June of 1916 an American report stated that British internees were only receiving half the amount of required rations per day according to the Hague Convention of 1907. Germany was experiencing a food crisis already, and could not afford to provide prisoners with more rations than its own citizens without a national outcry. The German government continued to explore prisoner exchange deals with the British, but these were not implemented until 1917.

The narrative *In the Hands of the Huns*, published anonymously in London in 1916, details the experiences of one male civilian prisoner in Ruhleben camp, and offers “a taste of the brutal system of Prussian militarism, or the dog-like treatment meted out in war-time to a hated Britisher who has the misfortune to fall into the hands of the disciples of ‘Kultur.’”<sup>248</sup> The author and his family were on a holiday traveling through western Germany in late July 1914 when war was declared. They were denied train tickets, and instead forced to remain in Karlsruhe. On October 2, military authorities permitted the author’s wife and daughter to return to England, though he was forced to stay. On October 25, the author read newspaper reports that

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<sup>246</sup> Stibbe, “A Question of Retaliation?,” 16.

<sup>247</sup> Stibbe, “A Question of Retaliation?,” 17.

<sup>248</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns: Being the Reminiscences of a British Civilian Prisoner of War, 1914-1915* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co, LTD, 1916), 11.

all British civilian prisoners were be interned on November 6 unless the British government released all German enemy aliens. On November 6, as promised, the author was taken first to the prison in Karlsruhe. While in prison, the author notes that the civilian internees were supplied with meals from local restaurants, provisions much better than those served even to the German prisoners incarcerated there, much to the shock of the head jailer.<sup>249</sup> This gives credence to the concern that British civilian internees were receiving better food than normal Germans. In fact, the author notes that each morning as the prisoners' daily provisions were carted into camp, a German mob sometimes formed, screaming "Why should we starve and you [the prisoners] have all this food?"<sup>250</sup> Occasionally the author would even give some of his food to the camp guards to take home to his wife and children, and mentions that sometimes women and children would stand outside the camp fences and beg for food.

On November 11, the author and other civilian prisoners were transported to their final destination, Ruhleben camp, which translates "quiet life." A German lawyer told the author of *In the Hands of the Huns* that "we Germans don't treat people like the English are treating our men... You know we are the highest cultured nation in Europe, and therefore you will have every comfort and humane treatment in Ruhleben."<sup>251</sup> During this journey, the author notes German hostility similar to that experienced by enemy aliens in Britain, which "may be taken as typical of German hatred of the English."<sup>252</sup> The American ambassador visited the camps, similar to visits to internment camps in Britain. Improvements occurred following this inspection by the ambassador. Camp doctors could even certify that certain prisoners needed better nutrition, and these men could get better food at a German beerhouse.

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<sup>249</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 24.

<sup>250</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 78.

<sup>251</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 47.

<sup>252</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 26.



Life in the British and German camps seems very similar. Communication with the outside world was restricted, especially regarding conditions of life in the camp. Living quarters were tight, with prisoners residing in horse boxes which measured ten by fifteen feet. The negative effects seem similar as well in Ruhleben camp, “The mental depression and physical debility brought about by these circumstances were indescribably.”<sup>253</sup> Health was a constant concern due to the subpar medical treatment available inside the camp. There were multiple escape attempts, and two men got close to the Dutch border, but were captured and brought back to Ruhleben. The prisoners fought back in any way they could. For example, on the Kaiser’s birthday, prisoners cut the hoisting cord for the camp flagstaff, which greatly angered the soldiers. German authorities permitted reporters from two newspapers, the Berliner Tageblatt and the Vossische Zeitung, to visit Ruhleben camp daily. According to the author, the reports suppressed what was actually occurring in the camp. Prisoners were allowed to receive visitors under special circumstances.

In order to stay occupied, the prisoners, much like their enemy alien counterparts in Britain, amused themselves by organizing sports, and educational, musical and dramatic entertainment. The men organized football, boxing, cricket, hockey, tennis and gymnastics competitions between the barracks. The prisoners formed a forty-member orchestra, and performed plays by Shakespeare, Shaw and Wilde. The men built a canteen to sell extra food items such as ham, bacon, eggs, butter and margarine. The camp also established a cobbler, tailor, watchmaker, an athletic outfitter, booking office for the theater, a lost property office, newspaper stall, and police station, all located on “Bond Street.”<sup>254</sup> The businesses were so profitable that the camp authorities required them pay a commission. The Ruhleben Express

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<sup>253</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 47.

<sup>254</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 70-71.

Delivery also employed errand boys to maintain a camp postal service. Clubs were erected where men played cards and dominoes, smoked, and drank tea. As a joke, the prisoners elected a camp Mayor, who proceeded to appoint members of Parliament with both Liberal and Conservative Parties, which the camp commander did not find amusing. Also similar to the enemy aliens interned in Britain, was the publication of “In Ruhleben Camp,” a magazine written and published by the prisoners. The editor’s goals were to offer “a real expression of Camp life and Camp views,”<sup>255</sup> and offered announcements from musical and dramatic entertainment, church services (Anglican, Catholic and German Protestant), poetry, editorials, advertisements for clubs and debates, sports results, art, and other camp announcements.

Fortunately, the author was sent back to England on November 6, 1915 due to continued illness. He was told that speaking about his treatment in Ruhleben would only invoke reprisals against those still interned. In April 1915 some civilian prisoners were permitted to return to their jobs as bankers in Hamburg, which greatly angered the German press and civilians since nothing similar happened to enemy aliens in Britain. As a result, the bankers were sent back to Ruhleben camp.<sup>256</sup> Continued internment gave the British press another opportunity to depict Germans as brutal and cruel, despite the fact that Ruhleben camp was more comfortable than many of the British internment camps. Anglo-German agreements reached at The Hague in 1917 called for the release of all prisoners over 45, and the internment of sick prisoners in neutral Holland or Switzerland.<sup>257</sup> Throughout 1917, there was growing pressure on the German military to reduce the number of internees or somehow offset the cost of guarding and feeding them as the German war economy grew worse.

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<sup>255</sup> *In Ruhleben Camp* (Berlin: June 6, 1915), 3.

<sup>256</sup> *In the Hands of the Huns*, 58.

<sup>257</sup> “The New Era for Prisoners,” *The Times*, August 1, 1917.

During the first half of 1917, Ruhleben Camp gained prominence as a political issue in Britain. This was due in part to the formation of the Ruhleben Prisoners' Release Committee, chaired by Sir Thomas D. Pile, which included former prisoners such as journalist Israel Cohen. This group claimed that the Asquith government acted too slowly in securing internees' release, by refusing exchanges of civilian prisoners. The group gained national support, and many spoke out against the government's policy. Stibbe states that the committee sought to exploit anti-German feeling as a way to put more pressure on the government.<sup>258</sup> Lord Devonport maintained that the government did not realize the intense feelings of sympathy for British civilians interned in Germany.<sup>259</sup> Various letters to the editor of *The Times* convey the desperation felt by those with family or friends interned in Germany, "No words can portray, and very few imaginations can conceive, the unbearable sufferings inflicted on them by the Germans. Very many of them are insane, and a large number of them dead, from ill-treatment."<sup>260</sup> The committee failed in its objective to prompt civilian prisoner exchange, it was simply too impractical for the War Office to turn over approximately 26,000 German prisoners who could then join military forces to fight against Britain. As Lord Newton stated, "no War Office was a philanthropic institution and that no military authority was in favour of a wide exchange of able-bodied combatants."<sup>261</sup> The two countries reached another agreement in 1918, but it occurred only three days before the armistice. According to Stibbe, the German internment operations should be seen as nothing other than "a disaster for the German government."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914-1918* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 141.

<sup>259</sup> "New Hope for Prisoners," *The Times*, May 19, 1918.

<sup>260</sup> "To the Editor of *The Times*," *The Times*, May 24, 1918.

<sup>261</sup> "New Hope for Prisoners: Lord Newton's Defence." *The Times*, May 29, 1918.

<sup>262</sup> Stibbe, "A Question of Retaliation?," 20.

Life in the camps for British and German internees was physically and mentally difficult, as they experienced food shortages, close living conditions and the mental strain of being without family and the monotony of an endless internment sentence. Women faced hardships as well as they were forcefully repatriated, deprived of steady income and faced the intense negative stigma associated with enemy aliens. Despite negotiations between the British and German governments, no agreement for prisoner exchange was reached until 1917. The end of internment could not come soon enough, but for many German aliens, it would not be the end of their struggle with the British government.

## Conclusion

Before the conclusion of World War I, the Aliens Committee, under the Ministry of Reconstruction, began debating how to deal with aliens after the end of the conflict. According to *The Times*, this committee comprised of at least eight different departments, continuing the problems of organization.<sup>263</sup> The Aliens Committee decided that all interned enemy aliens should be repatriated, and that the process of naturalization should be made much more difficult.<sup>264</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* published an article on December 5, 1918 entitled “Britain for the British,” which urged the government to take prompt action in deporting all enemy aliens and prevent their return to Britain.<sup>265</sup> This committee also called for the permanent interment of all aliens until they could be repatriated, as well as the denaturalization of all people of enemy origins.<sup>266</sup> The National Party demanded the immediate internment of all people of enemy nationality that remained at liberty, stating “The naturalised German, if his papers were recent, was far more dangerous than the unnaturalised,” and that all grants of citizenship to Germans within ten years of the war should be revoked and no foreign men should ever be permitted to stand for Parliament.<sup>267</sup>

Of course not all supported this point of view. Another *Manchester Guardian* contributor wrote against outbursts hostile to supposed spies, aliens or anyone who befriended an alien, or anyone who “even speaks as though such creatures were fit to live and breathe.”<sup>268</sup> The author spoke against the suspicion these people faced, which might be brought on by the most trivial

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<sup>263</sup> “The Report on Enemy Aliens,” *The Times*, July 10, 1918.

<sup>264</sup> Saunders, “Aliens in Britain and the Empire During the First World War,” 104.

<sup>265</sup> “Britain for the British,” *The Manchester Guardian*, December 5, 1918.

<sup>266</sup> “Britain for the British,” *The Manchester Guardian*, September 5, 1918.

<sup>267</sup> “The Alien Enemy: National Party’s Demand,” *The Manchester Guardian*, July 24, 1918.

<sup>268</sup> “Persecution,” *The Manchester Guardian*, June 29, 1918.

things. He also expressed sympathy that these suspects were only beginning to learn the meaning of English liberty, and unfortunately, had come to learn

that a free and democratic people can also be persecutors. Thus not only is the business [internment operations] cruel; it is also unpatriotic in the narrow sense...It is this attraction of freedom which has been the main source of its recruitment [to England], and this is the attraction which the persecution would destroy.<sup>269</sup>

This reinforces the idea of Britain's open self image. Many people saw their society as attractive because of this openness, which was harnessed by the war. The author lays blame, as do the supporters of internment policy, with the government. Instead of claiming the government should do more to harness the alien threat, the author asks why "they lower our reputation, waste time and energy, deprive us of the services of innocent people, divert the attention of the Government from the serious and most urgent business of defence to futile espionage and wasteful systems of internment..." In a letter to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian* a man criticized "Surely this nonsensical treatment of innocent and deserving people has gone far enough, and is unworthy of a great nation which professes so much solicitude for the rights of nations small and great."<sup>270</sup>

When Armistice Day came on November 11, 1918, the interned prisoners were not given any idea how long they would be forced to remain in the camps, or where they would be permitted, or forced, to go after their release. In March of 1919, 350 prisoners were still interned at Douglas Camp. There were 24,450 men interned at Knockaloe on November 11, and many were forced to remain at the camp through the winter of 1918-1919 while waiting on repatriation. Unfortunately, the winter was very cold, and the influenza epidemic was at its height in Europe. Only sixteen percent were permitted to return to Britain. Finally, in October

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<sup>269</sup> "Persecution," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 29, 1918.

<sup>270</sup> "Correspondence: Children of Enemy Aliens," *The Manchester Guardian*, December 17, 1918.

1919, the last prisoners left Knockaloe camp.<sup>271</sup> Only 3,000 of those interned were permitted to remain in England, mostly those with English spouses. Approximately 20,000 of the 30,000 men interned were repatriated.<sup>272</sup>

After the British internment camps were closed in 1919, the German population in Britain fell from approximately 60,000 to 20,000.<sup>273</sup> In 1918, Prime Minister David Lloyd George passed the British Nationality and Statute of Aliens Act, which was later amended to permit the government to strip enemy aliens of their British citizenship and deport them. This act sanctioned further xenophobia and intolerance. However, for some MPs, the act was not strong enough. *The Manchester Guardian* quoted Lord St. David, who “regretted that the Government had not introduced a bill of wider scope...The bill in no way fulfilled the public demand. The Government should start at the other end and denaturalise all aliens of hostile origin, and then see if any exceptions should be made.”<sup>274</sup> Lord Bressford agreed the bill was too lenient, and that the Home Office had acted much too weakly during the war. The British Empire Union, formerly the Anti-German Union, demanded that one way to eradicate German influence from Britain was to eradicate all alien business and goods from the country.<sup>275</sup>

Anti-alienism continued after the war, nurtured by various other factors, including the Russian Revolution, high unemployment from the closure of wartime industries, the returning soldiers looking for work, and the government’s search for the best way to deal with remaining aliens.<sup>276</sup> *The Times* even published an editorial pleading that the Russian Revolution “will remove our obligations as a free asylum to the subjects of the ‘bloodtainted Tsar,’” reminding the

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<sup>271</sup> West, *Island At War*, 104.

<sup>272</sup> Proctor, *Female Intelligence*, 33.

<sup>273</sup> Panayi, *The Enemy in our Midst*, 1.

<sup>274</sup> “Denaturalisation Bill Criticised,” *The Manchester Guardian*, July 27, 1918.

<sup>275</sup> “German Enemies in England,” *The Times*, April 13, 1918.

<sup>276</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 37.

public that German and Austrian enemy aliens were not the problem, but rather the issue to be discussed was the easy entry into Britain.<sup>277</sup> In 1919, the Aliens Restriction Act allowed for the deportation of all former enemy aliens for a five year period during which they could not enter the country. British-born children of non-British born parents were restricted from employment in the civil service and educational and housing entitlements. It seems that government was not willing to risk that they might have an interest in Germany over Britain; they still did not belong fully to Britain.<sup>278</sup> The de-liberalizing trend continued into 1920, especially regarding internal security under legislation such as the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, which revived some of the D.O.R.A. provisions, and an extension and intensification of the 1911 Official Secrets Act. “In these ways, and in others, Britain was losing a lot of her old liberal shine. It may all have been justified, and necessary; but it marked a radical departure from the past.”<sup>279</sup>

Though Asquith and Lloyd George were both members of the Liberal Party, they could not combat the trend of de-liberalization that swept Britain. By World War I, liberalism in matters of immigration was fading. According to Cesarani, “anti-alienism was related to public confidence and optimism;” it mirrored British national identity and sense of self.<sup>280</sup> Public confidence was low during economic depression of the 1870s and 1880s. The large number of immigrants, and the crime and political unrest that public opinion equated with them, caused native British citizens to form a national identity that labeled aliens as the “other” in society. Though the liberal ideal of asylum remained, British immigration policy was irrevocably altered by the 1905 Aliens Act. By 1915, violent actions taken against German aliens forced Asquith to acknowledge public opinion. The British internment operation was a consequence of the

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<sup>277</sup> “The Report on Enemy Aliens,” *The Times*, July 10, 1918.

<sup>278</sup> Cesarani, “Citizenship and Nationality in Britain,” 63.

<sup>279</sup> Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World*, 90.

<sup>280</sup> Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?,” 47.



Edwardian retreat from liberalism as well as a response to the insecurities brought on by World War I.

Public opinion did play a role in creating anti-alien policies. Panayi strongly questions if the internment operations would have occurred without the negative influence of the press and public actions. He asserts that government measures toward enemy aliens were in response to public fear and outrage toward Germans and Austro-Hungarians. His thesis is persuasive, and can also fit into the broader trend of the de-liberalization of Britain. Many of the negative reactions to Germans, and immigrants in general, should be placed in the context of a worsening economy where foreigners could easily become the scapegoat. Although these cannot adequately explain the internment operations, they can provide context to show how a society that valued openness and civil liberties so much could embark on such a process. To quote a German in Britain, “The world will never forget the way the poor Germans are treated in this country by the wretched English.”<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> “The Alien Peril: An Indignant Offender,” *The Times*, October 22, 1914.

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## **Vita**

Ansley Macenczak was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1986. She discovered her love of history at an early age in Mike Glenn's advanced placement European history class as a sophomore at Greater Atlanta Christian School, as well as through frequent travel with her parents, also avid history lovers. Ansley obtained her Bachelor of Arts in history with minors in sociology and European studies from the College of Charleston in South Carolina and graduated in December 2007 cum laude. She successfully defended her Master of Arts thesis at Louisiana State University in May 2010 and plans to graduate in August.