

**Two Centuries of
Anglo-German Relations
A Reappraisal**

by

Wolfgang J. Mommsen

German Historical Institute London

CONTENTS

Two paths towards political modernisation	8
Britain and the foundation of the Reich	13
The background to Anglophobia in Germany	16
From war to partnership	21
Further reading	28

It is not an easy task to discuss two centuries of Anglo-German relations in a few pages. For one thing, the subject has always been controversial, given the fact that twice within the last seventy years the two countries have waged war against each other, wars which have left deep scars on both national histories. The best relations between countries are those which are taken for granted rather than those which are the subject of controversial discussion. After the British people had come to terms with the political consequences of the American War of Independence, Great Britain enjoyed stable and fairly intimate relations with the United States for a very long time, certain misgivings and concern about the rising status of her American cousins notwithstanding. Since the great crisis in relations between Great Britain and France at the end of the nineteenth century, symbolised by Fashoda, the two countries have experienced a long period of relatively stable friendship, firmly founded on the *Entente Cordiale* of 1904. The relationship between Britain and Germany, however, has never seen long periods of tranquillity and consolidation. Anglo-German relations are characterised by ups and downs, periods of relative understanding followed by periods of violent encounters. Even during the times in which governments in London and Berlin managed to be on good terms with one another, the people were deeply divided as to whether there was much point in establishing friendly relations. It will be argued here that the reasons for this should not be sought in the national character of the Germans or the British, but primarily in particular political circumstances and, secondly, in the different pace of economic and political modernisation to which the two countries were subjected.

Lastly, I would like to contend that, if viewed from a European perspective, the two nations, though so often at loggerheads, nonetheless had (and still have) more in common with each other than with any other European nation – the Anglo-American relationship excepted, where a common language, ties of kinship and comparatively advanced democratic institutions have helped to sustain a long historical connection. In social composition, economic structure and

life-style, the German people were (and still are) far more similar to the British than to most, if not all other European nations. Despite this, the paths of the two peoples have often been at variance in the past and it is only during the last few decades that they have begun to converge.

Two paths towards political modernisation

During the reign of Frederick the Great in the 1770s relations between Great Britain and Prussia, then the foremost state within the Holy Roman Empire, were excellent. The two countries were allies and the victories of the Prussian armies, helped along by substantial British subsidies, made it possible for the British to inherit important parts of the older French colonial empire in America and India. And, in a way, without the assistance of Great Britain, Prussia might not have been able to sustain her ambitious effort to challenge Austria and establish herself as an independent European power, though nominally she still remained subject to the overlordship of the Emperor in Vienna. But although in political terms they were allies, and although public opinion in each country was favourably inclined towards the other, there can be little doubt that the two nations were heading in different directions.

Great Britain was already at the helm of a great empire, her interests being directed overseas rather than towards European affairs. Her political interests remained geared towards Imperial rather than European affairs throughout the whole period, right up to the Second World War and its aftermath. She was also, from an economic point of view, a very advanced country, being at the centre of what has since become known as the Industrial Revolution, and compared with the German states, let alone poor Prussia, she was enormously wealthy. The German states and, up to a point, Prussia too had always been pawns in the power games of the Great Powers; Prussia, as a newcomer, tried hard to become accepted as one of them

as well. Her economic policies were geared towards developing the material resources of the country primarily so that she could afford a large army, though the benevolent paternalism of the Prussian regime achieved a great deal to alleviate the poverty of the masses. This was carried out by an enlightened administrative bureaucracy which, although it welcomed individual initiative in economic matters, otherwise tended to stifle all liberal tendencies. The administrative elite developed a specific ethos in which duty towards the authorities and, to some degree, to the general population as well, figured prominently. The rise of Prussia during the later eighteenth century decisively weakened those older liberal traditions in Germany which had been alive particularly in the smaller principalities of southern Germany, and which, at least to some degree, could be compared to the Whig traditions in eighteenth-century England.

It is interesting to note that both the German and the British social systems survived the onslaught of the French Revolution essentially intact, although the establishment of the Napoleonic Empire for a time threatened to turn conditions on the Continent completely upside down. It was due to Great Britain's intervention, above all, that a reconstruction of Europe came about which also established the political order for Germany. The Congress of Vienna designed a new, loosely-knit federation of German states to replace the Imperial structure which had quietly died away in 1804. The *Bundesakte* contained stipulations designed to stimulate a certain degree of constitutionalism and liberalisation in the various German states. If things had developed in this way the gap between the development of political institutions in Great Britain on the one hand and Germany on the other, which was to determine the fate of Anglo-German relations for a long time to come, might never have become so wide. For there can be little doubt that whilst the British people slowly and cautiously embarked on a course of gradual liberalisation of their political system after the end of the Napoleonic wars, the German states, and Austria and Prussia in particular, by and large did the opposite.

For twenty years the German governments, with the no-

table exception of Baden, did all in their power to stifle the liberal movement. The authoritarian methods of rule which had developed during the era of “enlightened absolutism” were resuscitated, though now they were implemented by an educated elite of civil servants motivated by the idea that the modern rational bureaucratic state was the most advanced form of enlightened government that mankind had ever seen. Their policies should not be seen in negative terms only; these civil servants were determined to do their best for the country, to develop it economically, to alleviate the distress of the lower classes if at all possible by social legislation and sometimes even by direct state intervention, and by encouraging the rising middle classes. But they established a tradition of bureaucratic rule which the forces of liberalism never succeeded in overcoming effectively.

The British embarked upon a different path towards the modernisation of their own political system. Very gradually the traditional system of what Edmund Burke had praised as “virtual representation” of the people by a wealthy, landed aristocracy was replaced by more democratic forms of government. Step by step the ruling classes gave way to popular pressure for greater participation by the people in politics. Ways and means were gradually found to integrate rising sections of the middle and eventually also the lower classes into a time-honoured constitutional system. The personal continuity of the British ruling elite up to 1914 and beyond is a remarkable phenomenon, but it always allowed newcomers to rise to the top. Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain and David Lloyd George were all newcomers to the traditional ruling elite, yet they – perhaps with the exception of the last – readily adapted to its lifestyle and political outlook.

Not surprisingly this pattern of evolutionary politics appealed very strongly to the German educated elites. Amongst them admiration for Great Britain and, in particular, for British political institutions was almost boundless; most German liberals definitely preferred the British example of constitutional rule to the far more rigid formulae of the French revolutionaries. Theodor Mommsen once remarked

that the “Holy alliance of the people” had been the “goal of my youthful years” and it had remained also the “star” of an old man”; “the Germans and the British were destined to walk their ways hand in hand”.

There was, in fact, a continuous line of German liberal thinkers and politicians who, partly following in the footsteps of Montesquieu, considered the British pattern to be the ideal guideline for German politics too. Johann Christoph Dahlmann was inclined to idealise the British constitutional practice of his day when he wrote his famous guide for German constitutional liberalism. Rudolf von Gneist was a great expert on, and admirer of, English local government. Allegiance to the British pattern was widespread among intellectuals, and this was also true of such men as Max Weber and Hugo Preuß who greatly influenced the formulation of the Weimar constitution.

All in all it can be said that in the German public there was always a strong pro-British contingent which was largely identical with the rising middle and upper middle classes, and in particular with the educated elites. On the other hand, the ruling elites and the aristocracy tended to be lukewarm or even hostile towards Great Britain, a tendency which increased the more aristocratic rule gave way to government by consent. Pro-British and anti-British attitudes were thus, by and large, a reflection of social divisions within German society. In Britain there was no such marked difference, partly because German affairs were of far less importance to the British than vice versa. On the whole, however, the reverse was true, namely that the English aristocratic elite tended to look more favourably on things German, whilst the middle classes were, by and large, solidly pro-French and deeply sceptical of the seemingly authoritarian traditions in Germany.

On the level of political events things took a slightly more complicated turn. In the 1830s and 1840s, Palmerston pursued a policy of cautiously encouraging liberal movements throughout Europe, including the German national movement. The outbreak of revolution in 1848/49, however, threw the British government into a quandary. It favoured

the reconstruction of Germany along constitutional lines with Prussia taking the lead, but on the other hand, the statesmen of the day were deeply worried that a Republican Germany, which would be inherently unstable, might emerge from the revolution. Hence they cautiously urged Prussia to take the lead and settle the German question on moderate terms.

Apart from that, they feared that the nationalist enthusiasm of the Frankfurt National Assembly might eventually lead to major international problems. This was indeed to be the case concerning the principalities of Schleswig and Holstein. The German public claimed these as an inalienable part of the German nation which therefore had to be freed from Danish rule. On 29 April 1848, when the revolutionary movement was at its height, Sir Robert Peel put the British position in these remarkable terms (in a conversation with the Prussian Minister in London, von Bunsen): "In the next four weeks the Germans should remain absolutely silent on all matters of European politics . . . You talk on the basis of emotional feeling about the future, we listen in a mood of scepticism. Speed things up, establish a stable, strong Germany and then approach us; you will find us waiting half way."

However, the rift which developed between Great Britain and the German national movement over the future of Schleswig and Holstein, eventually settled largely against the German demands in 1852, was typical of the relations between the two nations. Britain, while sympathetic to the reconstruction of Germany according to liberal principles under Prussian leadership, in the interests of peace and stability did not want any radical alterations in the political map of Europe. The Germans placed the nationality principle above everything else. Hence the British eventually clashed with the German national movement which insisted on getting back the whole of Schleswig and Holstein under national sovereignty, even in the face of strong opposition from Denmark, and therefore refused the compromise suggested by London. It can be said that the German moderate liberals always demanded too much of their British partners,

largely because they lacked the sense of reality essential for success in international politics. In general, the British government continued to view sympathetically a solution to the German question on liberal terms, though it clearly gave preference to a *kleindeutsche* solution, having always loathed the idea of a great Pan-German Empire under the leadership of Austria, with the latter's many non-German possessions being part and parcel of that Empire.

Britain and the foundation of the Reich

On the whole the British governments of that period adhered to a policy of non-intervention in continental and indeed in German politics. They did not particularly like the way in which Bismarck brought about the unification of Germany under Prussian hegemony, but they saw little reason to interfere in the course of European events, even though in one particular instance, the control of the Dardanelles, British Imperial interests were directly at stake. This was partly due to the fact that after the electoral reform of 1867 the British ruling elite found it impossible to embark upon any major foreign policy ventures. Some people, like Lord Litton, even argued that after the constitutional changes of 1867 in Britain the social foundations for a strong national policy had been undermined forever. In this respect their opinions were not very far from Bismarck's views. For Bismarck strongly believed that governments dependent upon changing parliamentary majorities were unable to pursue a reliable and consistent foreign policy. Perhaps Bismarck was the last great statesman in Europe to build his own diplomatic system on the assumption that foreign policy was still the exclusive concern of small governmental elites, not the affair of the public at all.

Bismarck's personal dislike of Gladstone, the Grand Old Man of nineteenth-century British liberal politics, had its roots partly in the latter's attitude towards foreign policy.

Gladstone always argued that foreign policy must be in line with the great moral principles of the age and, though with circumspection and moderation, he worked for their implementation. Bismarck would have none of this; he considered foreign policy primarily, if not exclusively, a skilful balancing of conflicting political forces of diverse sorts; in his view it was of no use to moralise about it. And though to some degree he made himself the spearhead of the German national movement, he was still a great, perhaps the last great master of classical cabinet politics who conducted foreign policy aloof from the public, although he did not hesitate to use public opinion whenever it suited his purposes.

The creation of the German Empire as a result of Bismarck's "revolution from above" caused the societies of Britain and Germany to drift further apart. Not that official British policy pursued an outspokenly anti-Bismarckian course; in fact the contrary is true. Both Gladstone and Disraeli accepted the state of affairs as largely unavoidable. But there is little doubt that in international affairs Great Britain was pushed further to the periphery of Europe. She was pushed for many years into a position of relative isolation, which some even began to consider a "splendid" one. Bismarck's system of alliances established a common front between the three conservative monarchies against Republican France, while Great Britain was largely left aside. In effect, Bismarck never really endeavoured to integrate Britain into this system in any way; rather he attempted to embroil Britain and France with one another by encouraging the French to annex Tunisia and the British to occupy Egypt. It was only in 1887 that he undertook to associate Great Britain indirectly with the existing system of alliances, by inducing her to join the so-called Mediterranean Agreement concluded between Italy and Austria-Hungary to counteract aggressive Russian designs in the Middle East. At the same time, however, he had no hesitation in concluding a Non-Aggression Treaty with Russia which indirectly violated the stipulations of the Mediterranean Agreement by promising Russia diplomatic support for attempts to regain control of the Straits, something which the Mediterranean

Agreement had been designed to forestall. Distrust of a parliamentary government's reliability played a part in Bismarck's reluctance to involve Britain in the European system of alliances. Another reason was his concern about alleged conspiracies at Buckingham Palace for installing a liberal regime in Germany after the accession to the throne of Frederick III and his English wife.

On the British side similar feelings prevailed. In 1872 Lord Arthur Russell summarised public attitudes in Great Britain towards Bismarck's Germany as follows: "Prussia now represents all that is most antagonistic to the liberal and democratic ideas of the age: military despotism, the rule of the sword, contempt for sentimental talk, indifference to human suffering, imprisonment of independent opinion, transfer by force of unwilling populations to a hateful yoke, disregard of European opinion, total want of greatness or generosity etc. etc."

There is no question that these stereotypes, while in some ways accurate with regard to opinions in high quarters, were nonetheless one-sided. Admittedly, those forces which were put into the driving seat in 1867 were still inclined to think in Anglophile terms. But the German Empire was not simply a veiled form of Prussian hegemony – at the lower levels of the political system, in the *Bundesstaaten* and in local government, liberal tendencies in fact largely had their way. And these groupings in German society retained, or even intensified their sympathy for Great Britain and their preference for things British. This was reinforced by the close economic relations between the two countries which had emerged ever since British engineers and technicians had helped to get industrialisation going in Germany. Commerce and industry also began to cultivate close links with Great Britain. It would be quite wrong to say that the acute sense of commercial rivalry which developed from the 1880s onwards was, as such, a source of anti-British feelings. On the contrary, in economic terms the two societies became more and more dependent upon one another, albeit in indirect ways, with the Empire, that is, India, as an intermediary market. Though around the turn of the century Germany overtook

Britain in the production of iron and steel, chemicals and electrical goods, she became, at the same time, one of Britain's most important trading partners.

Why this effective trading partnership that emerged in the late nineteenth century did little to ease the increasing antagonism between the two peoples is not easily explained. The most important factor, as can be demonstrated without much difficulty, was the great disparity in the pace of industrial development in the two countries. The British economy had established a lead in world markets during an age in which small and medium-sized businesses were dominant. The Germans, on the other hand, were latecomers in the race for industrial development; here, from the 1880s onwards, development became an accelerating process in which large enterprises and industrial conglomerates soon took the lead. The German form of industrialisation, with its paternalistic varieties of industrial relations and the predominance of syndicates and industrial conglomerates of all sorts, did not lend itself to liberal values, as had been the case in Britain one or two generations before. Furthermore, rapid growth was accompanied by unprecedented social tensions.

The background to Anglophobia in Germany

Large groupings of the older middle classes and the agrarian sector reacted violently against the impact of industrialisation and its social and political consequences. The rise of the working classes, which in Germany were opposed from the start to liberal party politics and refused to be accommodated within the established political system (in contrast to what happened in Britain), was another important factor. For it fuelled resistance in many quarters to the capitalist market economy and the principles of free trade and unfettered competition associated with it. It is fairly easy to see that these violently anti-modernist feelings were grist to the mill of anti-British agitators; for, rightly or wrongly, Great Brit-

ain seemed to stand for all these things, namely industrialisation, ruthless competition in the market and democratisation. It was only in the last years before 1914 that the United States became the prime target for such criticism. Thus pro-British and anti-British attitudes corresponded more than ever to social and economic divisions within German society. To be sure, business groups and in particular the banks, always favoured a policy of moderation and cooperation, even though sectional economic interests at times attempted to exploit anti-British (or, for that matter, anti-German) feelings for their own economic ends. German heavy industry, however, was less inclined to take a positive view in these matters, since its endeavours were largely directed towards monopolistic control of the home market and towards state-aided monopolistic export markets in third countries, often less developed ones. Indeed, heavy industry stood to lose a great deal by British competition there, unlike the consumer goods industries or trade in general.

The backbone of anti-British feeling in Germany before 1914 was, on the whole, a widespread anti-modernism, and as far as popular Anglophobia was motivated by economic considerations at all, these had little to do with industry and commerce as such. It was rooted in those sections of the middle classes which were losing out to industrialisation, and also in the agrarian interest groups. The agrarian nobility had originally not been all that far removed from pro-British attitudes. Emotional and practical links between the English landed aristocracy and the German agrarian nobility still existed, even though their life-styles had become very different over the decades, due to a variety of factors which cannot be dealt with in detail here. However, the more the Prussian landed aristocracy was confronted with economic difficulties and the more its political privileges came under fire, the more it came to dislike Britain and the British constitutional model. Eventually an alliance came into being between all those who considered uninhibited industrial development, free trade, parliamentary rule and democracy as aspects of the same thing. Under the circumstances, and also in view of

the fact that the progressive forces in German society always referred to the English example in order to justify their own objectives, this provided a strong base for the development of a violent Anglophobia. Hence it may well be said that anti-British feelings in Germany before 1914 resulted primarily from social divisions in a society subjected to fairly rapid social change, and from the nation's difficulties in adapting to new industrial conditions. In other words, the rise of anti-British tendencies in Wilhelmine Germany had very little to do with Great Britain as such.

This is corroborated by, amongst other things, the fact that those groups of the German liberal intelligentsia which broke away from the bulk of liberal opinion as regards things British, usually knew little or nothing about Great Britain. Most of the popular agitators and writers who fulminated against the British certainly knew very little about that country. It was crude clichés which played a dominant role in this debate, as far as it can be called a debate at all. And these clichés merely served as additional arguments in what was fundamentally an anti-modernist message. On the one hand, the British were charged with pursuing ruthless power politics without any regard for the legitimate interests of other nations; on the other hand, they were belittled as a nation of shop-keepers, only interested in profit-making and a materialistic life-style.

It cannot be denied that these tendencies were greatly aggravated by the new aggressive imperialism which, from the 1880s onwards, captured the public mind, rather than what has aptly been called the "official mind" in the chancelleries of Europe. For a variety of reasons German "world politics" had been directed, from the start, primarily against Great Britain as the richest of the *beati possidentes* which was attempting to contain the onslaught of the newcomers in the imperialist theatre as much as possible. This was in part a fault of the British too. Bismarck's colonial annexations, for instance, were triggered off partly by the British government's rather unwise reaction when the German government first approached it on these matters. As the British Government was prepared neither to give protection to German

interests, nor to let Imperial Germany provide it herself, Bismarck decided to force Britain to give way by putting pressure on her in Egypt and elsewhere. And, as far as German interests were concerned, Chamberlain's manipulative tactics in the two years before the Boer War were perhaps just as clumsy as William II's initial stance regarding the Jameson Raid in 1896.

Sheer envy also played a role in German Anglophobia, as might be expected. The same sort of people who advocated a tough policy towards Britain were also more or less open admirers of the British. Friedrich Naumann, for one, was full of praise for the British political system. But very early on he argued that a struggle for survival between the Germans, the Slavs and the British was unavoidable. During the South African War he took an even more radical view. Carried away by a wave of popular Anglophobia at the height of the war, he explained that "there are but two alternatives in view of the incredible, fearful supremacy of Britain. Either we submit or we fight. Our children will fight. If there is anything certain in world history it is that there will be a future world war, that is to say a war of those who will escape the British yoke." But on the other hand, Naumann worked hard for a liberalisation of the German constitutional system along British lines! Gustav Stresemann, who from 1908 onwards became one of the main spokesmen for a strong "forward policy" with a distinct anti-British bias, is also a case in point; he was also pro-British at heart. The most conspicuous case, however, was William II himself, who valued his dynastic connections with the British monarchy very highly. He always strove to be loved by the British, but he nonetheless hoped to outdo his British cousins by building a huge battle fleet.

Imperialism need not have been a fundamental point of division between the British and German peoples and indeed, at times it was not. Admittedly the construction of a German battle fleet was intended to bring Britain to her knees politically, if not militarily, but it could well be argued that British friendship and love were to be procured, as it were, by force. The complicated pattern of motives behind Tirpitz' naval policies, which enjoyed increasing popularity

among the German public in spite of its anti-British or – as was often also the case – pro-British attitudes, does not permit an easy explanation. Tirpitz may have been willing to crush the British; most of his followers only wanted to follow Britain's lead!

It may well be said that German and British imperialism were far less in conflict with each other than, for instance, German and French imperialism. German attempts to hammer out a colonial alliance with France against Britain in 1893/94 were shortlived. In fact, ever since Bülow realised that Tirpitz' naval policy had become a non-starter, the German government had worked hard to come to terms with Britain in imperialist matters, and possibly to become Great Britain's junior partner in this field. Indeed, it eventually partly succeeded in establishing a sort of British-German cooperation in the Balkans and the Middle East, and to some degree also with regard to the future of China. On the whole British governments were lukewarm at best, and deeply distrustful of Germany's ultimate objectives. Little heed was paid to Harcourt's fervent pleas for a colonial appeasement with Imperial Germany in 1911 and 1912. This was partly because the Germans asked too much, and in particular because they were always hinting that Britain was expected to sacrifice her close ties with France as the price for cooperation elsewhere. But it is not true to say that the antagonism between the two countries could not be overcome, even during these troubled years of internecine struggle among the great powers for control of the few remaining "free" territories in the Third World. Indeed, in a European perspective, Anglo-German relations in the last decade before 1914 were far better than, say, Germany's relations with France or, in particular, with Russia, whose re-emergence as a great military power was viewed with increasing fear in German governmental and military circles.

There were, in fact, two periods during which the German government hoped to bring about a re-alignment with Great Britain – first during the Caprivi era (1890 – 1894) and later during the last years of Bülow's chancellorship and the subsequent chancellorship of Bethmann Hollweg (1908 – 1914).

Undoubtedly, attempts by German diplomacy to improve relations with Great Britain were clumsy and in many respects unsatisfactory. Their failure, however, was not essentially due to Britain's refusal to cooperate; they foundered on domestic opposition by an anti-modernist alliance of the traditional elites with parts of industry and in particular sections of the lower middle classes – the main recruiting ground of the New Right. Here again we observe that Anglo-German rivalries of these decades were largely a reflection of social cleavages within German society.

From war to partnership

The First World War was in many ways the high water mark of anti-British feeling in Germany and, conversely, anti-German feeling in Great Britain. The upsurge of a violent Anglophobia primarily in the first year of the war was, indeed, spectacular. On the other hand it must be seen as part of a rising flood of utopian war aims of a most unrealistic nature, and at the same time to some degree as the result of unfulfilled hopes on the German side that Great Britain would help to preserve peace in 1914. The catch-phrase of the *perfidie Albion* captured the minds of very many people, and it must be said with regret that academics in particular excelled in most extreme anti-British agitation of all sorts. The anti-modernist tendency of much of the Anglophobe writing of the day was unmistakable. Werner Sombart for one argued that Imperial Germany had become the “last bulwark against the muddy flood of commercialism” which had originated in Great Britain and was about to impose itself upon most other nations. Perhaps the most outspoken critic of English commercialism and the English materialistic life-style which, as he put it, must be halted by all means, was Max Scheler. His pernicious book *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg*, published in 1915, described the ongoing war as a struggle between “German heroism” and English

“Krämergeist” – I cannot find the proper phrase to translate this utterly deprecating term (possibly tradesman’s mentality). In other words, in his view the war was about two essentially different or indeed totally antagonistic social systems, German society given to idealistic values and prepared to make personal sacrifices in the name of the nation, and British society, absolutely dominated by a utilitarian philosophy which views everything in terms of personal gain and a comfortable material existence. The world, he exclaimed, must be rescued from the “English disease”, namely a materialistic mentality entirely orientated towards profit and commercial gain!

It is easy to see that this extreme polemicism bore little resemblance to reality. However, in its own way it reflected the dichotomy between two alternative sets of values and life-styles. Scheler in fact idealised a form of society which in reality had long since ceased to exist in Germany as well, but which still survived in the value hierarchy of the dominant classes, namely a feudal system in which military values were held in high esteem while commerce and trade were considered inferior occupations, not worthy of a gentleman. The British, for their part, tended to identify the Germans with the Prussian Junkers and their arrogant and authoritarian manners, perhaps distorting the truth as much as Scheler and Sombart and many others who maligned the British.

We need not deal at any length with these shallow stereotypes which recurred again and again in numerous pamphlets during the war. They tell us little about the real feelings of the two nations during the war; possibly the many cases of chivalrous treatment of prisoners-of-war are a more genuine gauge of the real feelings of the people. But these pamphlets do illustrate one point with great clarity: that the stereotypes used on both sides of the Channel to describe the national characteristics of the adversary were primarily a reflection of the predominant values in the two societies and said very little about the enemy. They also indicate that German society, unlike its British counterpart, was not yet a genuinely industrial society in 1914, either in real economic terms, or – and this is important in this context – in terms of

the dominant political mentality of the nation at large, or at any rate its opinion leaders.

Perhaps at this point one should emphasise that in both countries there were always alternative trends which tend to be underrated. This is because in periods of conflict antagonistic stereotypes usually gain the upper hand. There was, for instance, a long tradition of scholarly cooperation between the two countries before 1914 in very many fields. Numerous German scholars visited the leading British universities before 1914, and conversely a great many British scholars studied at German universities. Without impulses from British scholars German scholarship would not have done so well, and the high esteem in which German scholarship was held in Britain before 1914 is well known. The history of the interrelationship of British and German academic development has yet to be written; without doubt it would be a more worthy chapter in the sad story of Anglo-German relations in the last century.

The inter-war years brought the establishment of the Weimar Republic, and hence altered the social foundations upon which the relationship between the two countries was to be built. Already during the Paris peace negotiations it was the British who were willing to give fair consideration to Germany's legitimate national interests, and in the difficult years which followed, British diplomacy could be relied upon to provide a counterweight to extreme French demands. Yet for a variety of reasons the Germans failed to achieve a gradual, peaceful revision of Versailles speedily enough to satisfy their nationalist opposition, although the Western powers, and Britain in particular, gradually came round to the view that the Paris peace treaties had to be modified in favour of Germany. It is impossible here to tell the story of Hitler's rise to power. Perhaps one of the many factors which contributed to this development was the failure of the Western powers to set up a viable international system of trade after the First World War.

Hitler's dictatorship can be seen as the last, most extreme stage of resistance by parts of German society against the twin forces of capitalist industrialism and democracy. Not

surprisingly the National Socialists revived the anti-British stereotypes of earlier periods in a most extreme form: the old cliché of a nation of tradesmen who would eventually give in if confronted with the iron will of a rearmed National Socialist Germany. Ironically enough, at the end of the day the leaders of National Socialist Germany fell prey to it themselves, grossly miscalculating the likely attitude of Great Britain in the event of a war with Poland. Strange to say, Hitler's own image of the British was always somewhat more positive than the image created and endlessly preached by Goebbels' propaganda machine. In a way he admired the British and their achievement in having subjugated half the globe. As in the case of William II, hatred and admiration were closely interconnected here, and it is well known that Hitler never entirely abandoned his hopes of eventually striking a bargain with the British in order to establish a condominium between them and the Teutonic master race over the whole globe.

The peoples on the Continent have not forgotten, and they will not forget, that Great Britain kept the flag of freedom flying in one of the darkest periods in the history of Europe, and helped, with great sacrifice, to rescue Europe from the destructive rule of Hitler and his Fascist partners. This is true not only with regard to the former Allies of Great Britain, but to Germany as well. In fact the British feeling for reality, as well as their respect for the feelings of other people, greatly helped the Germans to overcome the shadows of the past and to establish a genuinely democratic system. It is, incidentally, worth mentioning in this context that the British occupation policy was, comparatively, by far the most successful in paving the way for the birth of democratic institutions in Germany.

The Second World War is a trauma which still overshadows relations between Britain and Germany, and is likely to do so for some considerable time to come. However, it should be noted that some of the causes which I have tried to pinpoint as underlying the tensions and rivalries between the two nations, have now gone for good. The Germans have, after all, caught up and come to terms with the realities of

modern industrial democracy, if only at a very high price, not least that of the division of what was once a united German nation state. With the assistance of the West, West Germany eventually succeeded in re-establishing a viable industrial system and a functioning parliamentary democracy. The residuals of pre-industrial authoritarian traditions have been done away with, and with them the nationalist attitudes and stereotypes of the past which overshadowed Anglo-German relations. The liberal tradition which had always been on the losing side in the long history of the German nation eventually prevailed, and with it the essentially Anglophile tradition in German political thought surfaced again.

The last chapter in the long history dealt with here began with the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949, preceded by the effective defence of freedom in West Berlin in 1948. The gradual return of the German people to the international community of nations as an equal partner would today appear to be completed. The Germans in the Federal Republic are nonetheless very much aware that this was only possible due to the far-sighted policies of the Western powers who realised at a very early stage that a reintegration of the Germans, at least those under their control, into the West was the only viable option open to them. They did not want them to go it alone in 1952 when the Russians attempted to lure them once more into a neutralist position and a reunification under doubtful political conditions. For this reason they did not hesitate to join the Western Alliance and they welcomed the foundation of the EEC as a first step towards a political union of all European states.

Since 1945 a great, and without doubt lasting change has taken place in the political mentality of the Germans. After 1945 they sincerely opted for the social and political order of the West, and, as the historical conditions which had given rise to a feeling of rivalry were altogether gone, the old high esteem for all things British came to the fore again. It is a remarkable fact that German public opinion always held that the policy of European unification was bound to fail if Great Britain would not join in. It is revealing, and indeed sym-

bolic, that Adenauer's only political defeat in matters of foreign policy was when he appeared to accede unreservedly to de Gaulle's policy of keeping Great Britain out of Europe by concluding a special German-French treaty in 1963. Recent quantitative analyses of German public opinion by Karl W. Deutsch and others show that the intention of the German people to establish close relations with Great Britain was both remarkably consistent and considerably stronger than the wish to be on good terms with France, although both powers are rated substantially lower than the "big brother" of the Federal Republic, the United States.

With these experiences in mind, there were very few politicians in Germany who envisaged the possibility of a new European order without the British playing an equal part in it. In the late fifties and early sixties the prospects for a Europe with the United Kingdom playing a vital part were anything but promising. De Gaulle's new policy of a "Europe of Fatherlands" by which high hopes for the creation of a united Europe were watered down, is usually considered the key factor in keeping Britain out of Europe in the sixties. However, the British themselves were for many years rather lukewarm about the idea of joining the European economic and political institutions, although along with the United States, they provided a vital element in defending them, in particular in 1953 when Great Britain helped to solve the deadlock over the European Defence Alliance. The Conservative governments of Eden and Macmillan were still primarily concerned with preserving the position of Great Britain as a world power, although the British were forced by their economic situation gradually to reduce their military commitments all over the globe. There can be little doubt that the gradual farewell to their former Imperial position made the British more willing to consider the European ticket, while on the other hand the Europeans, in particular the French, became more prepared to let the British in to the Common Market, even at the cost of substantial sacrifices. To some degree the French position that Great Britain should join the Common Market only if she were willing to accept an absolutely equal role within Europe, was sensible,

although in some ways selfish and shortsighted.

In the seventies, in fact, a situation developed which was rather favourable for the British, although they had done little to bring it about. All of the Six wanted Britain to join the Common Market, though for different reasons. The Germans, because the British entry would give a new impulse to the European idea, and the French because they assumed that the British might be helpful to keep the Germans in check. In fact, the British have been rather skilful in their attempt to gain influence in Brussels; however, the heyday of great eulogies has passed, and the grey daily routine work has begun, not without some disappointment on all sides. But in spite of this the words which Willy Brandt addressed to both Houses of the British Parliament on 3 March 1970, have come true: "Provided that, as is hoped, Great Britain will join the Common Market, the community will benefit directly from the political traditions of Great Britain, her great historical experience of governing an Empire, from the worldwide connections which she still maintains, from her understanding of foreign cultures, from her practical political talents, and, last but not least, from the imaginative power, ability and modernity of the British people".

With considerable delay the British eventually took this step towards Europe, though today this again appears to be in dispute – not because of particular reservations with regard to the German people, but because the high hopes associated with the European ideal did not fully materialise in a far rougher economic climate. Nonetheless, a long history of strained relations has been overcome, and a new partnership established which, it is to be hoped, will bear much fruit in the future.

Further reading

1. John Mander, *Our German Cousins. Anglo-German Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, London 1974
Those Germans . . . and how we see them, with a preface by George Mikes, London 1973
Paul Kluge/Peter Alter (eds), *Aspekte der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen im Laufe der Jahrhunderte*, Stuttgart 1978
Klaus Dockhorn, *Deutscher Geist und angelsächsische Geistesgeschichte. Ein Versuch der Deutung ihres Verhältnisses*, Göttingen 1954
W.H.G. Armytage, *The German Influence on English Education*, London 1969
Charles E. McClelland, *The German Historians and England. A Study in Nineteenth-Century Views*, Cambridge 1971
Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Zur Entwicklung des Englandbildes der Deutschen seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts', in: L. Kettenacker/M. Schlenke/H. Seier (eds), *Studien zur Geschichte Englands und der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen. Festschrift für Paul Kluge*, Munich 1981, pp. 375-397
2. Manfred Schlenke, *England und das friderizianische Preußen 1740-1762. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Politik und öffentlicher Meinung des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg/Munich 1963
Werner Kroker, *Wege zur Verbreitung technologischer Kenntnisse zwischen England und Deutschland in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1971
Walther Hubatsch, *Der Freiherr vom Stein und England*, Cologne 1977
Günter Gillissen, *Lord Palmerston und die Einigung Deutschlands. Die englische Politik von der Paulskirche bis zu den Dresdner Konferenzen (1848-1851)*, Lübeck 1961
Wilma Höcker, *Der Gesandte Bunsen als Vermittler zwischen Deutschland und England*, Göttingen 1951
George Haines, *Essays on German Influence upon English Education and Science, 1850-1919*, Hamden (Conn.) 1969
Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea. Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860*, Cambridge 1980
Adolf M. Birke/Kurt Kluxen (eds), *Viktorianisches England in deutscher Perspektive*, Munich 1983

Klaus Hildebrand, 'Großbritannien und die deutsche Reichsgründung', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft 6 (1980), pp. 9-62

Günter Hollenberg, *Englisches Interesse am Kaiserreich. Die Attraktivität Preußen-Deutschlands für konservative und liberale Kreise in Großbritannien 1860-1914*, Wiesbaden 1974

Percy Ernst Schramm, 'Englands Verhältnis zur deutschen Kultur zwischen der Reichsgründung und der Jahrhundertwende', in: Werner Conze (ed.), *Deutschland und Europa. Historische Studien zur Völker- und Staatenordnung des Abendlandes. Festschrift für Hans Rothfels*, Düsseldorf 1951, pp. 135-175

Gerhard A. Ritter, *Sozialversicherung in Deutschland und England. Entstehung und Grundzüge im Vergleich*, Munich 1983

Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*, London 1980

Friedrich Meinecke, *Geschichte des deutsch-englischen Bündnisproblems 1890-1901*, Munich/Vienna 1972

R. J. Crampton, *The Hollow Detente. Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911-1914*, London/Atlantic Highlands (N.J.) 1980

Oswald Hauser, *England und das Dritte Reich. Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der englisch-deutschen Beziehungen von 1933 bis 1939 auf Grund unveröffentlichter Akten aus dem britischen Staatsarchiv*, 2 Vols, Stuttgart 1972/Göttingen 1982

Dietrich Aigner, *Das Ringen um England. Das deutsch-britische Verhältnis. Die öffentliche Meinung 1933-1939. Tragödie zweier Völker*, Munich/Esslingen 1969

Claus Scharf/Hans-Jürgen Schroeder (eds), *Die Deutschlandpolitik Großbritanniens und die britische Zone 1945-1949*, Wiesbaden 1979

A. E. C. Volle, *Deutsch-britische Beziehungen. Eine Untersuchung des bilateralen Verhältnisses auf der staatlichen und nichtstaatlichen Ebene seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bonn 1976

Karl Kaiser/Roger Morgan (eds), *Britain and West Germany. Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy*, London 1971

Winfried Böttcher, *Deutschland aus britischer Sicht 1960-1972*, Wiesbaden/Frankfurt 1972

PUBLICATIONS OF THE GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE LONDON

- Vol. 1: Wilhelm Lenz (ed.), *Archivalische Quellen zur deutsch-britischen Geschichte seit 1500 in Großbritannien*
Manuscript Sources for the History of Germany since 1500 in Great Britain
(Boppard a. Rh., Boldt, 1975)
- Vol. 2: Lothar Kettenacker (ed.), *Das "Andere Deutschland" im Zweiten Weltkrieg*
(Stuttgart, Klett, 1977)
- Vol. 3: Marie-Luise Recker, *England und der Donauraum, 1919-29. Probleme einer europäischen Nachkriegsordnung*
(Stuttgart, Klett, 1976)
- Vol. 4: Paul Kluge and Peter Alter (eds), *Aspekte der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen im Laufe der Jahrhunderte*
Aspects of Anglo-German Relations through the Centuries
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1978)
- Vol. 5: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Peter Alter, Robert W. Scribner (eds), *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Reformation in England und Deutschland*
The Urban Classes, the Nobility and the Reformation. Studies on the Social History of the Reformation in England and Germany
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1979)
- Vol. 6: Hans-Christoph Junge, *Flottenpolitik und Revolution. Die Entstehung der englischen Seemacht während der Herrschaft Cromwells*
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1980)
- Vol. 7: Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy. Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War*
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1981)
- Vol. 8: Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *Der "Führerstaat": Mythos und Realität*
The "Führer State": Myth and Reality
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1981)
- Vol. 9: Hans-Eberhard Hilpert, *Kaiser- und Papstbriefe in der Chronica majora des Matthaeus Paris*
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1981)
- Vol. 10: Gerhard Hirschfeld and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (eds), *Sozialprotest, Gewalt, Terror. Gewaltanwendung durch politische und gesellschaftliche Randgruppen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1982)

- Vol. 11: Wolfgang Mock and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (eds), *Die Entstehung des Wohlfahrtsstaates in Großbritannien und Deutschland 1850-1950* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1982)
- Vol. 12: Peter Alter, *Wissenschaft, Staat, Mäzene. Anfänge moderner Wissenschaftspolitik in Großbritannien* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1982)
- Vol. 13: Wolfgang Mock, *Imperiale Herrschaft und nationales Interesse. 'Constructive Imperialism' oder Freihandel in Großbritannien vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1982)
- Vol. 14: Gerhard Hirschfeld (ed.), *Exil in Großbritannien, 1933-1945* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1983)
- Vol. 15: Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Hans-Gerhard Husung (eds), *Auf dem Wege zur Massengewerkschaft. Die Entwicklung der Gewerkschaften in Deutschland und Großbritannien 1880-1914* (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1984)

English Publications of the German Historical Institute London

Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Mock (eds), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, Croom Helm, 1981)

Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld (eds), *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* (London, Macmillan, 1982)

Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1983)

Gerhard Hirschfeld (ed.), *Exile in Great Britain. Refugees from Hitler's Germany* (Leamington Spa, Berg Publishers, 1984)

Annual Lectures of the German Historical Institute London

Samuel Berrick Saul, 'Industrialisation and De-Industrialisation? The Interaction of the German and British Economies before the First World War', 1979 Annual Lecture of the GHIL (London, 1980)

Karl Dietrich Erdmann, 'Gustav Stresemann: The Revision of Versailles and the Weimar Parliamentary System', 1980 Annual Lecture of the GHIL (London, 1981)

A.J.P. Taylor, '1939 Revisited', 1981 Annual Lecture of the GHIL (London, 1982)

Gordon A. Craig, 'Germany and the West: The Ambivalent Relationship', 1982 Annual Lecture of the GHIL (London, 1983)