

German Historical Institute  
London

THE 2000 ANNUAL LECTURE

Fog in Channel  
Anglo-German Perspectives  
in the  
Nineteenth Century

*by*

Peter Pulzer

Peter Pulzer is Professor Emeritus of Government, University of Oxford. From 1992 to 1997 he was a member of the Kuratorium, Stiftung Historisches Kolleg, Munich. He has been visiting professor at the Geschwister-Scholl-Institut, Munich, Potsdam University, the TU Dresden and Humboldt University, Berlin. Principal publications include *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (1964, 2nd edn 1988), *Jews and the German State, 1848-1933: The Political History of a Minority* (1992) and *Germany 1870-1945: State Formation, Politics and War* (1997).

London 2000

Published by  
The German Historical Institute London  
17 Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1A 2NJ  
Tel: 020 - 7404 5486 Fax: 020 - 7404 5573  
e-mail: [ghil@ghil.co.uk](mailto:ghil@ghil.co.uk) homepage: [www.ghil.co.uk](http://www.ghil.co.uk)

ISSN 0269-8560  
ISBN 0 9533570 4 X

As all of you will know, many of the features of the modern world, from postage stamps to football championships, have their origins in Victorian Britain. One of these is the package tour. It owes its existence to two developments in both of which Britain was a pioneer – an extensive railway system and the movement for abstinence from alcoholic drinks. They came together through an enterprising lay preacher who in 1841 chartered a train to take a delegation of teetotallers from Leicester to Loughborough. The success of this event led to an expansion of the tour business, which culminated in Thomas Cook – for it was he – leading his first group on the continent in 1855. The destination was predictably the Rhineland. Predictably, because, despite the alcoholic temptations of that province, Germany posed less of a moral threat than France and was more interesting than the Low Countries, while Italy and Spain were still out of reach for any except the most leisured. Above all, Germany, at any rate its South and West, was romantic. Still virtually untouched by large-scale industry and urban squalor, it offered Browning’s ‘tall, old, quaint, irregular’ towns and Byron’s paean to the Rhine in the third canto of *Childe Harold*. As their steamer took them from Cologne to Mainz and from there to Mannheim and Heidelberg, the travellers could admire Byron’s ‘castled crag of Drachenfels’, the ‘fields which promise corn and wine’ and ‘scattered cities crowning these / Whose far white walls along them shine’. But intact landscapes, however attractive to those who were nostalgic for England’s fast disappearing ‘green and pleasant land’, signified something else: backwardness – backwardness in political, economic and social respects, a backwardness on which earnest British observers never ceased to comment. The pioneering Socialist Thomas Hodgskin was struck by ‘the passive obedience [that] has long been one of the characteristics of the inhabitants of

Germany' and by 'the many sensible men ... who preferred that all-directing government to ours, because they thought a less degree of interference on the part of government would bring on to Germany the same atrocity of crime of which they read in the English newspapers'.<sup>1</sup> The poet Thomas Hood, visiting the romantic Rhineland some years later, noted another aspect of political backwardness:

We have seen a Jewish sheriff in London; but I verily believe if anything could create a rebellion in these provinces, it would not be the closing of the coffee-houses and the suppression of the newspapers, but the making of a Burgomaster of the race of Israel ... You must live in Germany to understand the prevalence and intensity of the feeling.<sup>2</sup>

Two other themes dominate British criticism of German public life. One forms a continuous strand at least from the eighteenth century onwards: the militarisation of society. James Boswell, originally an admirer of Frederick the Great, the 'Philosophe de Sans Souci ... the great defender of the Protestant cause, who was prayed for in all the Scots kirks', changed his mind when he saw the conditions of the soldiers:

My ideas on the value of men are altered since I came to this country. I see such a number of fine fellows bred to be slaughtered that human beings seem like herrings in a plentiful season.<sup>3</sup>

His contemporary and fellow-Scot, Dr John Moore, thought that Berlin 'looked more like the cantonment of a great army, than the capital of a kingdom in the time of profound peace... Nothing was to be seen in the streets but soldiers parading'.<sup>4</sup> Seventy years later, in the decade after the crushing of the revolutions of 1848-9, the impression, even on those well disposed to Germany, was simi-

lar. Charlotte Williams-Wynn, who had once received a proposal of marriage from Varnhagen von Ense, observed, 'At Frankfurt the people are completely soldier-ruled'.<sup>5</sup> George Eliot, the translator of David Strauß, who was in love with 'dear Weimar, ... with its pleasant group of friends' and felt that 'the mind could make a pretty town even of Berlin', was repelled by the military appearance of its streets: 'It is distressing to see the multitude of soldiers here - to think of the nation's vitality going to feed 300,000 puppets in uniform'.<sup>6</sup> If German authoritarianism and militarism were offensive to Liberal England, conservatives detected an opposite defect, namely the tendency towards extremist thought and revolutionary action. This struck a particular chord in 1848. *Blackwood's Magazine* noted with satisfaction that in the matter of revolutions England had long ago 'put away such childish things' and Germany was certainly not to be a role model for Britain in this respect:

- ✧ In two hundred years she may possess the mingled freedom and stability which now constitute the freedom and happiness of England. England has preceded other nations by two centuries in this path.<sup>7</sup>

The other theme is German economic backwardness and the attendant low quality of life, at any rate outside court circles. As late as the 1860s Henry Mayhew, best known for his study of poverty and deprivation in London, found conditions to be even worse in Saxony and Thuringia, at that time the most industrialised regions of Germany. The comparison is spelt out in the last chapter of his account, which bears the title 'Why is Germany so poor?'

The ordinary fare of the national feast of England [is] whitebread, which the Germans regard as cake, from its superiority to their own old-oaken staff of life, and roast beef (aye, and

such beef as grand-dukes themselves never tasted); with plum pudding occasionally to follow; whereas the characteristic cheer of Deutschland consists of black bread, and potatoe soup, with by way of a great treat, a dish of rotten cabbage, seasoned with fat, as an addendum. The common drink, too, at morning and evening, among the German gentry and work-people, is a cup of the infusion of burnt carrots at threepence per pound (as a makeshift for coffee) without either milk or sugar; while that of the very poorest of our own folk consists of a 'dish' of four-shilling tea, duly milked and sweetened ... An Irish beggar is better fed and housed than a Saxon mechanic ... It is no marvel that their labour is hardly worth even the few groschens a day that is given for it'.<sup>8</sup>

Mayhew's explanation for this deplorable state of affairs has an interesting proto-Keynesian ring to it. He thought it a defect of the German character to regard saving as a virtue. As a result they spend too little, thus depriving the economy of a demand-led impulse to growth. There was, however, no doubt about the consequences of this fallacy:

How many hundred years behind us are the people in all the requirements of decency and civilisation, among whom such a comfortless and boorish form of existence can continue to the present day.<sup>9</sup>

Even George Eliot, no advocate of luxurious lifestyles, noted German defects in this department: 'They put their knives in their mouths ... they consider a room furnished when it has a looking-glass and an escritoire in it'.<sup>10</sup> Even at the end of the century German standards of comfort failed to come up British expectations of refinement. Elizabeth von Arnim, Australian-born, educated in

England and married to a Pomeranian aristocrat, warned prospective travellers on the state of the German pillow:

The native pillows are mere bags, in which feathers may have been once. There is no substance in them at all. They are of a horrid flabbiness ... It is infinitely better to be comfortable at night than, by leaving the pillow at home and bringing dresses in its place, be more impressive by day.<sup>11</sup>

Although British perceptions of Germany had by then undergone a radical change, the memory of this patronising consensus lingered, as confirmed by Havelock Ellis, who wrote in his introduction to the first English translation of Ibsen's plays in 1890:

The Scandinavian group of countries today holds a position not unlike that held by Germany at the beginning of the century. They speak, in various modified forms, a language which the rest of the world have regarded as little more than barbarous and are generally regarded as an innocent and primitive folk.<sup>12</sup>

How, you may ask, did Germans react to this never-ending British condescension? It was a mark of the lack of self-confidence among Germans at any rate in the first half of the century, that they regarded British attitudes as largely justified. Britain – or England, as German commentators preferred to call her – was a role model in both politics and society. That was so partly because the commentators were predominantly North German and/or Protestant, but they looked up to their Anglo-Saxon cousins whether they were moderately Liberal or moderately Conservative. The main advocate of British virtues was Leopold von Ranke. He admired the mixed constitution that combined freedom with order, but above all Britain's role as one of the Great Powers in maintaining the continental balance of power and the Protestant cause against

the twin forces of extremism, revolution and Popery.<sup>13</sup> Like many others, Ranke deduced the strength of Britain from its institutions, which were the opposite of those of France:

In France all was uniformity, subordination and dependence on a highly developed but morally corrupt court. In England ... political competition between two equally strong parties within a well-defined and circumscribed circle. In France the devotion, implanted not without violence, into its patent opposite. In England there developed a perhaps restricted, but on the whole manly and self-confident religiosity, which overcame its antagonisms. The former bled itself white in undertakings of false ambition; the latter's arteries boasted youthful blood. It was as if only now the current of English national power ... flowed into the plains, to dominate them with proud majesty, to bear its ships and to see world cities created along its banks.<sup>14</sup>

The Liberals of South-West Germany were more Anglophile after the passage of the 1832 Reform Act than before. For Karl von Rotteck this restored the true course of constitutional development. England, he concluded in the *Staatlexikon*, had been 'raised by a marvellous grace of circumstance to a system of political and civil liberty which, after lengthy and laborious struggles, finally victorious, placed her ahead of all other nations'.<sup>15</sup> His partner, Karl Theodor Welcker, had even fewer doubts on the 'forever admirable work of art of the English constitution' when compiling the supplement of the *Staatslexikon* some ten years later:

England is the practical academy of politics ... How far behind we Germans still are! Indeed, when one compares the totality of English conditions; when one compares all that with



our dear German ministers, officials, learned pedants, clumsy businessmen; when one contrasts the results for the honour of the fatherland, freedom and power in terms of all the highest principles of political life, whether for citizens or princes; finally, when one thoroughly compares England's steady progress and improvement to our daily regression, again in all those highest principles – then all our German governmental wisdom seems almost childish.<sup>16</sup>

Even Friedrich List, who aimed to liberate the German states from economic subjugation by Britain, acknowledged that it was the wisdom of British policies that lay at the root of their success. In economic matters he approved of the policy of importing raw materials and exporting manufactures, though he argued that past protectionism rather than present-day free trade was the model to follow, but his highest praise was reserved for Britain's political and social institutions:

In no European state is the institution of aristocracy so wisely calculated to secure for it individual independence, dignity and permanence vis-à-vis the crown and the middle class, to bestow on it a parliamentary training and position and to direct its ambitions into national and patriotic channels, to absorb the elite of the middle classes and everything that distinguishes it in intellect, in extraordinary wealth and tremendous achievements, and to give back to the middle classes the surplus of its descendants and thus to amalgamate aristocracy and the middle class in future generations.

The consequence was that in every respect Britain compared favourably with Germany:

... the rise of towns, of agriculture, of trade and

manufacturing; the subjugation of the aristocracy to the rule of law, but against that their dominant participation in legislation, administration and the distribution of the fruits of industry; development at home and expansion abroad; internal peace; influence over all less cultivated countries; restriction of the power of the crown, but a gain for the crown in income, brilliance and durability; all in all: a high level of affluence, civilisation and freedom at home and overwhelming power abroad.<sup>17</sup>

Not all German scholars or travellers took such rosy views, but considering how widespread judgments of this kind were, it is not surprising that even Goethe, who was reluctant to acknowledge anyone's superiority, was bowled over by the deportment of the seventeen-year-olds who toured the continent:

They do not feel ill-at-ease or embarrassed in this foreign German land; on the contrary, their appearance and demeanour in society is as confident and relaxed as if they were the lords of creation and the whole world were theirs.<sup>18</sup>

It does not follow that those who commented on the manners and institutions of their neighbours were typical of their countrymen, especially when one considers the asymmetry of power and influence between the post-Napoleonic British Empire and the still fragmented German Confederation. It was only to be expected at this stage that more Germans should look to Britain than the other way round. Moreover, intellectual Britons, as opposed to Thomas Cook's trippers, identified predominantly with the culture and mindset of the Protestant German North. George Eliot, happiest in Weimar and Berlin, grew distinctly cooler as she journeyed South. Nuremberg, 'that town of towns', was still acceptable, but

once across the Danube her disapproval knew no bounds:

The general aspect of Munich is distasteful to me. The buildings are generally huge, expensive and ugly, and one feels everywhere that the art is something induced by royal patronage.

She did make the acquaintance of the philologist Friedrich Bodenstedt in Munich:

Like all the best men here, he is a North German, and has not acquired the Bavarian habit of spending his evenings at the Kneipe, drinking beer, smoking tobacco and trying to talk down his companions. That is the understood mode of life for all Bavarians, however cultivated, and you may imagine what is the character of the women *dabei* ... Happily there is such a colony of North Germans among the educated people here that one hopes there may be a general modification through their influence.<sup>19</sup>

These differing perceptions of Northern and Southern Germany became more salient as German unification loomed, but before we come to that let us look at another topic in which Britain and Germany compared each other. Four years after Mayhew's contemptuous description of German poverty another book appeared which said of the countries of Central Europe, and in particular Germany, that they 'have a civil organisation which has been framed with design and foresight to meet the wants of a modern society'.<sup>20</sup> The author was Matthew Arnold and his subject was education, on which he had been commissioned by the government to report. He was not the first to comment favourably on German schools; almost twenty years earlier Joseph Kay had been impressed by the 'refined and intelligent teachers' of Prussia,<sup>21</sup> but it was Arnold's broadside that had the greatest impact. His chapters on Germany were reprinted

twice, in 1874 and 1882. The standards of both schooling and universities in England were equally under attack. The novelist Sabine Baring-Gould, who visited Germany regularly, reported the remarks of a German teacher's experiences in England:

In Germany we look up to the schoolmaster, in England they look down on him. When I made the acquaintance of my fellow-teachers, I felt the prejudice was not without foundation. There was not one of them that could be introduced into a gentleman's drawing-room.<sup>22</sup>

As for adequate university teaching, Arnold was convinced that any good student 'would feel the want of it ... such a student must go to Paris, or Heidelberg, or Berlin, because England cannot give him what he wants'.<sup>23</sup> Over forty years later the Oxford mediaevalist A. J. Carlyle echoed this verdict:

The position of the great German nation in philosophy, science and literature was so powerful that the students were bound to study in Germany and to go to Germany if they were of any promise.<sup>24</sup>

Those who had studied in Germany, like Byron's friend Henry Crabb Robinson, who spent three years at Jena, were enthusiastic about their experiences. However, Robinson also felt that he had something to contribute: 'I have introduced among the students games at leap-frog and jumping over ditches; and I attribute much of my well-being now to these bodily exercises'.<sup>25</sup> Other potential reformers, like Mark Pattison, the Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, went further than Arnold or Carlyle. The reason for the low standard of teaching, he argued, lay in the disregard of scholarship and research:

The fact that so few books of profound research emanate from the University of Oxford

materially impairs its character as a seat of learning, and consequently its hold on the respect of the nation.

He knew where to seek a remedy for this shortcoming, but also why his chances of success were minimal:

It so happens that the best extant type of such an institution is the German professor – two words which are, even taken separately, not calculated to recommend anything to general acceptance in this country and the combination of which is doubly unfortunate.<sup>26</sup>

The assumption of German intellectual superiority pervaded not only academic debate, but literature. In *Middlemarch* the young artist Will Ladislaw tries to discredit the old pedant Casaubon in the eyes of his young wife Dorothea by mocking his research:

It is a pity that it should be thrown away, as so much English scholarship is, for want of what is being done in the rest of the world. If Mr Casaubon knew German, he would save himself a lot of trouble ... The Germans have taken the lead in historical studies and they laugh at results which are got at by groping about in the woods with a pocket compass while they have made good roads.

To which Dorothea can only reply, 'How I wish I had learnt German when I was at Lausanne. There were plenty of German teachers. But now I can be of no use'.<sup>27</sup>

In the practical matter of organising modernising cultural institutions, German examples were again the ones to follow. When John Ruskin, giving evidence to the National Gallery Site Committee, had to confess that he had never visited the collections of Munich and Dresden, he went on a lightning tour of the major German galleries.<sup>28</sup> The Imperial College of Science and Technology in South Kensington was modelled on the Technische Hochschule of Charlottenburg, now the TU Berlin; the

chairman of the advisory committee was the later Secretary of State for War and Lord Chancellor, Richard Burdon Haldane, an admirer of Hegel and the translator of Schopenhauer. For advice on the National Insurance Act of 1911 Lloyd George called on William Harbutt Dawson, for many years *The Times'* correspondent in Berlin and the biographer of Bismarck, 'the first social reformer of the century'.<sup>29</sup>

As in their judgments on their respective countries' politics, so when it came to education and scholarship, Germans and Englishmen tended to agree. It is not as if British achievements in science in the nineteenth century were negligible, yet Nietzsche could blithely write of the 'Geist achtbarer aber mittelmäßiger Engländer - ich nenne Darwin, John Stuart Mill und Herbert Spencer'.<sup>30</sup> But there was one field in which British deficiencies appeared particularly shameful, made explicit in a book that is better known for its title than its contents:

At last I have discovered what it is that distinguishes the English from all other civilised peoples to a quite astonishing degree, a lack that everyone admits to – so this is no new discovery – though its significance has not yet been emphasised; the English are the only civilised people without their own music.<sup>31</sup>

Oskar Schmitz, the author of *Das Land ohne Musik*, did not mean that there were no performances or appreciative audiences, but that there was no tradition of musical creativity. Other observers, however, were even more critical. Baring-Gould, whom we have already met on the subject of schools, noted what did not escape Schmitz, that Britain lacked a permanent opera company:

It is impossible [he wrote] for musical art to spring up when there is no field in which it can display itself. Every little town the size of

Exeter, Salisbury, Colchester, Northampton would in Germany have a good opera, and every opera-house arouses enthusiasm for music in a wide circle round it.<sup>32</sup>

There were two solutions to this problem. Opera-lovers could go to Germany – or Italy for that matter – and Bayreuth had its English devotees. Even before then George Eliot had relished the glories of Gluck's *Orfeo* and 'die Wagner' in Berlin as well as the 'divine music' of *Fidelio*.<sup>33</sup> But not every British visitor to Germany was equally entranced by these offerings. Henry Crabb Robinson, who had nothing but praise for the Humboldtian university ideal of freedom and solitude, disliked other aspects of the enlightened despotism of the German states: 'A city in which the sovereign prince applies the revenues of the state to the erection of opera-houses and palaces has never been an agreeable object in my eyes.'<sup>34</sup> Nor was Matthew Arnold differently impressed at the end of the century. 'The German schools deserve all the praises given to them', he wrote to C. J. Leaf on his last visit in 1885, 'I am never tired of attending the lessons in general, but they make me hear too much music. I send you the programme of a School-music by which I am to be victimised from ten to twelve to-morrow morning.'<sup>35</sup> But Britain did not merely export audiences, it also imported musicians and patrons. The first permanent orchestra in Britain, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, owed its existence to the German merchant colony in that city who invited Karl Halle, later Sir Charles Hallé, a political refugee, to be its conductor. Much of the initial finance behind Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts came from Sir Edgar Speyer of the Frankfurt banking family and Sir Robert Meyer of the Mannheim brewing family founded the Saturday morning Children's Concerts. When Felix Mendelssohn, a frequent visitor to Britain, became

director of the Leipzig Conservatoire, British musicians were encouraged to study there. The first holder of a Mendelssohn scholarship was Arthur Sullivan. Later British composers to be trained at Leipzig included Frederick Delius, himself the son of German immigrants, Charles Villiers Stanford and Ethel Smyth. Mendelssohn was not the last German composer to cross the Channel. Wagner's third and last visit in 1877 was more successful – i.e. more profitable, which is what mattered – than its predecessors. There was, however, no meeting of minds. When George Eliot protested to Cosima about her husband's anti-Semitism, she got, as you might expect, nowhere.<sup>36</sup>

One could admire Germany or Britain, or at least aspects of their life, without drawing any particular political conclusions from this attitude. The question nevertheless arises how the profound changes in the map of Central Europe between 1864 and 1871 affected perceptions. True, after the proclamation of the *Kaiserreich* Disraeli spoke of 'the German revolution, a greater political event than the French revolution of the last century',<sup>37</sup> but this did not deter him from fruitful collaboration with the originator of that revolution at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Gladstone, at the head of the Liberal Party, had doubts about Bismarck's means, even if not about his aims. On the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine he felt, with the Liberal's distaste for *ius sanguinis*, that 'not blood and language, but will, conviction and attachment' ought to be decisive and therefore favoured a plebiscite. As for the *Kulturkampf*, aimed though it was against 'the present doctrines of the Church of Rome', he noted that 'Bismarck's ideas and methods are not ours'.<sup>38</sup> Bismarck less fastidiously nevertheless regarded Gladstone as an ally, at least in this matter. When Gladstone sent him a copy of *Vaticanism*, he received a grateful acknowledgement.<sup>39</sup>



In general the expansion of Prussia occasioned little concern at this stage. The new Empire's gross domestic product was one half of that of Britain, its share of world trade one-third of Britain's. Its commercial policy was free-trading and there were reasons for hoping that its constitutional life would develop further in a liberal direction, especially under the aegis of the Crown Prince, Queen Victoria's son-in-law. Above all, the new state was predominantly Protestant. The liberal-inclined *Fortnightly Review* probably spoke for the majority when it wrote, some weeks after the battle of Königgrätz:

It is gratifying to see that at this important juncture the political intelligence of England is stronger than her feeling ... Doubtless our fashionable tourists declare with truth to this hour that the Volksgarten at Vienna is more amusing than the Thiergarten at Berlin; that an Austrian official, notwithstanding his comparative ignorance, is a much more accessible companion than his Prussian colleague; that they would rather sit at a *table d'hôte* with a dozen Austrian staff officers than with a Prussian sub-lieutenant; ... that it looks much less the thing to sit under the lime-trees than in the Vienna coal-market; and that it is even more pleasant to drink with an ignorant Catholic priest in Bavaria than with a classically educated Protestant minister in Westphalia; but notwithstanding this they cannot resist the conviction that the establishment of a powerful and liberal German state, independent of Rome and of equal power to her French neighbour, is in the interest of England.<sup>40</sup>

It is only on the far Left of British politics, among Radicals and Republicans, that doubts arose at this stage. The Positivist and Republican Frederic Harrison thought 'it will be the knell of peace and liberty when the trium-

phant Empire of Germany bestrides the Continent,<sup>41</sup> for 'on the battlefield of home freedom and progress the German is not so stout as he is on foreign soil'.<sup>42</sup> *The Examiner* printed an *Ode to Success* whose message is not without relevance today -

Those who have helped themselves alone are  
great

The wealthy are the good.

But such sentiments, also to be found in the *Edinburgh Review* and the *National Reformer*, were not widely held at least until the accession of William II.

Even when the change did come, it was more widespread among popular opinion than in the elite. The change had its roots in objective causes. In contrast with the position at the foundation of the *Reich*, Germany quickly became a serious competitor – in manufacturing and trade, in the race for colonies and, as the century came to its close, in naval construction. The British response to these developments was ambivalent. A growing number of books appeared, drawing attention to the threat from the continent – for instance, E. E. Williams's *Made in Germany* of 1896. An overt imperialist ideology gained ground, predominantly in the Conservative Party, but also in a section of the Liberal Party. Its proponents urged fighting the German challenge on its own ground, by protective tariffs, as advocated by Williams, by Imperial Federation, as favoured by Joseph Chamberlain or a militarisation of national life, the recipe of Alfred Milner and the *National Review*. The emergence of a popular press, in particular the Northcliffe-owned *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, fuelled jingoistic sentiment further. Popular novels went in the same direction. Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1902), portrayed a German plot to subvert Britain in league with Irish Nationalists. The novels of William le Queux, of rather lesser literary merit,

were a weather-cock of popular sentiment. Whereas in the 1890s their tone had been anti-French, as in *England's Peril* (1899), after the turn of the century, spurred on by Northcliffe, he turned anti-German, as in *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) and *The Kaiser's Spies* (1910). Many in the elite were reluctant to embrace such a crude and demagogic political style. Tariffs and conscription went against the liberal consensus that was shared by many Tories. Those who had educational or family ties with Germany found it hard to abandon their longstanding Germanophilia. No-one illustrated the dilemmas presented by *Weltpolitik* better than Sir Eyre Crowe, later permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, born in Leipzig of a German mother and married to a German wife. His classic memorandum of January 1907 on the long-term perspectives of British national interests was quite conciliatory towards Germany up to a certain point, but drew the line at 'a German maritime supremacy' as 'incompatible with the interests of the British Empire' and above all at the 'heedless disregard of the susceptibility of other people', which he attributed to the legacy of Bismarck.<sup>43</sup>

Nor was the temper of the times helped by a change in German academic opinion, which reflected the transformation of German domestic politics. With the establishment of the German Empire, Britain was no longer needed as a model for aspiring state-builders, and those historians and constitutional lawyers who were committed to the Bismarckian structure increasingly regarded Britain as an anti-model. Indeed the continuing Anglophilia of the more left-inclined Liberals and many Social Democrats merely discredited such views further. This change of perspective applied less to the older generation of National Liberals, like Rudolf von Gneist who, for all their specific criticisms of recent British developments, still admired the course of Britain's constitutional life, or

to social reformers like Lujo Brentano, who admired the proliferation of voluntary institutions, exemplified by the trade union movement. More typical of a newer generation was Heinrich von Treitschke's move towards Anglophobia. For him, Britain's commercial egotism marked the degeneration of her parliamentary tradition. His hope that 'the wisdom of a politically experienced nobility, the sense of justice of a free people, would dam the flood of Manchester theory' was disappointed. And he read a 'sly and violent policy of commercial self-interest [that] passed for a heroic fight for the ultimate good of humanity' back into the Napoleonic period.<sup>44</sup>

Those in Britain who did not repond to this new course with instinctive Germanophobia faced two options. One was to follow the French example and distinguish between the rulers of Germany and those elements with whom they continued to feel an affinity. St. John Strachey, the editor of the *Spectator*, spoke for them when he sighed that 'unfortunately the real German people ... count almost for nothing'.<sup>45</sup> The other was to deny that there was a fundamental clash between the two states, as exemplified by the Anglo-German Friendship Committee of 1906, the Associated Councils of Churches in the British and German Empires for Fostering Friendly Relations between the two Peoples, The King Edward VII British-German Foundation and the Neutrality League, founded as war loomed in 1914. As late as 2 August, a few hours before the German invasion of Belgium, the Neutrality League praised Germany as 'highly civilised, with a culture that has contributed greatly to Western civilisation, racially allied to ourselves and with moral ideas largely resembling our own'.<sup>46</sup>

This ambivalent disinction between a hostile regime and a friendly populace briefly survived the outbreak of the war. 'It will be a day of rejoicing for the German

peasant, artisan and trader, when the military caste is broken', David Lloyd George prophesied in September 1914.<sup>47</sup> But the violation of Belgian neutrality, the damage to Reims cathedral and the destruction of the university library of Louvain by German artillery, the deportation of forced labourers and the reports of other atrocities, culminating in the execution of Edith Cavell, and finally the sinking of the *Lusitania* confirmed the growing public suspicion that Germans were barbarians. Had not the Emperor himself boasted that his compatriots were to be remembered like the Huns of old – a godsend to headline-writers in search of monosyllables? No section of the population was more heavily disappointed in its German counterparts than academics. Many had studied in Germany and were linked to German academics by personal friendship and even marriage. They assumed that their German fellow-scholars shared their belief in a frontierless republic of letters. Nothing could shock them more than the near-unanimous identification of these fellow-scholars with Germany's military enterprise and the Anglo-phobe tone of their declarations. 'If ever there was a state in the world that pursued only selfish aims in its conduct, despised justice and let its power hold sway, it was England', wrote the academics who responded to the Oxford University Press pamphlet *Why we are at War. Great Britain's Case*.<sup>48</sup> The 'Manifesto of the 93', which was eventually signed by several thousand of the German good and the great, was even more explicit:

It is not true that the fight against our militarism is not a fight against our culture, as our enemies hypocritically claim ... The German Army and the German people are one.<sup>49</sup>

More in incomprehension than in anger over a hundred British academics wrote to *The Times*:

We note with regret the names of many German professors and men of science whom we

regard with respect and, in some cases, with personal friendship, appended to a denunciation of Great Britain so utterly baseless that we can hardly believe that it expresses their spontaneous or considered opinion.<sup>50</sup>

Michael Sadler, Professor of History at Manchester, who in August 1914 had written to his colleague J. Harvey, 'Of the two Germanys, the one that you and I love is not responsible for this wickedness', concluded only a year later that German academia was not as guiltless as he had assumed:

German education has paid the penalty for going to excess in the use of methods which, if employed in moderation, are salutary and wise ... Its conception of the role of the state has led it to neglect the duty of disinterested reflection.<sup>51</sup>

Those who had never shared the enthusiasm for German scholarship now felt doubly justified. L. P. Jacks, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, surrendered to the wildest optimism, declaring, 'The age of German footnotes is on the wane'.<sup>52</sup>

The First World War marked the low point in Anglo-German relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, if only because it shattered so many illusions. The deterioration applied at all levels. Not only were shops whose owners had German names vandalised and dachshunds stoned in the street, but the Saxe-Coburg-Gothas and Battenbergs felt obliged to change their family names. It was many years before academic contact was restored to normality, even though political relations with the Weimar Republic became quite warm. As for the Third Reich, its very extremism and barbarity actually made it easier to believe in the 'two Germanies', as the controversy over Vansittartism during the Second World War showed. But that is another subject.

The last question I want to address is how we account for the varying and often inconsistent perceptions that the two nations had of each other. Many of these perceptions were caricatures, but a good caricature must relate to recognisable realities. The German pedant, the sabre-rattler and, in the first half of the century, the wild revolutionary really did exist, as did the unmusical and unphilosophical Englishman and the manufacturer who equated his profit with the good of the world. In many cases the stereotype was borrowed from the other side of the Channel. Neither Britain nor Germany lacked satirists of their own compatriots, who provided readily exportable models. Above all, much of what was said about the other nation was a disguised comment on the home country. German praise of English constitutionalism or common sense was an implied criticism of German backwardness and British echoes of this theme ill-disguised self-praise. Similarly British praise of German education, sometimes well beyond what it deserved, reflected Britain's inferiority complex in this domain, while German contempt for the British cult of commerce was an implied defence of Germany's pre-bourgeois structures. Such games with mirrors, however much they may be obscured by Channel fog, are not an Anglo-German speciality. The *genre* dates from Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and is alive and well in our day. But that, too, is another subject.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas Hodgskin, *Travels in the North of Germany* (Edinburgh, 1830), vol. I, p. 132, vol. II, p.75.
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas Hood, *Up the Rhine* (London, 1840), pp. 211, 208.
- <sup>3</sup> Frederick A. Pottle (ed.), *Boswell on the Grand Tour. Germany and Switzerland, 1764* (London, 1953), pp. 23-4.
- <sup>4</sup> 'A View of the Society and Manners in France, Switzerland and Germany with Anecdotes Relating to some eminent Characters', *The Works of John Moore, MD* (Edinburgh, 1820), vol. I, pp. 236-7.
- <sup>5</sup> *Memoirs of Charlotte Williams-Wynn*, edited by her sister (London, 1877), p.93; Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany. Exile and Asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1986), p. 39.
- <sup>6</sup> George Eliot, *Journal, The Letters of George Eliot*, selected with an introduction by R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1926), p.92; Gordon S. Haight (ed.) *Selection from the George Eliot Letters* (New Haven, 1985), p. 146.
- <sup>7</sup> 'The Revolution in Europe', *Blackwood's Magazine* (May, 1848), p. 652.
- <sup>8</sup> Henry Mayhew, *German Life and Manners as seen in Saxony at the Present Day* (London, 1864), vol. II, pp. 590, 613.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 585.
- <sup>10</sup> Haight (ed.), *George Eliot Letters* (note 6), vol. II, pp. 185-6.
- <sup>11</sup> Elizabeth von Arnim, *The Adventures of Elizabeth in Rügen* (London, 1990), pp. 40-41.
- <sup>12</sup> *Plays by Henrik Ibsen*, edited with an Introduction by Havelock Ellis (London, 1890), p. vii.
- <sup>13</sup> Charles E. McClelland, *The German Historians and England. A Study in Nineteenth-Century Views* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 96-102.
- <sup>14</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *Die grossen Mächte, mit einem Nachwort von Theodor Schieder* (Göttingen, 1963), p. 13.
- <sup>15</sup> Karl von Rotteck and Karl Theodor Welcker, *Staats-Lexikon oder Encyclopädie der Staatswissenschaften* (Altona, 1835-48), vol. III, p. 763.
- <sup>16</sup> Karl Theodor Welcker, 'Englands Staatsverfassung', *Supplemente zur ersten Auflage des Staats-Lexikons* (Altona, 1846), vol. II, pp. 234, 229-30.



- <sup>17</sup> Friedrich List, *Das Nationale System der politischen Oekonomie*, (Jena, 1922), pp. 119-24, 133, 132.
- <sup>18</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, 12 March 1828.
- <sup>19</sup> Haight (ed.), *George Eliot Letters* (note 6), vol. II, pp. 451, 453-4.
- <sup>20</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (London, 1868), p. 272.
- <sup>21</sup> Joseph Kay, *The Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe* (London, 1850), vol. II, p. 87.
- <sup>22</sup> S. Baring-Gould, *Germany Present and Past* (London 1879), vol. I, p. 270.
- <sup>23</sup> Arnold, *Schools and Universities* (note 20).
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted by Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany. British Academics 1914-1918* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 6.
- <sup>25</sup> Thomas Sadler (ed.) *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson, Barrister-at-Law, FSA* (London, 1869), vol. I, p. 87.
- <sup>26</sup> Mark Pattison, *Suggestions on Academical Organisation with Especial Reference to Oxford* (Edinburgh, 1868), pp. 153, 169-70.
- <sup>27</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch* [World's Classics] (Oxford, 1947), pp. 221-2.
- <sup>28</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *The Wilder Sea. A Life of John Ruskin* (London, 1982), p. 268.
- <sup>29</sup> W. H. Dawson, *Bismarck and State Socialism. An Exposition of the Social and Economic Legislation of Germany since 1870* (London, 1890), p. 127.
- <sup>30</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [Kröners Taschenbuchausgabe] (Stuttgart, 1976), p. 187.
- <sup>31</sup> Oskar A. H. Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik. Englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* (Munich, 1915), p. 31.
- <sup>32</sup> Baring-Gould, *Germany Present and Past* (note 22), vol. II, p. 100.
- <sup>33</sup> Haight (ed.), *George Eliot Letters* (note 6), vol. II, p. 191, n. 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Sadler (ed.), *Henry Crabb Robinson* (note 25), vol. I, p. 84.
- <sup>35</sup> George W. E. Russell, *Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1881* (London, 1901), vol. II, pp. 361-2.

- <sup>36</sup> Rupert Christiansen, *The Visitors. Culture-Shock in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 2000), p. 75.
- <sup>37</sup> 9 February 1871. House of Commons Debates, 3rd Ser., CCIV, pp. 81-2.
- <sup>38</sup> H. G. C. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries* (Oxford, 1982), vol. VII, p. 402, vol. VIII, p. 470.
- <sup>39</sup> John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (London, 1908), vol. II, p. 96.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Fortnightly Review* (1 September 1866), pp. 245-50.
- <sup>41</sup> Frederic Harrison, *The German Peril. Forecasts, Realities, Hopes, 1864-1914* (London, 1915), p. 53.
- <sup>42</sup> Id., *Autobiographical Memoirs* (London, 1911), p. 9.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany', in G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds), *British Documents on the Origins of the World War* (London, 1932), vol. III, pp. 406, 417.
- <sup>44</sup> Heinrich von Treitschke, 'Die Feuerprobe des nord-deutschen Bundes', *Preußische Jahrbücher*, XXVI (1870), p. 249; 'Preußen auf dem Wiener Congresse', *ibid.*, XXXVI (1875), p. 674.
- <sup>45</sup> Quoted by Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London, 1980), p. 399.
- <sup>46</sup> Quoted by A.J.A. Morris, *Radicalism Against War, 1898-1914* (London, 1972), pp. 218-9.
- <sup>47</sup> 6 August 1914, *House of Commons Debates*, 3rd Series, CCIV, pp. 41-2.
- <sup>48</sup> Quoted by Hermann Kellermann, *Der Krieg der Geister. Eine Auslese deutscher und ausländischer Stimmen zum Weltkriege 1914* (Weimar, 1915), p. 92.
- <sup>49</sup> Jürgen and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf 'An die Kulturwelt!' Das Manifest der 93 und der Anfang der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg. Mit einer Dokumentation* (Stuttgart, 1996), pp. 144-5.
- <sup>50</sup> *The Times*, 21 October 1914, p. 10.
- <sup>51</sup> Quoted by Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany* (note 24), pp. 31, 39.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.