

Tending the Enemy's Flock: German Pastors and POWs in Britain, 1940-1955

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Timeline

July 27, 1929: Geneva Convention created by nine signatory nations
1931: Britain ratifies the Geneva Convention
1934: Germany ratifies the Geneva Convention
April 1934: Hitler seizes power, first waves of Jewish migration to Britain.
September 3, 1939: Britain and France declare war on Germany
October 1939: the International Red Cross committee offers to establish a central agency for prisoner of war affairs
January 31, 1940: Mr. Thorne asks Secretary of State for War Oliver Stanley about the treatment of German POWs
August 28, 1940: American ambassadors observe British POW camps in Germany
December 7, 1941: The United States declares war on the Empire of Japan, Germany declares war on the United States
1942: British begin integration of German POWs into the British prison system
September 3, 1943: Allied Invasion of Italy begins; British government begins transporting large numbers of German POWs to the British Isles
Late 1944: British authorities find that they are unable to affect a real shift in POW attitude, Colonial Office reports show a failing interest and weak support for reeducation
November 1, 1944: German pastors set up a system to help POWs obtain postwar work
December 1944: Reverend L.B. Angliss first visits the POW Camp on the Isle of Man
1945-1948: British authorities begin using the ABC classification system in POW camps
February 28, 1945: Reverend Angliss returns to the Isle of Man Camp
March 8, 1945: Victory in Europe
April 9, 1945: Pastor Martin Böckheler arrives in Sydenham and works as a permanent official to “market” the German Protestant churches
June 13th, 1945: Home Office states that repatriation is now the primary objective for POWs
July 5, 1945: United Kingdom general election results in a landslide victory for the Labour Party
July 17- August 2, 1945: Potsdam Conference
January 1946: The German Young Men’s Christian Association begins operating in Britain under the guidance of Pastor Werner Jentsch
March 1946: Noel Baker writes a letter to the editor expressing concern over the POWs
December 11, 1946: German pastors start camp lecture series
April 29 – May 6, 1947: Reverend Birger Forell visits Germany to supervise the Espelkamp and to check on POW affairs
May 1947: Ecumenical event as pastors, politicians and human rights activists converge on the Norton Camp to discuss POW treatment; Pastor Jentsch begins psychological surveys of German POWs remaining in camps
November 1947: German pastors begin creating and working in transition camps to prepare POWs for repatriation
March 15-19, 1948: The “young youth leaders’ course,” begins its examination period under the guidance of the German pastors
November 1948: Pastor Böckheler expresses unease over the ineptitude of the British government in preparing the POWs for repatriation
1949: German Democratic Republic established in East Germany

Introduction

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 1943.

On February 26th, 1948, Pastor H. Dietrich Pompe wrote a letter to the Right Reverend Archbishop of York, discussing “the greatest difficulty” he has ever faced. He begged the Archbishop to aid him in his mission: helping Johann Orend, a German held at a prisoner of war (POW) camp in Britain, receive artificial fingers. A German national living in Romania, Orend had been forced to join the SS during World War II, and on December 12, 1947, had lost three fingers of his left hand. Not only had he not heard from his family in a long time, but Orend was also scheduled for German repatriation in the coming months to go to live with his brother. Earlier that year, the Archbishop had helped another German POW, to receive artificial limbs before returning to Germany to live in housing the Archbishop had arranged, and Pompe hoped for a similar favor for Orend. As the pastor Pompe explained, he worried about the “thousands of amputated men waiting in vain for artificial limbs.” Moreover, he told the Archbishop that “existing regulations do not oblige British authorities to provide German POWs with artificial limbs.”¹ When it came to helping POWs, the church authorities would be on their own.

Pastor Pompe’s search for an artificial limb for a POW reflected a larger pattern of interaction between German POWs and German pastors that scholars have largely ignored. For more than 350,000 German POWs interned in Britain between 1945 and 1950, German pastors played a critical – though often unseen – role. Never taking center stage, the work of German pastors in aiding the British internment of POWs has been largely snubbed until now. Bilingual, multicultural, brilliant, religious, distraught and hopeful, these German pastors were thrust into a role that at first glance seems like it only opened them up to greater suspicion from the British government. Motivated by a critical shortage in

¹ “Pompe, Pastor H. Dietrich (British Council of Churches): Correspondence concerning work with the prisoners of war,” London Metropolitan Archive (LMA)/4288/D/04/032: 22.

manpower, the British government created a system of internment for German POWs that would last well beyond the Second World War. Furthermore, from 1945 to 1947, the British government debated the question of whether the continued employment of German POWs was in violation of the Geneva Convention, struggling with the issues of violating international law, and with the very real concern of how to meet these labor demands.² Eventually, the British government would turn to German pastors as the medium through which to reeducate, rehabilitate, and repatriate the German POWs.

In October and November of 1939, various branches of the British government began to debate whether POWs could be used as labor, based on the precedent of POW employment during World War I.³ Their initial discussions, however, did not take into account the Geneva Convention.⁴ As the number of POWs grew and the British labor force shrank after the war began in 1939, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry began to push for greater control of POW employment. The Army Council initially refused, citing the low numbers of prisoners and a fear of a potential “fifth column” on the home front, but the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry estimated that the unskilled labor pool in Britain would reach such a low level that only German POW labor could make up the losses. However, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry would have to wait for the situation to become truly dire before they were granted greater access to the German POWs.

This internal debate ran parallel to conversations occurring between Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the Home Defense Security Executive (HDSE), chaired by Viscount

² The British National Archives (NA), War Cabinet Records, CAB/128/2, Image Reference 0017: 8.

³ NA, “Report: Employment of Prisoners of War and Enemy Aliens,” MAF47/54, 4 November 1939.

⁴ Bob Moore, “Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 32, Issue 1, 1997: 119.

Swinton, in May 1940; they initially discussed removing dangerous aliens and civilian internees to the Dominions.⁵ Swinton and the HDSE hoped that German POWs could be, in turn, relocated to the Dominions or Canada in order to prevent them from becoming a factor on the European front, and Swinton actively lobbied the British government to pursue this policy. However, under the Geneva Convention, POWs could not be moved from a theater of war from which they were captured.⁶ Swinton was not particularly concerned, and only worried once he learned that Newfoundland would not be ready to hold these POWs captured as part of the North Africa campaign in 1943. Relocation attempts abroad faltered, seemingly in tandem with a significantly depleted labor force at home.

As the war progressed, the conscription of almost three and half million men depleted the labor resources of the British Isles. While women entered the workforce at record levels, the British government still experienced shortages, particularly in food production, with rationing in effect throughout most of the war and afterward from 1945 to 1951.⁷ The government seriously reconsidered using POWs as the foundation for a new war labor system, as they recognized that British labor could be directed towards munitions, while foreign workers could be used in less “high risk” industries such as agricultural and infrastructure work. While writing about the employment of POWs, one British official stated, “it is difficult to establish a nice correspondence between the

⁵ Ibid: 120. These first groups of “dangerous internees” were actually be sent to Canada in the coming months. Philip Cunliffe-Lister, the First Earl of Swinton would serve as the Secretary of State for Air, and was a confidant of Churchill. Further research into these exchanges could be done in Philip Cunliffe-Lister’s records in the Churchill College Archives.

⁶ Ibid: 121. “Theater of War,” refers to either the “European theater” or the “Pacific theater,” thus moving the POWs to Britain was not a violation of the Geneva Convention.

⁷ Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000*, London: Penguin Books, 2004: 209. David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007: 19.

conditions of labor in countries where civil workers are treated like slaves, and countries where labor is regulated in terms of an industrial democracy.”⁸

However, the challenges of integrating Axis troops with Allied economic systems would have to be solved much faster than expected. As a result of surprising military successes in North Africa, the British faced an abundance of Italian POWs in 1943. The British captured over 59,000 Italian soldiers, and faced the impossible task of trying to guard and evacuate the soldiers from Africa and into Europe. Sensing an opportunity, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries began to put in requests for POWs to fill shortages in the domestic market as long as they did not include any “violent or fascist types.”⁹ As the Army Council officially processed and accepted requests, it became apparent that the domestic British labor force was in much shorter supply than initially estimated, resulting in a demand for approximately 15,000 Italian laborers. After the Italian government changed alliances to support Britain, the government felt uncomfortable with interning large numbers of their new “allies” and began to import German POWs instead.

The difficulties of transporting, accommodating, and utilizing the manpower within the constraints of security policy slowed the process at first, but eventually the first permanent camps were established in southern of England in 1944. The Axis POW camps in Britain grew to incarcerate as many as 163,000 German soldiers by early 1945.¹⁰ While the war seemed to be coming to a close, agricultural shortages showed no signs of slowing,

⁸ Moore, “Liabilities into Assets”: 122.

⁹ Ibid: 122. This exchange is also detailed in NA Minute 12, CAB65/7, 3 July 1940: 192, and in NA, Foreign Office (FO), G.W. Lambert of the War Office’s letter to the Under-Secretary of State, MAF47/54, 10 September 1940.

¹⁰ NA, War Cabinet Records, CAB/129/2, Image Reference 0002: 3. It is worth noting that of those 163,000 German POWs, there were 14,000 deemed “unemployable” by the British government for their so-called “Ardent Nazi Status.”

alarming British officials. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Robert Hudson wrote in May of 1945 that “the deficiency in agricultural manpower cannot be met other than by the employment of more prisoner labor.”¹¹ This massive labor shortage kick-started a mammoth prisoner transfer, moving over 150,000 Germans from the European continent to Britain for employment in the agriculture industry, to offset the 100,000 person manpower deficit.¹² By late 1945, the situation had become so desperate that George Isaacs, Minister of Labour and National Service, began soliciting the United States and the Soviet Union for manpower from their camps of German soldiers, attempting to move as many as 45,000 men to the Isles.¹³

In addition to the labor shortages rocking Britain, the Allies began to face problems in the failing POW camps located in Continental Europe because of camp overcapacity and rampant disease. In various memoranda written in November 1944 and February 1945, Secretary of State for War Sir P.J. Grigg expressed serious concerns that the current POW camps could no longer hold the necessary number of prisoners, while maintaining the standards outlined in the Geneva Convention. He noted in particular the high threat of disease in the camps, specifically pointing out prisoners in Belgian camps suffering from diphtheria.¹⁴ By 1946, new camps were established in the north of England and German POWs in Britain numbered well over 350,000. The die had been cast: for many of the

¹¹ NA, War Cabinet Records, CAB/66/65/54, Image Reference 0001: 1. Minister Hudson further stated that there was “no prospect” of workers coming from any other areas of the British Isles, and in order to have “any reasonable chance” of maintaining food production, they would need vastly to increase the number of German POWs in Britain.

¹² NA, War Cabinet Records, CAB/66/65/54, Image Reference 0001: 1.

¹³ NA, War Cabinet Records, CAB/128/2, Image Reference 0017: 8.

¹⁴ NA, War Cabinet Records, CAB/66/61/44, Image Reference 0001: 2. Austerity scales for prisoner of war camps put maximum occupancy at 39,000, but Grigg placed current capacity as high as 56,700, with an expected 45,000 needing accommodation within the next few months.

German soldiers captured during the Second World War, their destination lay across the narrow channel of water, in Britain.

It is at this point that the figure of the German pastor, with unparalleled access to over 350,000 POWs, comes into play. The German pastors occupied a unique niche in these events, as they possessed the ability to interact with many different communities, both British and German. Mandated by both the British government and the international convention to provide religious services to POWs, the pastors of this period had an opportunity to have a massive impact on the men who would eventually rebuild Germany. The “pastors” of discussion make up three primary groups, and were all Protestant, and mostly Lutheran. First, the “German pastors,” such as Julius Rieger and Werner Jentsch, who worked most directly with the camps, were ethnically German. Most were born in Germany, but at some point in the interwar period or before 1939, migrated to Britain. Those before 1933 were viewed as “migrants” by the British government, and often took up residency as part of a system of pastoral exchange.¹⁵ Those who arrived after the rise of fascist Germany were “refugees.”¹⁶ Their Anglican British counterparts, with whom they had strong connections dating to before the First World War, aided them in this process. They not only able to settle quickly into the well-established German community, which had become more insular in the aftermath of the First World War, but they were also able to garner support from powerful Anglican figures. Finally, the German pastors and British

¹⁵ Revd. Dr. Ulrich Lincoln, the current pastor of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Church in London, in an interview with the author, 5 June 2015.

¹⁶ German pastors were also interned in these camps, albeit at smaller numbers. The LMA records surrounding this issue are unclear as to why some pastors were interned while others were not, but they do describe other pastors’ efforts to get them removed. It is likely that the later German pastor connection with the left-leaning British Council of Churches helped protect many of them from internment.

pastors in the postwar period aimed to facilitate the visitation and migration of German pastors to Britain who had lived in Germany throughout the war, in order to aid in the repatriation process.

Yet, the pastor role has never been fully understood by historians, and instead is often relegated to a footnote in which “religious instruction given to prisoners” is noted as an afterthought. What is known is that these clergy were present in the camps, and were offered access to POWs, at levels greater than some British officials. Instead of being viewed as enemies of the state, like many of their German migrant and refugee counterparts, the German pastors were offered nearly unrestricted contact with some of Hitler’s most ardent supporters.¹⁷ Released for public viewing in the last ten years, the writings of many of the German pastors operating in these camps are available for analysis for the first time. What did the German pastors hope to gain by helping Hitler’s Nazi soldiers? Was there more to their motivations than compassion and pastoral commitment? And could their involvement have a real impact not only on POWs, but also on both British and international views of the German state? It is time that the role of the German pastors, as confidants and activists take center stage. At a turning point in European and international history, German pastors offer a window into larger discussions of migration, ethnicity, rebuilding, and global Christianity.

The historical work done on the POW experience in Britain is copious in parts, while sparse in others. Indeed, most of the relevant scholarship on the German POW experience focuses principally on the relationship between captors and prisoners, from two angles:

¹⁷ As noted previously, some German pastors were interned, but it was a small portion of the overall group. This issue is still very unclear, and had time allowed, would have benefited from greater research.

economic and social.¹⁸ My study of the German pastors not only enriches our understanding of the POW experience in Britain, but it also enriches our understanding of a postwar period fraught with uncertainty and political turmoil. For the German pastors, POW involvement acted as a springboard into the critical issues of “German humanity” as the Second World War ended. The pastors found themselves caught between two different eras, as Allied objectives shifted from punishing Nazis towards fighting the Cold War. The defeated nation of Germany “proved to be the literal and figurative divider.”¹⁹ Initially, the Western Allies’ policies regarding denazification, the prosecution of war criminals, and the treatment of refugees, seemed to be motivated by victor’s justice, leading to anger from German churches. The German pastors in Britain found themselves trapped between their desires to be complicit in the Allied mission, while fearing that these policies only strengthened Communist appeals. However, like the British officials working with the POWs, the Allies realized that the churches’ political and propaganda efforts against the Soviet Union could lead to tangible gains for their side.

This thesis argues that German pastors, through the medium of the German POWs, created a space for themselves to take part on international conversations of denazification, humanization, and reintegration of the postwar world. These actions were undertaken under the umbrella of the movement toward an end to the Second World War,

¹⁸ See Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying, the Secret World War II Transcripts of German POWs*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012; Henry Faulk, *Group Captives: The Reeducation of German Prisoners of War*, Toronto: Chatto & Windus Ltd, 1977; Sophie Jackson, *Churchill’s Unexpected Guests: Prisoners of War in Britain in World War II*, Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2010.

¹⁹ JonDavid K. Wyneken, “The Western Allies, German Churches, and the Emerging Cold War in Germany, 1948-1952,” in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip Emil Muehlenbeck, Vanderbilt University Press: Nashville, 2012: 18.

and later, on the coming Cold War. Both British authorities and German pastors recognized that these POWs presented them with an opportunity to influence part of the population that would rebuild Germany, and German pastors recognized an opportunity to attempt to transform the image of Germany conveyed to Britain and the world.

First, I argue that because of the failure of British efforts to reeducate the German POWs located on the Isles, German pastors took up the mantle of reeducation. Their efforts involved a holistic program of reeducation, including employment, intellectual engagement, and the forging of personal connections to Germany. By participating in these efforts, German pastors sought to reeducate German POWs, and to improve the image of the German citizen worldwide, particularly as the war came to a close. Second, I contend that the pastors' aid to POWs in their transition to Germany was motivated by a desire to evangelize the POWs and also to help change the damaged German Protestant Churches. Because the West, due to the events of the war, called the ethical reputation of German churches into question, pastors sought an opportunity to show how Germans could contribute to the global movement for Christian Reconstruction.²⁰ As Britain failed to prepare POWs for repatriation, pastors instead helped ready POWs for their reintegration into the homeland. Finally, I assert that the POWs remaining in the camps after the war ended, experienced a critical moral reckoning, facilitated and monitored by the German pastors. Some members of the British populace began to perceive the great suffering of the POWs, and protested the government's efforts to treat them as second-class citizens with restricted opportunity to remain in Britain. In tandem, German pastors began to try and "return their humanity" to the POWs, by reconnecting them with their families and using

²⁰ Ibid: 19.

them to examine their feelings toward their captors. The German pastors were then able to expand these transcontinental POW connections to help not only German migrants coming to Britain, but German-Jewish refugees as well. As the war ended, Germans and Britons alike were compelled to assess their roles in the coming new world order. Ultimately, through their involvement in German POW affairs, pastors endeavored to create a transnational, religious, and cultural connection between Germany and Britain that would be vital in the coming Cold War.

Chapter I:

Camps Without Walls: German Prisoner of War Internment Interaction with the German and Ethnic British Communities, 1940-1948

In December 1944, Reverend L.B. Angliss, a British pastor of German descent, found himself continually stymied in his efforts to visit German prisoners of war detained on the Isle of Man. Angliss had left the relative comfort of the mainland to visit the isolated, cold, and uncomfortable camp, and the jailer greeted him with a rude reception, initially refusing to let him inside.²¹ After this disrespectful reception, Angliss decided that he would need to avoid these kinds of complications in the future, and wrote a stern letter to the Home Office, demanding his right to visit detainees in accordance with Command Paper 6162.²² Angliss declared himself the official Home Office representative to the prisoners on the Isle of Man by invoking this order, creating a new role for himself as a Government advocate on behalf of the POWs.

While the Government allowed outsiders to act as advocates for the German soldiers, it did not trust the potential “fifth column” activity of the POWs. In *Churchill’s Unexpected Guests: Prisoners of War in Britain in World War II*, Sophie Jackson describes the British interrogation network and the monitoring system of the camps’ public spaces, which recorded POW conversations then used for analysis by the Government into the psyche of the German soldier.²³ Angliss’s next recorded visit to the Isle of Man jail occurred on February 28th, 1945, and he reported no issues in entering the facility. At this point, his real work began: the assessment of both the facilities available to the POWs and the physical and mental health of the prisoners.

²¹ NA, Home Office (HO) 215/245, 28 Feb. 1945: 11.

²² Ibid: 11. A Command Paper is a document issued by the British government and presented to Parliament. Command Papers include white papers, green papers, and reports from various government bodies.

²³ These reports were routed to the interrogation centers located in London, and are currently available through the NA in limited amounts to the public.

Inside the isolated Isle of Man, Angliss began his interviews with the POWs, and encountered POWs who professed both anti-Nazi and anti-British sentiments, sometimes in tandem. The first prisoner, "Larsen", had an ordinary conversation with Angliss. At the end of their discussion, Angliss recommended that Larsen "be sent to London and not returned to "X" camp along with his companion "Saunderson."²⁴ A third prisoner, "Neserov" started the conversation with a simple request for newspapers, to which Angliss agreed, but the conversation then took a turn. Nesterov, a very adventurous young German, talked to Angliss with great enthusiasm about his attempted escape from his previous POW facility; his failure and subsequent recapture had sent him to the Isle of Man.²⁵ Angliss was more amused than afraid, and humored Nesterov by continuing the conversation; however, this sort of humoring of prisoners did not continue into the next meeting. As Angliss and prisoner "Kamerman" began to talk, Angliss concluded that Kamerman was "a mental case." They began to get into an argument about the Home Office and the police; Angliss was "visibly shaken" as the conversation ended.²⁶ He immediately left to return home following the encounter.

The misadventures of Angliss in dealing with a German POW population that varied widely in character and disposition, exemplified the coming struggles of the British government in dealing with both the logistics of the internment system and the POWs themselves. During the war and in the immediate postwar period, British officials believed that the vast majority of German POWs were not "ardent Nazis," and only acted on orders

²⁴ Ibid:13. When reporting on POW activities, authors struck out all the names of camps, using the distinction "X," for security reasons.

²⁵ Ibid: 13.

²⁶ Ibid: 13. Angliss used the term "mental case" based on his own judgment that Kamerman was displaying paranoiac behavior toward the Home Office and the police.

from their superiors.²⁷ In their internal discourse, Government officials argued that most Germans were “war weary”, and had a greater connection to Germany as a homeland than to Hitler’s ideology.²⁸ However, this presumption has proven largely false, and contemporary historians have challenged the “clean hands” legend surrounding the German Wehrmacht. Leading German historians such as Dieter Pohl and Johannes Hürter in conjunction with the Hamburg Institute for Social Research’s Wehrmacht exhibition and research project, argue that the Wehrmacht had a history of anti-Semitism and extreme militarism, carrying out horrific acts of violence on the Eastern Front largely of their own accord. Most critically, they also played off the British need for a strong European ally in the context of Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union, to hide their own complicity in Hitler’s violent mission.²⁹ As British authorities began to take a more active role in reeducating German POWs in late 1944, the Government found that they were unable to effect a real shift in the attitudes of the camp towards democracy, which can largely be explained by a vastly underestimated assessment of POW support for a Nazi regime.³⁰ Into

²⁷ The term “ardent Nazi” appears frequently throughout the primary documentation surrounding classification of German POWs. However, the term seems to be largely arbitrary, and left up to the distinction of those classifying the POWs. The criteria surrounding the categorization of “ardent Nazi” are thus, highly suspect and largely unknown.

²⁸ Jackson, *Churchill’s Unexpected Guests*, 40.

²⁹ This discussion is detailed in Wolfram Wette’s *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, Dieter Pohl’s *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, and Johannes Hürter’s *Hitlers Heerführer*. It is also critical to note here that the polarization of Europe did not really begin until 1947, almost two years after the war had ended. However, German POWs could play off rising tensions inside the Allied alliance, particularly after the death of President Roosevelt, Churchill’s electoral defeat, and the desire to rebuild Germany. The rebuilding of Germany, and the subsequent superficial denazification, has been well documented in the historiography of the period. Moreover, German POWs used the British government’s lenient denazification policies to create a space for themselves in both Germany and Britain post-1947.

³⁰ In *Group Captives: The Reeducation of German Prisoners of War*, Henry Faulk states that while there were some early attempts at reeducation in late 1944, began in earnest after the Potsdam Conference, July 17th – August 2nd 1945, in which the Allies affirmed their intention to “denazify and democratize” the Germans: 52.

the reeducation void stepped the Anglo-German pastors of the British Isles who took up the movement for reeducation, while also helping to renew the connections between the German and British communities of both nations. The pastors viewed POWs as a microcosm of German society, suffering from a “frightening sense of isolation and guilt by the crumbling of the Nazi social structure...[they] needed a reorientation, a renewed sense of belonging.”³¹

Why did the German POWs have the particular experience that they did? Why did German POWs have the opportunity to forge connections with the outside community, and why did the British government allow the interaction to continue? This chapter seeks to answer the question of why the British government decided to invest in reeducating the German POWs and why the German pastors located in Britain decided to get involved in this project. Answering these fundamental questions sheds light on the state of relations between Germany and Britain as the end of the Second World War approached, and as Britain began to rebuild Germany, particularly as Allied-controlled West Germany emerged as a partner against the Soviet Union in 1947. Britain and Germany possessed deep cultural, linguistic, and historical links, but the Second World War’s fracturing of relations created a need for a new enthusiasm to renew the connections, while also suppressing “other” movements of the left and the right in the context of the Cold War.

The small undertaking of the German pastors to influence the German POW experience played a role in a changed perspective of both German POWs and the British populace in the postwar period, by recreating a connection between individuals of the two nations both in terms of employment and intellectual understanding. These changes would

³¹ Ibid: 161.

gain momentum in the 1950s. As the British authorities failed to see “change” beyond simple professed sentiments for the democratic cause, German pastors in Britain, eager to change the view of Germany, took up the mantle of reeducation. German pastors’ acted as messengers between German and British communities, and their efforts to bring democratic outlooks to the POWs created a new vision of rebuilding in the postwar period. However, German pastors’ motives were not solely altruistic: they possessed deep concerns over their status in British society, and as the internment of “enemy aliens” gained moment, the German-British pastors saw an opportunity to portray themselves as “Germans working for the Allied cause.” This chapter addresses the British creation of the camp system, and then moves to a deeper discussion of how the German pastors interacted with the German POWs, in the context of an expanding Soviet Union in 1947 and 1948.

International and National Contexts for the Internment of POWs

As the British campaign in Italy began to gain momentum in 1943, the British government faced a new and unexpected challenge: an overabundance of German prisoners of war. Before this operation, the Axis prisoner of war camps in Britain had been filled with Italian POWs captured during the North African campaign, but the camps on the Continent were filled to capacity, and a rising demand for labor on the home front necessitated British attention. In its desperation, the British government in 1943 began in earnest the process of transporting huge numbers of German POWs to the British Isles. However, along with the logistical considerations of moving thousands of people into a comparatively small landmass, the British had to consider how their treatment of German POWs fit into the existing system of POW protection under the Geneva Convention, the only legal international document protecting wartime conduct.

Created in 1929 by nine signatory nations, the Geneva Convention stated, “in the extreme event of war, it will be the duty of every Power, to mitigate as far as possible, the inevitable rigours thereof and to alleviate the condition of prisoners of war.”³² While neither Germany nor Britain were signatories, both “ratified” the Geneva Convention in 1934 and 1931, respectively. The signatories described the means by which nations engaged in conflict should uphold the treatment standards of POWs during times of war. They argued that each nation should be responsible for maintaining a standard of care for POWs equivalent to the level received by the nation’s own soldiers, thereby ensuring POWs received adequate care to the level a nation could supply.³³ The idea of equivalency between enemy soldiers and the nation’s own troops formed the basis of the Geneva Convention’s protection of POWs, after the astonishing atrocities committed against POWs during the First World War. However, while the standard of equivalency was legally binding amongst the signatories, as the Second World War began, a disparity arose between the treatment given to Axis and Allied POWs in the European theater of war.

Before the United States entered the war in 1941, the Germans allowed American emissaries to visit German POW camps that held British soldiers, in order to help ensure the acceptable treatment of the prisoners. On August 28, 1940, the American ambassador in Berlin transmitted a series of reports to the British government, containing notes from

³² “Preamble,” *Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, International Committee of the Red Cross, 27 July 1929.

³³ There was not an extended debate seeking the lowering of the standard of care for POWs. Led by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), forty-seven states began to revise the existing rules under the Hague regulations of 1907. While the Belgian and German delegations expressed some discomfort with the notion of “collective penalties,” the nations ratified the Convention without much delay. In “Collective Responsibility and Accountability under International Law,” Shane Darcy argues “the excesses of the First World War had spurred the drafters toward increasing considerably the humanitarian safeguarding prisoners of war.”³⁴

POW Camps Oflag IX, A, Ober und Unterlager, Stalag IX B, Dulug XII and Dulag Luft, on behalf of American intermediaries.³⁴ Conditions varied from camp to camp: one facility was described as “decent,” with adequate clothing stocks, regular mail, and access to well-prepared food, while others had possible water contamination. However, the worst facility was Spangenberg, an over-capacity camp with 180 prisoners of war, housed in an ancient and gloomy castle. The reporter described his disgust over inadequate bathing and washing facilities, poor toilets, and ventilation so bad that a nearby hospital continuously received British prisoners.³⁵

The reporting by American forces painted a conflicting, but bleak picture overall for the British authorities, and British fears for POW treatment were compounded once the United States entered the war. Once the Americans were officially part of the Allied war effort, the Germans cut off American access to the camps. Therefore, the British had no way to inspect or ensure that British POWs received a satisfactory standard of treatment.³⁶ It is critical to note here that even if the Germans had wanted to maintain a high standard of POW treatment, it is unlikely that this would have been possible. Particularly as the war took a turn for the worse, German soldiers were often on the edge of starvation, and very few resources could be devoted to taking care of them or of enemy POWs. In his account of his interment in Stalag IVB, RAF Squadron Sergeant Douglas J. Gillam wrote “without food

³⁴ NA, FO 416, 27 May – 3 June 1940: 6. The timing of these reports is particularly interesting because the US government recalled their ambassador in protest of Kristallnacht in 1938, and there was no new ambassador appointed to the post. Instead, a charge d’affaires led the office, but all reports continued to be signed as “the American ambassador.”

³⁵ Ibid: 1.

³⁶ German POW response to the improvement of treatment during internment is discussed in the second chapter.

sent to us by the Red Cross, many prisoners would have...starved.”³⁷ The Red Cross, as part of the international concern for POW welfare following the First World War, operated as best it could in Continental Europe, but the Germans often refused its help or made aid difficult to obtain. For instance, German authorities refused all aid for camps that housed Soviet Union prisoners, on the grounds that the USSR had not ratified the Geneva Convention, and therefore, the Germans could not be held accountable for providing adequate care.³⁸

The British were faced with a moral dilemma: should they continue to care for German POWs to the best of their abilities as mandated under the Geneva Convention, or should they mirror the ill-treatment that British soldiers were receiving in the Third Reich, even though the British government could provide better care for the German POWs? The debate raged in the letters to the editor of both national and local British newspapers, as members of the population vented anger against both the German government and the German people.³⁹ However, economic motivations won out, as the British decided to utilize German POWs as a labor base to sustain agricultural production on the island.⁴⁰

³⁷Tony Vercoe, *Survival at Stalag IVB: Soldiers and Airmen Remember Germany's Largest POW Camp of World War II*, McFarland & Company: London, 2006.

³⁸ The atrocities against Soviet soldiers in German POW camps in the East, are well documented by historians, particularly in Pohl's *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, and will not be discussed at length here.

³⁹ See "Are They Getting a Fair Deal?: Our prisoners – and Theirs," in *The Evening Telegraph and Post* of December 6, 1940," which discussed in great detail the harsh conditions to which the Germans subjected the British soldiers. In a contrasting *Times* letter to the editor, Violet Barbour asked the British public, "if these men [the German POWs] are not given a degree of freedom, how can they shed the outlook of the prisoner of war or regard this as a free and democratic country?" The debate would largely be settled with the recognition of the services that German POWs offered as agricultural workers. The third chapter will look at the response of British populace to German POWs using newspaper editorials.

⁴⁰ In the Geneva Convention, Section III, Labor of Prisoners of War, Article 27, it specifically states, "belligerents may utilize the labor of able prisoners of war, according to their rank and aptitude."

In 1942, the British began the integration of German POWs in mass into the British prison system, which already held enemy aliens interned at the beginning of the war.⁴¹ Under the Prison Act of 1890 and section 4 of the Prison Act Amendment of 1911, the British government “with respect to the Management, Good Order, and Discipline of the Isle of Man Prison and to the Classification and Treatment of Prisoners” guaranteed certain rights to POWs.⁴² The prison staff regulated the facilities in many areas, including enforcing cleanliness, inspecting cells, and engaging with prisoners.⁴³ The prison staff enforced the standard of living, and visiting justices protected POW rights by traveling to the prisons to hear complaints expressed by the internees. They then reported that information to the various commanders of the camps. Critically, the Government also mandated that all prison staff be legally bound to report accidents and all complaints to the camp commandant, the senior British official running the camp.⁴⁴ The camp commandant dealt with a wide span of issues in the POW system, from facilitating reeducation programs to dealing with simple complaints about the food.⁴⁵

Captors were not required to compensate POWs. In the postwar period various groups raised concerns about the ethical concerns of using POWs as laborers.

⁴¹ There is a large literature surrounding the internment of “enemy aliens” in Britain during the Second World War, and the issue of enemy aliens will not be discussed here. It is worth noting, however, that many of the interned “enemy aliens” were actually German and Austrian Jewish refugees who had fled before the Second World War started. The Research Center for German and Austrian Exile Studies, *“Totally Un-English”?: Britain’s Internment of “Enemy Aliens” in Two World Wars* (2205) describes this internment period at length.

⁴² *H.M. Prison, Isle of Man. Regulations with Respect to Management etc.*, 1929, NA: HO 215/245:1.

⁴³ *Ibid*: 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*: 9. It is interesting to note that a complaint about the food to the commandant was not dismissed or even mocked by the British staff. Rather, the staff addressed and remedied even a complaint on this small scale, and the British commandant spoke to the head cook “that very same day.” The quick redress of complaints shows a level of care for POW welfare that seems to contrast with the traditional idea of the treatment towards enemies of the state. Daniel Hutchinson, “‘We Are the Most Fortunate of Prisoners:’ The Axis POW Experience at Camp Opelika during World War II” (*Alabama Review* 64.4 Oct 2011, 285), states that “Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union treated their

Essential for German POWs, the British authorities also guaranteed access to a chaplain, who had permission to keep a confidential journal where, in the words of the prison management regulation handbook, “he shall record his visits and enter any observations that may occur to him.”⁴⁶ The right to a chaplain was also guaranteed under the Geneva Convention. This confidential record served the dual purpose of providing the POWs with a trustworthy confidant inside the camp who had connections in the German immigrant world, and permitting the chaplains to record their findings without fear of repercussions from the British authorities. In particular, chaplains could “see every prisoner in private, in order to be able to direct his advice and instruction.”⁴⁷ The pastors were under no obligation to report what the POWs said to British authorities, creating a confidential source where POWs could express their emotions about their internment. By having a built-in system where prisoners possessed a guaranteed right to visits by pastors, the German pastors could immediately begin to establish a relationship with the German POWs interned in locations including the Isle of Man; this relationship would give pastors legitimacy with the German POWs as they became more involved in reeducation efforts. While prisoners could receive visitors on designated days and write and receive letters, often they did not have anyone to write to, much less to visit, when they arrived in Britain. Visitations by pastors created the opportunity for German POWs to forge a connection with the outside world.

In order to assess the needs of the prisoners, pastors wrote the *Monatsbericht des Lagerpfarrers* (the monthly report of the camp pastors). These reports included

prisoners with criminal callousness...but pockets of humanity and compassion did exist...with American and British military planners.”

⁴⁶ Ibid: 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

information such as the home address in Germany of the various internees, the services they provided in the camps, and the pastor's assessment of the likelihood of a successful repatriation.⁴⁸ Often, the reports by the pastors focused on the qualities of the internees most likely to result in their release, such as the relative warmth of the relationship between the German prisoner and his British captors. In *die Monatsbericht* of a lieutenant colonel in the German Wehrmacht, one pastor noted the friendly relationship between the British and the lieutenant colonel, and his approval for multiple jobs inside of the camp.⁴⁹ The relationship between the British "captors" and the German POWs was particularly critical in securing the release and possible repatriation of the German soldiers. By proving that soldiers were friendly, hardworking, and most importantly, supportive of the Allied mission, German pastors aimed to change the British perspective of the POWs. This became particularly important after February 1945, when news about the concentration camps reached the British public. After this point, the pastors, set against "all notions of revenge," worked to rebuild the "human equality between captives and pastors," which seemed to disappear as British authorities increasingly saw POWs as "morally inferior."⁵⁰ By altering the British perspective of a German POWs, the pastors were not only able to help increase the chance of a repatriation, but they also proved their own loyalty to the British government and their mission of freedom and democracy.

⁴⁸ "Correspondence including pastors' reports on ministry to prisoners of war in Britain," LMA/4288/A/03/003, October 1947: 72.

⁴⁹ Ibid: The "*das Verhältnis zwischen der britischen Bevölkerung und den Kriegsgefangenen...*" [becomes illegible here, but the word is most likely *Kriegsgefangener*, meaning prisoner of war]: *freundschaftlich*, The record further indicates the relative likelihood of this prisoner's chance of repatriation as "sehr gut" but no further mention is made of his particular case throughout the file, 74.

⁵⁰ Faulk, *Group Captives*: 16.

As the German POWs began to arrive in Britain in 1942, they fell into an existing camp structure that provided them guaranteed rights and resources under both the Geneva Convention and British law. The interaction between the outside world and the German POW camps was both unparalleled and unheard of: most POW camps, particularly those run by the Axis forces that held Soviet prisoners, were better known for starvation and torture than their community involvement in the POW camps. The German pastors vastly expanded the initial scope of their roles in the British POW camps, by taking up the mantle of reeducation, after the British authorities found their own attempts stymied in late 1944.

The Problems of Reeducation

The POW camp network extended across Britain as the war heated up in 1943. Each camp contained an average of 150 prisoners, and the classification of the POWs determined their camp location. In his report to the Colonial Office Camp, Commandant Major Johnstone described how the updated system of classifying prisoners applied to a particular set of German POWs. The previous classification system used by the British authorities of black, white, and gray, with “black” being most ardently against the British cause, and “white” being most pro-democratic, had proven too vague for application on a unit to unit basis. As a result of the imprecise classification system, the Foreign Office moved to a system of classification using letter grades, A, B, and C, with “A” being the most pro-democratic, and “C” being the most pro-Nazi, and a plus/minus scale. However, both systems of classification were used interchangeably throughout the years of POW internment and also applied to interned enemy aliens. In an analysis of the screening for the camp in question, Major Johnstone noted the breakdown as A (41 POWs), A- (5), B+

(70), B (376), B- (133), C+ (1), and C (113).⁵¹ The camp was unique because of the disproportionally higher numbers of B/C POWs as opposed to other camps evaluated from 1945 to 1948.⁵² However, because of the British authorities' desire to show that "progress" was being made in the camps, it is difficult to ascertain how accurate these measures were. That, coupled with the British tendency to underestimate the numbers of "ardent Nazis," can account for the generally higher numbers of "pro-democratic" prisoners, which contrasts with existing historiographical evidence about the makeup of the Wehrmacht.⁵³

The British authorities often blamed the elected officials inside the camp, voted on and chosen out of the POWs inside each camp, for the "negative camp outlook."⁵⁴ While voting for camp leaders provided some sense of control for the POWs, the system ran the risk of giving the POWs an opportunity to elect someone who had no desire to make real changes in line with British goals for reeducation. For example, Camp Leader Ernest Schroeder, a prisoner in Johnstone's camp, was described as "an opportunist member of the Party and the S.A... despite his surface enthusiasm for re-education, he has achieved nothing so far in this respect," who oversaw the day-to-day morale of the camp.⁵⁵ The Deputy Captain Leader Ernst Trompeter, a "B" prisoner, a "thoroughly non-political type," had no party record (in reference to the Nazi Party), while also having little influence on the intellectual life of the camp.⁵⁶ According to Commandant Johnstone, while Trompeter

⁵¹ Report of Camp Commandant Major Johnstone, July 1946, the NA, Colonial Office (CO) 152/3: 12.

⁵² Ibid: 1-10. Includes other reports from various camp commandants describing the breakdowns by unit. Major Johnstone had the highest level of B/C POWs.

⁵³ See Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*.

⁵⁴ NA, HO 215/419: 5. "In so far as possible, internees should manage their own camp organizations and activities, and every opportunity has been taken to develop and maintain this general principle through a system of camp and house leaders."

⁵⁵ NA, CO 152/3: 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid: 12.

and Schroeder did not actively undermine the work of the British government, they had a negative impact on British plans for reeducation because of their apathy towards the movement. The British camp authorities created an environment in which the POWs could select their own compatriots into camp leadership positions, and where indifference to British reeducation policies resulted in no visible repercussions. As a result of these policies, the British government gave neither the camp leadership, nor the German POWs, any incentive to participate in reeducation.

The POW camp leadership included the elected position of an “educational leader,” responsible for aiding the British in reorienting the German POWs away from Nazism and towards the “values of a democratic society.”⁵⁷ In this particular camp, educational leader Gefr. Arimond had been a Nazi party member since 1938, and obtained his position through his experience as a doctor of psychology and a university tutor. In his reports, Commandant Major Johnstone described Arimond as “seeing the need for re-education and progressing in anti-Nazi outlook, but cannot yet be considered a white.”⁵⁸ By having a mixture of elected and selected leadership positions in the camps, the British hoped to create a sense of political agency for the German POWs, by giving them an introduction into an, albeit smaller, “democratic” system. However as the elected Nazis did not possess the will to change their ideological orientation, attempts stalled overall. Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer in *Soldaten* suggest the POWs possessed an “ideologically charged frame of reference,” in which fear, indoctrination and political education completely altered the German soldier psyche. They argue “a young German did not become an SS man only by

⁵⁷ The documents measured a camp’s reception towards democratic values principally through the number of POWs taking English language courses, their understanding and reception to British society, and their relationship with their British captors.

⁵⁸ Ibid: 12. “White” is here used to describe a prisoner who is the most pro-democratic.

reading pamphlets. He had to be bound up in a network of common practices.”⁵⁹ German pastors needed to change the POW’s frame of reference.

The indifference of elected POWs towards reeducation manifested the strongest in camps with large numbers of the Waffen SS and Luftwaffe, groups viewed as the most difficult to reeducate and control.⁶⁰ For example, in Commandant Major Johnstone’s camp, over forty percent of German POWs were members of the Waffen SS, transferred in July 1946 from Belgium, with “little change affected in six months of reeducation activities,” and a general camp complexion of black and gray.⁶¹ However, the British authorities deemed the vast majority of the German POWs not “ardent Nazis”, who fell into the “black” or “C” categories. As the war progressed, the British isolated more and more of the “ardent Nazis” in specifically remote camps, particularly on the Isle of Man, in order to try to prevent their malicious attitudes from “infecting” the rest of the German POWs.⁶² The British hoped these efforts would improve overall morale. The units included a wide diversity of economic standing and educational background; for example, enlisted soldiers included both university-educated men and lower class laborers. There was also no correlation between social class and the classification letter assigned to a POW.⁶³ The high education level of the German POWs was not uncommon: prisoner D. Winkler attended a “privatschule” or private school, and H. Haustein worked as an electrician and merchant

⁵⁹ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*: 312.

⁶⁰ Francois Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books: 1940. Lafitte was a specialist on the reeducation efforts, and he described in great detail the uncooperative actions of the Luftwaffe and the Waffen SS.

⁶¹ NA, CO 152/3: 12.

⁶² Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*.

⁶³ NA, CO 152/3: 7.

after attending trade school.⁶⁴ The British worked to maximize their use of the talents of the German POWs, “employing them to the fullest extent possible”, and encouraging them to start their own businesses as tailors, carpenters, and barbers.⁶⁵

The British also utilized the skills of educated German POWs in order to aid in the reeducation effort. Men like H. Haustein, who were recruited to teach English to their compatriots, aided the British goal of German POW reeducation. However, British reeducation efforts often fell short, because the British were unable to establish a connection with the German POWs, who often did not speak English, and had been exposed to the Nazi propaganda machine for most of the 1930s. The British faced a complex and difficult task; they became increasingly discouraged by their lack of impact upon the men in the camps. The Colonial Office reports in late 1944 show the falling interest and weak support for the British education program: “no serious attempt has been made to get re-education going on a sound basis....little provision for lectures or discussion groups...mental standard is low.”⁶⁶ Even after the renewed interest in reeducation following the end of the war in May 1945, and the Potsdam Conference in August 1945, the British authorities found their efforts failing. It is into this increasingly bleak environment of the POW camp that the German-British pastors began to make their mark through 1948.

German Communities in Britain

German migrants to Britain were a sizable minority, numbering about 73,000 by 1939, but that number skyrocketed to 200,000 by the end of the war.⁶⁷ Many of those

⁶⁴ Ibid: 10.

⁶⁵ NA, HO 215/419: 5.

⁶⁶ NA, CO 152/3: 13.

⁶⁷ Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-War Britain: An Enemy Embrace*, New York: Routledge, 2006: 2. While there were about 200,000 Germans living in Britain,

initial migrants were Jewish refugees, who arrived in several waves. The first wave occurred immediately after Hitler seized power, with only 2,000 to 3,000 refugees arriving to Britain by April 1934. Only after 1938 did numbers begin to rapidly increase, with over 40,000 Jews arriving that year. Originally, the Jewish refugees were admitted as “transmigrants” on the condition that they would eventually leave Britain, lumping them together with over 80,000 refugees who arrived from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, but were not Jewish.⁶⁸ The German Jews experienced a crushing dislocation stemming from their identity as Germans. Marion Berghahn in *Continental Britons* details the internment of Jews, and the fundamental identity crisis they experienced as their “cultural German identity” and their Jewish spiritual existence came into conflict.

Many wealthy German communities located in the northern or northwestern parts of London were a huge draw for German and Austrian refugees who possessed the resources to move straight into the middle and upper middle class districts of London.⁶⁹ Refugees often compared Hampstead to the Tiergarten of Berlin. However, for many working class Germans and Jews, they were plagued by problems with homelessness and unemployment, with few options for income or living in a place other than a hostel. Some members of the German community who traveled frequently between Britain and Germany in the interwar years even further complicated the distinction between refugees and migrants.⁷⁰ This distinction between Jews and Germans, refugees and migrants, was not

they were by no means homogenous. Only 28,000 of those were born in Britain, while the rest were refugees fleeing the Third Reich or economic migrants.

⁶⁸ Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*, New York: Berghahn, 2007: 76.

⁶⁹ Ibid: 127.

⁷⁰ Throughout the DBKC, many pastors discussed the case of interned enemy aliens who left Britain for a short period, only to return and be placed in internment. Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge

clearly made by the British government. With the outbreak of Nazism, the Anglo-German community's integration came under attack, in an ominous repetition of World War I anti-German sentiment.⁷¹ The non-German British populace, including migrants from other parts of Europe, as well as the "ethnically British" population, contributed to significant attitudes of distrust toward the Germans living in Britain. Classified as "enemy aliens of the state," 80,000 Anglo-Germans, some of whom had lived in Britain for generations, along with refugees and migrants, underwent a forced period of review in special tribunals to determine their loyalty to British society in the early 1940s. Migrants were forced to report a change of address, were subjected to a curfew, and some were even accused of disloyalty towards Germany, in a bizarre distortion of anti-Nazi sentiment.⁷² While 99 percent of the "potential enemy aliens" who migrated before 1933 fell into groups viewed as a non-threat to British society, the British classified around 600 members as high security risks, and sentenced those select few to immediate internment.⁷³

The Jewish refugees were not so lucky. Marion Berghahn in *Continental Britons* found that almost all refugees experienced some form of permanent or temporary internment. The pressures exerted on the refugees by members of the existing Jewish community in Briton were huge: the German Jews were instructed to "be grateful for their asylum," and were given pamphlets to teach them the "eight commandments of good

Weber-Newth's research falls in line with the German pastors' discussions of an intergenerational, cross-Atlantic migration in this period. Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People*, London: Viking, 2001.

⁷¹ Steinert and Weber-Newth, "German Migrants in Postwar Britain: Immigration Policy, Recruitment, and Reception," in *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss*, ed. Mathias Schulze, James M. Skidmore, David G. John, Grit Liebscher, and Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008: 217-229.

⁷² Berghahn, *Continental Britons*: 137.

⁷³ "Fact File: Civilian Internment 1939-1945," BBC, 15 October 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6651858.shtml>.

behavior.”⁷⁴ The entire refugee and immigrant crisis strained the British and German populations. The distinctions between the groups blurred, and the comparatively small German community that was in place before the war broke out changed completely.

It is into this environment that the German immigrant pastors began to make their mark in early 1944. At this stage of process, the German pastors involved were born in Germany, but had arrived in Britain either during the interwar period, or fleeing the rise of fascism in the early 1930s. For those that arrived during the interwar period, they came via a system of exchange between the theological German communities in Britain and Germany. Most of the pastors who worked in the German churches of Britain received their initial training in Germany, but then were rotated into communities in Britain.⁷⁵ All were of German descent, but relied on their theological connections with their British Anglican counterparts to provide them with support beyond their parish connections.

Coming from a largely Lutheran background, the German pastors gained their credibility with the British government because of their vocal dissent of Nazi activity in Germany, and their connection with prominent figures like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller.⁷⁶ For those that fled as Hitler rose to power, the German pastors were able to rely on their kinsmen who were already in place before the war, and British religious allies who supported anti-Nazi theological figures. As the British government began exponentially increasing the number of German POWs heading to the Isles, the German pastors saw an opportunity to spread a religious message to the POWs and to gain

⁷⁴ Berghahn, *Continental Britons*: 140.

⁷⁵ Revd. Dr. Ulrich Lincoln, the current pastor of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Church in London, in an interview with the author, 5 June 2015.

⁷⁶ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

credibility with the British government. The British saw Nazis as anti-Christian, and thereby a Christian as an opponent of Nazism.⁷⁷ The German pastors played off that expectation in order to not only raise their status in the eyes of the British, but also to raise the opinion of Christianity in the German soldiers' mind. Led by large church organizations like the World Council of Churches (WCC), and smaller community groups like the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche (DBK), the German pastors took steps to get involved in the camps. British reeducation efforts were failing, because of disinterest from both German POWs and government officials alike, and they needed the help of the pastors who could activate the German community to reintegrate and reeducate the POWs toward a more democratic set of ideals. While the German pastors had altruistic and religious reasons for helping the POWs, the British government saw an opportunity to make real progress in the reeducation effort. The roots of this German-British connection grew from the POW camps, as pastors began to make an impact on the precarious home front.

The German churches, on behalf of the German immigrant communities, had a challenging role to play as aids to the POWs. By acting in a way that could be viewed by the British populace as too sympathetic to enemies of the state, the Anglo-German pastors had to be continuously cognizant of how their actions would be viewed, and as a result, made critical choices about not only their camp initiatives, but also their discourse in the camps. A Christmas sermon on behalf of the British Council of Churches (BCC) in 1946, exemplified the tensions German pastors faced as active members of British society with strong roots in Germany, but who were also directly opposed to the actions of the Nazis.⁷⁸ The letter began

⁷⁷ Faulk, *Group Captives*, 160.

⁷⁸ The British Council of Churches (BCC) was an organization created in 1942 to "further common Christian action" and promote the cause of unity among the Churches of Great Britain and Ireland.

by offering a typical Christmas greeting to “you who wait in our country for our release...and to those dear to you who are waiting for you at home.”⁷⁹ This opening acknowledged not only those who were suffering in the camps, but also those in Germany who eagerly awaited the return of their loved ones. The letter recognized “those who laid down their lives in doing their duty,” but intriguingly did not specify which group the pastors meant: Germans or British. The ambiguity was clearly intentional. If the pastors sided too openly with the German cause, they could lose their credibility with the British government, but if they were too outwardly supportive of the British cause they would alienate the very prisoners whom they were trying to help. Instead, the writers Geoffrey Cantuar, the Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the British Council of Churches, and M.E. Aubrey, Chairman of the Committee of the POWs, opted for a blanket statement of peace between both nations, in the spirit of postwar connections between both nations. Cantuar and Aubrey relied on ambiguous language of support for both groups in order to prevent the risk of alienating either group.

The struggles were felt at the highest levels of those who aided the POWs, and stemmed from the dual role the pastors had to play. Arguably, those who possessed a strong connection between both the German and British communities faced the strongest

The BCC grew off interwar organizations such as the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches and Bishop William Temple’s Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship. After the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, the BCC became an “Associated Council.” The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland succeeded it in 1990.

⁷⁹ “Burlingham, Reverend R E: papers concerning ministry to prisoners of war,”

LMA/4288/D/04/019, 2 June 1948: 4. The BCC was also an active player in the nuclear deterrent movement at the beginning of the Cold War era. In a report written about the effect of the nuclear technology on society, the BCC argued that a destruction of linkages between nations creates “the only alternative left open...recklessness.” “British Council of Churches Report 1946,” 17. The BCC was also working to reestablish connections in the context of a looming Cold War and the fears of the Soviet Union as a global communist superpower.

internal tensions, such as Aubrey who was Anglo-German. The identity struggle of the German pastors appears throughout the Dietrich Bonhöffer Kirche records, as pastors continued to battle with the issue of how to help the prisoners while also recognizing that too close of contact with Hitler's soldiers would not endear them to the British population. Their internal considerations aside, the German pastors deeply entangled themselves in a battle for the soul of the German POWs, while also hoping to prove their ultimate loyalty to a British populace that had a complicated relationship and viewpoint of the German people by 1946. In trying to reeducate the POWs, the German pastors hoped to remodel the German POWs to fit a narrative in which the German soldier, while an executor of violence, was not ultimately responsible for the war. The British government, through the German pastors, also hoped to create a bridge between the German and British populations by using anti-Fascism as a foundation to begin greater economic cooperation, which eventually turned into a strategic partnership against a growing Soviet Union, in 1947.

Aid Programs Created by German Pastors

The German pastors believed in a holistic aid program, which combined the efforts of the pastors with the resources available to them via the German immigrants in Britain, who possessed an obvious ethnic tie to the POWs. In Britain an active immigrant group already began to connect the camp to the outside world. Local grassroots movements, spearheaded by pastors at churches like the Dietrich Bonhöffer Kirche in Sydenham and the German Lutheran Church of London, worked within the overarching protocols developed by the War Office and the Scottish Command. One of the largest groups working on behalf of the German POWs was the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens, spearheaded by Secretary John W. Perry, who often tried to connect various members of

the German immigrant community with those expressing needs inside the POW camps. For instance, he recommended Marianne Spier, a German refugee who came to Britain with the *Kindertransport*, to work in a German POW camp as a translator.⁸⁰ German pastors used their connections and intimate knowledge of the German immigrants living in Britain both to assess an urgent need in a camp, and to fill it with a person in possession of deep knowledge and of investment in, the community.

While pastors solicited grassroots donations throughout the German immigrant communities, the efforts always possessed a clear sense of purpose, particularly in regards to reeducation. For instance, Rita Oaterman of Essex donated various books and novels to a POW camp located in eastern Britain. A pastor encouraged Oaterman writing, “that for obvious reasons it is very desirable to send books by Thomas Mann and others to prisoner of war camps.”⁸¹ The encouragement stemmed from a desire on the part of the churches for POWs to appear sympathetic to the Allied cause by reading German, anti-fascist, anti-Nazi authors, whose writings could not be construed as sympathetic to the Third Reich. By reading books that had been banned by the Nazis instead of more recent fascist literature, the churches hoped to use even small, simple acts to move prisoners into a favorable status with the government and change the public view of the average German. The pastors wanted to change the terms of the conversation from a judgment of “brainwashed”

⁸⁰ “World War II correspondence from interned pastors and other prisoners and the responsible authorities,” LMA/4288/D/04/001, 18 October 1944: 34. The letter went on to list the various qualifications of Spier, including her secondary education in Germany in combination with her excellent English skills, but also her desire to establish a tighter connection with the German community. See Frieda Stolzberg Korobkin, *Throw Your Feet Over Your Shoulders*, Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing, 2012, and Diane Samuels, *Kindertransport*, London: Nick Hern, 2008, on the children’s exodus from Germany.

⁸¹ Ibid, 15 November 1944: 89. Rita Oatermann was also encouraged to send works by Gottfried Keller, clearly part of a desire to encourage prisoners to read German works that were a very sharp contrast to Nazi works.

Germans to “reformed” Germans. Small steps towards a holistic reeducation helped German pastors introduce their plan of a reorientation towards democracy, and to rebuild connections with the German immigrant community.

The primary goal of the German pastors was to create a rich intellectual environment for the German POWs, through lecture series, book donations, and the creation of newspapers. German pastors expressed a concern for “the lack of suitable material for organizing German services within the camp,” in a letter written to Rev. B. Forell of the YMCA Prisoner of War Department by an unnamed writer. Often, the organization of German services centered around educational opportunities that involved the entire POW community. London church organizations shouldered responsibility for helping interned Germans set up their own camp newspaper, titled *Die Heimat und Wir* (The Homeland and Us). The newspaper drew contributions from thirty-six smaller units inside a given camp, and included a wide range of topics such as “biblical passages”, “political science in Germany”, “the value of culture”, and “how to live a good life.” In the August 1947 issue, prisoner Alfred Jacobson contributed an article titled “‘das Schwarze Problem’ der USA,” which discussed issues of race, the United States Civil War, and black identity.⁸² Other articles compared the various educational systems of Scotland, England, and Germany, and discussed a scientific study of chromosomes, providing detailed illustrations.⁸³ The only kind of articles that seemed to be conspicuously absent was that on military affairs, which the British government likely censored. Newspapers emerged in

⁸² “Prisoner of War Camp 36, prison Newspaper No. 15,” LMA/4288/D/04/005, 28 July 1947: 1. This article in particular showed a strong understanding of racial and political issues, which was not radically different from the many other articles in *Die Heimat und Wir*. These articles often conversed on a wide variety of topics at a high intellectual level, as discussed above. “Das Schwarze Problem der USA” is translated as “the Problem of Blackness in the United States.”

⁸³ Ibid, 28 July 1947: 25.

large part from the involvement of advocates in the German churches, who looked to give the German prisoners a greater degree of control of a highly restricted system.

The intellectual engagement of the prisoners expanded beyond just newspapers and the delivery of Bibles and books; the London communities also organized speakers to come and teach classes for the prisoners. A letter to Rev. Birger Forell from Dr. H. Fuglsang-Damgard stated his acceptance of an appointment as a teaching professor for German students in the camps. Fuglsang-Damgard wrote that he would prefer to teach about ethical problems, but would also lecture on topics of dogmatism and the philosophy of religion.⁸⁴ Pastor G.R. Halkett created a popular lectures series for the German POWs, stating that the “commandant of the camp [had] written to [him] again,” about providing more speakers given such high demand.⁸⁵ The creation of newspapers and lecture series gave German POWs a sense of agency in their environment: pastors enabled POWs to have the freedom to write and to discuss issues on a wide variety of intellectual topics. Intellectual engagement gave German POWs an outlet that encouraged them to think “positively” about democracy. Increasingly “positive” results in English language testing showed an inclination towards a changing attitude towards Britain. The Colonial Office reported that while “results are disappointing [on the last round of English tests] there is considerable keenness to learn English...they are evidently making an effort to learn.”⁸⁶ Greater personal

⁸⁴ “Forell, Pastor Binger: correspondence regarding aid for prisoners of war,” LMA/4288/D/04/025, 11 December 1946: 3. While prisoners were afforded excellent opportunities to learn from professors, they were in many respects limited by those who were willing to teach on religious subjects. Resources were restricted in this manner not only by the British, who believed that religion was so anti-Nazi it was very unlikely to be misconstrued, and also by the pastors themselves, who had a vested interest in evangelizing the POWs. So while there were many different resources available to the POWs, they were restricted in scope.

⁸⁵ LMA/4288/A/03/003, 31 August 1946: 38.

⁸⁶ CO 152/3: 8.

agency and the development of the German POWs, translated into tangible gains in their reception of democratization and, the British hoped, in a greater sense of cooperation with British society in the coming future.

Beyond intellectual engagement, German pastors gave German POWs hope for their post-war futures, by becoming involved in repatriation efforts and by seeking employment opportunities for the interned soldiers. For instance, a “young German prisoner” whom a pastor met during his rounds at a local hospital in Liverpool, was “very anxious to get in touch with some organization which could help him to assist in relief-work in Germany after the war.”⁸⁷ The pastor recommended setting the young interned German up with work through the Christian International Service, which was a trans-European mission based in London.⁸⁸ This action created an opportunity for a life after the war, and the advocacy of the pastor created a bond of support between the two men. German pastors used all of the connections available to them to create spaces in which POWs could be employed after the war. In a letter from Pastor Rieger to Cyril Hudson, Rieger discussed a wounded German soldier who often helped with the chaplains’ rounds in the hospitals.⁸⁹ He was the son of a pastor who had lived in London before the First World War, and had returned to Germany after the Armistice. The pastors’ attempts to remove him from the camp for religious reasons and to find him satisfactory employment inside the city showed how the pastors often used religious resources and the special permissions given to

⁸⁷ LMA/4288/D/04/001, 1 November 1944: 62. It is unclear from the letter how successful their attempts were with Cyril Hudson, and if the government approved these kinds of appeals.

⁸⁸ This operation would likely become part of the World Council of Churches operation, created in 1948.

⁸⁹ Pastor Julius Rieger was a German Evangelical Lutheran theologian and writer. He was not only a pastor of a German congregation in London (St. George’s) but a friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He later worked with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) overseeing the pastoral care entrusted to POWs.

churches in order to rescue men from the internment camps. The German pastors gave the POWs tangible opportunities in the postwar world, and solidified the connections between Germany and Britain through employment-based linkages.

German pastors even helped create a system of visitation and a letter delivery system that simultaneously strengthened POW connections with the German immigrant community, and helped to retain ties to homes abroad. The Glasgow YMCA set up a part-time camp visitor system in order to encourage German prisoner interaction with the



outside community. Other localized communities got involved; in Aberdeen, German prisoners were permitted walks along the moors.⁹⁰ The German pastors also helped ensure that letters from German POWs reached their relatives abroad; the letters revealed POW satisfaction with the camp experience. On February 13, 1946, POW Willi Sturmat of Camp 174 in the Norton Facility wrote to his wife, barely containing his love for her

⁹⁰ "YMCA Prisoners Aid: correspondence regarding organization," LMA/4288/D/04/003, 3 March 1947: 2.

and his excitement at his first letter. He writes that “dies Berliner” is extremely happy.⁹¹

The letters and visitation created a sense of home for the detached POWs, providing them with a familial basis of support throughout their wartime internment.

However, the members of the British and German communities who tried to aid the POWs faced some obstacles created by the British government. As the camps located in the vicinity of London closed, it would be much more difficult for pastors to give aid to the POWs.⁹² As early as December of 1944, various pastors began to describe difficulties visiting the POWs located in hospitals around London; the War Office started to require permission in order simply to visit some of the wards. Pastors faced increasing resistance to the kind of educational and biblical studies that they wanted to provide to the internment communities: a letter to Dekan Rieger discussed the pastors of the Theological School of Camp 174 in May of 1947 facing difficulties from the camp administrators in regards to teaching material.⁹³ These bureaucratic walls put up by the British government did not deter the pastors from their mission; instead they sought increasingly more thorough ways of aiding the prisoners, both at a local community level, but also at a larger governmental office level.

Often the resistance came from a failed understanding and continued distrust of the democratic mission of the pastors working in the German POW camps on the part of the British government. While the vast majority of the pastors’ activities sought to work with the professed goal of the reeducation of the German POWs, the British government nevertheless did not fully and publically support the pastors’ work, probably because of

⁹¹ “Grüber, Provost H.: correspondence regarding his search for relatives of prisoners of war and emigrants, including letters from Norton Camp,” LMA/4288/D/04/026, 13 February 1946: 54.

⁹² LMA/4288/D/04/019, 12 April 1948: 11.

⁹³ LMA/4288/D/04/003, 13 March 1947 and 27 May 1947: 4,11.

anti-Nazi pressure from the British population particularly during the war.⁹⁴ The British Parliament, in particular, treated the seriousness of the democratic mission of the German pastors with mockery. In March 1940, the *Times* reported on a discussion concerning the reeducation of German POWs and the involvement of BBC media. Mr. G. Strauss of the Labour Party asked the Secretary of War whether any “any steps were being taken...to bring before the German prisoners interned in this country the virtues of democracy against fascism,” to which Financial Secretary Sir V. Warrender stated that they have the opportunity to listen to BBC programs. Sir Herbert Williams of Croydon jested, “serves them right,” and the members of Parliament descended into laughter with no further debate on the matter.⁹⁵ The flippancy with which the manner was treated reflected an ignorance of the seriousness of the process in the earlier years, but also a greater emphasis, probably fairly, on actually winning the war in Europe. As the war began to turn in favor of Britain and her allies, the British government paid more attention to their interned POWs, as they began to recognize how the relative success of their mission would impact the postwar world. The POWs represented an avenue towards greater political control in Germany, and sympathies towards the British government could help create a German society that was not only anti-Fascist, but anti-Communist as well.⁹⁶

Conclusion

By late 1948, the role played by the German pastors in the POW camp system had created a “very cooperative” environment, with social activities and intellectual

⁹⁴ Because of the limited release of National Archives surveillance files, it is unclear if German pastors were monitored during their involvement in the POW camps, particularly those pastors who traveled between Britain and Germany. It is well documented that the British monitored the POWs, so by extension it is probable that they monitored the German pastors as well.

⁹⁵ *Times*, “German Prisoners and B.B.C.,” 12 March 1940:1.

⁹⁶ Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

opportunities proving “irresistible.”⁹⁷ However, these gains were not easily acquired, with both British officials and German pastors alike struggling with the complications of supporting POWs in Britain. For British officials, the implementation of international and national standards of POW treatment, created an environment of adequate treatment for POWs, but drew the ire of some who thought that POWs were given too much comfort. The camp system, while proving ineffective at reeducating German POWs through the tactics of British authorities, did provide an entry point for German pastor aid and evangelizing efforts. Highly concerned about the perception of themselves in the British community, German pastors saw an opportunity not only to protect themselves and establish further connections with the British government, but to reeducate citizens of their homeland. As German pastors utilized the existing structure of the POW system, they created a unique brand of aid that provided the POWs with an intellectual engagement with democracy, even while they were prisoners during wartime. This critical intellectual engagement helped German pastors make a “positive” impact in the lives of POWs, which became of particular importance as the war drew to a close. For as the war ended, even greater questions loomed on the horizon: how much good had reeducation accomplished? Were POWs ready to return to Germany, and was the reeducated German POW capable of contributing to a rebuilding of European society, as the Soviet Union loomed on the horizon?⁹⁸

⁹⁷ CO 152/3: 5.

⁹⁸ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, London: Pimlico, 2007, and Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

Chapter II:

“A Special Kind of Christian Fellowship:” German Churches and Rebuilding the Homeland
with German POWs, 1945-1955

As the Second World War came to a close, and Europe surveyed the destruction left in the wake of a quarter century of total war, the reconstruction of the German state became a point of particular concern for the victors. The Allied Powers became the arbiters of justice, seeking a denazified state while dealing with a German population that was only beginning to come to terms with their actions both before and after the war. The German word *vergangenheitsbewältigung* is used to describe a process of coming to terms with the past, which for most of the German populace did not occur until the 1960s and 1970s. For most of the immediate postwar years, many German citizens sought to ignore their actions during the war and refocus on building a new German republic.¹ However, the Protestant German pastors of the period, particularly Lutherans, were forced to come to terms with their own actions under Nazism more quickly than other parts of the German population. Under Hitler's reign, Protestant churches or the "German Christian Movement," actively cooperated with and supported the actions of the Third Reich.² The vast majority of Protestant Churches supported the actions of Hitler, with the exception of the Confessing Church, which acted as a resistant splinter group to the Nazi regime. In the aftermath of the

¹ Anna Wolff-Poweska, *Memory as Burden and Liberation: Germans and their Nazi Past (1945-2010)*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015. There has been much discussion among historians about the role of collective memory in German society and how Germans responded to the Nazi state, the Second World War, and the Holocaust. It is generally accepted that Germans truly began the process of *vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the 1960s-1970s as part of the larger counter-culture movements of the time.

² The motivations for this are highly complicated and are still discussed by historians. Many argue that Protestant churches supported Hitler out of a sense of self-preservation, a support of a return to what originally seemed to be "conservative" values, and out of support for the anti-Semitic policies of Hitler. The Confessing Church, the exception to the German Christian Movement, was led by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller and Heinrich Grüber, and acted in opposition to the Nazis after the publication of the "Aryan Paragraph" in 1933. The "Aryan Paragraph" was a clause created by the Nazis that reserved membership in society solely for members of the "Aryan race" and excluded from such rights any non-Aryans, particularly Jews or those of Jewish descent. See *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015 for further reference.

war, the German Protestant churches faced a difficult period of reckoning. Highly criticized for their actions during the war by other national church groups, the German churches' international reputation was in danger of being permanently scarred.³

As a result of *Deutsche Christen* action during the war, German pastors who had actively resisted Hitler's regime recognized the perilous state of the Protestant Churches in the postwar period.⁴ However, the Confessing Church was also plagued not only by *Deutsche Christen* action during the war, but Confessing Church inaction. While members such as Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were true heroes of the period, the Confessing Church was "marked by a refusal to attack or even criticize the Nazi state."⁵ In a pattern of both acquiescence and resistance, the Confessing Church, while largely anti-Nazi, struggled to provide tangible resistance to the Nazi regime. As a result, the postwar legacy of both the *Deutsche Christen* and the Confessing Church was complicated and confusing. Led by former active resistance members of the Confessing Church and Lutheran German pastors who had fled to Britain before the war, the anti-Nazi elements of the German church took up the mantle of both denazification, but also the Christian Reconstruction of Europe. The Christian Reconstruction of Europe became even more critical with the rise of

³ For the purposes of this study, the Catholic churches will not be discussed in depth, but Catholic churches in Germany were by and large, complicit in the Nazi mission. See, Derek Hastings' *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁴ Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012: 94-139. Ericksen discusses in depth the "battle lost by the Confessing Church against Nazism." He argues that the *Deutsche Christen* and their pro-Nazi ideas overwhelmed the smaller influence of the Confessing Church, particularly as the *Deutsche Christen* manipulated the usage of the Old Testament.

⁵ Ibid: 94.

the Soviet Union: as communist-atheism threatened to engulf Germany, and with the split of Germany in 1949, the threat became even more real.⁶

For the German pastors located in Britain, the POW situation in the postwar period presented a perfect opportunity not only to become actively involved in the process of denazification, but also to raise their credibility among the international community by “reforming” Nazis. German pastors in the postwar period while undoubtedly altruistic and proselytizing, were also focused on a second, and equally important goal: improving the image of German Christianity worldwide. For German pastors, those two goals could not be separated: evangelizing and internal reformation became the mantle by which they would reshape the postwar world.⁷ Furthermore, in the highly complicated environment of postwar repatriation, German pastors used their evangelical resources and transcontinental networks to convince British authorities of their credibility when dealing with POWs. In particular, German pastors helped run the “transition camps,” which the pastors designed to help prepare POWs for reentry into German society. In these camps, pastors not only took the opportunity to evangelize the young, highly volatile POWs, but to also assess the POWs potential contribution to German society. Finally, as POWs returned to Germany, German pastors worked to ensure that the linkages created during the war helped to form a religious bridge between Britain and Germany into the 1950s.

⁶ Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

⁷ Judt, *Postwar*: 229. The Stuttgart Confession of Guilt by Protestant leaders in 1945 further complicated matters. A declaration issued on October 19, 1945 by the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, it stated that the church confessed guilt for its inadequacy in opposition to the Nazis and the Third Reich. The Council faced the ire of the German population, who viewed this as a further capitulation to Allied demands, and by ardent church leaders, who perceived it as inadequate. Recognizing great internal strife and the fading power of the Protestant church, Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches came together to form the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in 1948.

Motivations for Involvement

As the process of denazification began to encompass not only governmental officials but also religious leaders, the pastors of the German Protestant groups in Britain and Germany feared for the survival of their religious and moral authority, once the extent of church complicity with the Nazis was revealed. On November 29th, 1946, Pastor Martin Böckheler in Stuttgart expressed particular concern over the denazification policy and the representation of the *Kirchenvorstände*, or church executive boards in these proceedings.⁸ From 1935 to 1940, Pastor Böckheler was held in the concentration camp of Flossenbürg, which was designed primarily to hold “antisocial” or “criminal prisoners.” After his release and the subsequent death of Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by hanging in the Flossenbürg concentration camp on April 9th, 1945, Böckheler fled to the German evangelical community based in Sydenham. There, he acted as a permanent official who “marketed” the positive activities of the German Protestant churches. However, Böckheler feared what would become of the German outreach movements, particularly after the Allies won the war and established the various occupation zones of Germany.⁹ With the war coming to a close, even the German pastors who resisted the Third Reich wondered what role they would play in the reconstruction of their homeland.

⁸ LMA/4288/A/03/007, 29 November 1946: 16.

⁹ Ibid, 29 November 1946: 16. Francis Graham-Dixon noted in *Allied Occupation of Germany* “it was the state, not the Church, that had the power to wield material influence on any critical political decisions.” Throughout the occupation, the government “appropriated the Christian message of peace” to combat the rising influence of communist ideas, particularly in the Eastern zone. John Troubeck, the Foreign Office’s leading political adviser on Germany argued, “Christian revival is the only alternative to the ideal of national socialism, but that impulse must come from within Germany.” However, as Wyneken states in *Religion and the Cold War*, the Protestant churches feared that the partition of Germany would only bring greater isolation to their parishes, the majority of which would lie in the Soviet occupied zone. While religion was viewed as an alternative to counter National Socialism, those concerns were second to political considerations.

In this period of uncertainty, German pastors started seriously to consider the perception of their activities by the international community. Pastor Werner Jentsch, the official head of the German Young Men's Christian Association operating in Britain since January of 1946, described his feelings of isolation from the Christian reconstruction movement in Europe. However, Jentsch recognized that seeming active, and utilizing internationally recognized anti-Nazi leaders involved in Christian reconstruction could mitigate the isolation of German churches. Jentsch recommended to Dekan Rieger the recruitment of Hanns Lilje and Wilhelm Stählin to their efforts.¹⁰ Hanns Lilje was a German Lutheran bishop and pioneer of the ecumenical movement, and eventual bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover in 1947, while Wilhelm Stählin was a German Lutheran theologian, bishop of the Evangelical Church of Oldenburg, and initiator of the Liturgical Movement in German Protestantism in the 20th century. Both men were heavily involved in the Confessing Church, and were considered to be active resisters of Nazism. Jentsch hoped that Lilje and Stählin would not only bring credibility to his work in Britain, but also that their activism in the Church's political battles could translate into a reformed image of the church. As the German pastors sought to take on a more active role with the reconstruction of Europe and Christianity, many groups leaned on the credibility of former Confessing Church members to prove the sincerity of the German pastor mission.¹¹

Ethical and moral questions plagued the German pastors in the postwar period, as they began to question the role that they had played, either directly or indirectly, in the rise

¹⁰ "Jentsch, Pastor Werner (Norton Camp/Willingen): correspondence concerning his activities and his offer to assist YMCA work with German prisoners in Britain," LMA/4288/D/04/028, 19 March 1948: 44.

¹¹ Throughout the DBKC, Pastor Jentsch and Pastor Rieger discuss in detail which pastors should be brought in to support the POWs. Their credentials are always considered, and in particular, the absence of an association with National Socialism.

of Nazism in Germany. Pastor Jentsch, of the World Alliance of the Young Men's Christian Associations, in his own personal musings, argued that the Christian churches had completely lost their way.¹² He argued that the church "repeatedly made the mistake to only care for the big problems without seeing...the individual soul which [the church] might lose or win."¹³ More often, the Christian worried little "of the neighbor," and instead focused on the "front-lines" of the official world. As a result of the focus on the "official world," he saw the German Christians as losing sight of their individual patrons, and as living in a state of denial about their neighbor instead.¹⁴ Jentsch expressed a particular concern for what was to come, both for his church and his homeland: "Germany's dangerous situation does not let me sleep. The distress, the shameful misery with all its horrible and humiliating consequences are too deep-rooted and tragic to be forgotten in a single day."¹⁵ Jentsch struggled with the depth of the problems in the German Church, while also grappling with his desire for the churches "to deserve a Christian name."

However perilous the situation, Jentsch believed that the presence of German POWs located in Britain, offered an opportunity not only to reform members of their populace, but also to show the reformation of the Protestant Churches. Jentsch argued that POWs were deeply conflicted regarding their actions during the war, and German pastors could provide both clarity and religious healing to the young men scheduled for repatriation. In a

¹² Further research in the WCC Archives and the YMCA archive could be used to provide greater detail into the activities of pastors such as Jentsch and Stählin.

¹³ LMA/4288/D/04/028: 71.

¹⁴ Ibid: 71. "Neighbor" here is used biblically, as if in reference to a member of the flock of the clergy.

¹⁵ Ibid: 71. Jentsch worried not only for the state of Germany internally, but also the international position of the nation. Through the occupation and breakup of Germany, the nation faced a battle not only for a physical reconstruction, but an emotional and spiritual renewal, to which Jentsch alludes.

letter written to Jentsch, a young POW stated: "It is not easy for me to fight against the hatred, springing up again and again. I feel that hatred leads to nothing, can change and better nothing. But still it threatens to break out again. I do not know if love of our Germany is the reason, or what else."¹⁶ Jentsch, moved by the emotional turmoil expressed by the young POW, saw the German POW cause as a perfect opportunity to renew the soul of the German people. Jentsch confirmed the idea that by using POWs as a spring board, German pastors could not only begin their mission of revitalizing Germany, but also transforming the image of the German Protestant churches, who were still so tainted by the work of the *Deutsche Christen*.

British Troubles with POW Management

In the aftermath of the passage of the Geneva Convention and the start of the Second World War, both the Allied and Axis powers struggled to maintain the standard of care needed for POWs, while also managing the war effort. These efforts, unsolved during the war, would plague the British government even after the war's end. In October 1939, the International Red Cross Committee (IRCC) offered to establish a central agency for the collection and distribution of information concerning prisoners of war.¹⁷ The British accepted the offer and merged the IRCC representatives with other members of government to help monitor POW affairs. The Under Secretary of State and the Secretaries of the Foreign Office, Air Ministry, War Office, Home Office, and Treasury were to represent the primary branches of the British government that had a particular interest in POW affairs. In their meetings, this interdepartmental cabinet discussed the creation of an

¹⁶ Ibid: 71.

¹⁷ NA, HO 213/494: 1. The International Red Cross archive would present an opportunity for further research on the subject, particularly in regards to their motivations for involvement in POW affairs.

official prisoner of war information bureau, but considered the bureau redundant because of the offer put forth by the IRCC, and instead placed a bureau for POW affairs inside the War Office, where information could be easily communicated to the German government.¹⁸

While information about POWs could be communicated between Britain and Germany, in actuality, this rarely occurred, and information that was released often faced bureaucratic delays. Home Office Representative Gardner suggested that POW information should not be released unless a family requested it, while Representative Clayton took it a step further and argued that POW information should always be withheld.¹⁹ However, the representatives eventually came to the consensus that under the practice of reciprocity, it would be in the best interest of British soldiers if some method of POW correspondence with the homeland could be established. When the war began, there was no procedure for correspondence with enemy territory, and during the war a neutral channel was established through Belgium.²⁰ However, when the war ended and the networks established by both the IRCC and the British government collapsed out of disuse and lack of interest, German pastors recognized an opportunity to reestablish a connection between Germany and Britain. Particularly as the repatriation effort began in earnest, German pastors recognized the importance of establishing communication channels between governments. It was essential that when German POWs began the process of repatriation that their families knew they were coming, in order to prepare the home and to help them find employment. For instance, a POW wrote that he was not averse to a return to Germany, but worried if he could make the move without being certain of employment in

¹⁸ Ibid: 4.

¹⁹ Ibid: 5.

²⁰ Ibid: 6.

the homeland.²¹ Bishop Dibelius, an administrative supervisor at an internment camp, wrote that with the current state of repatriation efforts, a six or seven month delay was needed to ensure a resettlement of POWs with work.²² The German pastors sought to avoid the confusion brought by a mass release of prisoners, a tactic employed by the Soviet Union in 1946.²³ The German pastors alone had the unique connections between both communities in order to affect the repatriation process, after the British largely abandoned their communication networks established during the war.

Transcontinental Relationship Between German Pastors and English Pastors

Many of the German pastors who sought to improve the status of POWs, relied on their theological counterparts, both English pastors in Britain, and German pastors in Germany. Throughout their efforts of rebuilding the image of the church, a true camaraderie emerged among these men. Dr. Rieger and Reverend C.O. Goodchild of St. Michael's House had a particular friendship, and Goodchild wrote that he was "very sorry not to see you [Rieger] when in London."²⁴ Their friendship was based around efforts to connect family members, and while their communication focused mostly on lost messages to family members and releases of POWs, they still often asked of each other and of their families. Once again lamenting a missed meeting, Goodchild wrote to Rieger that he "only

²¹ "Correspondence after release from internment, requesting support for his de-Nazification hearing," LMA/4288/A/04/008: 26.

²² Ibid: 26.

²³ Judt, *Postwar*: 30.

²⁴ "Correspondence including a memorandum referring to the extradition and treatment of war criminals," LMA/4288/A/04/007: 1. Ronald Cedric Osbourne (C.O.) Goodchild was the seventh Anglican Bishop of Kensington between 1964 and 1980. He was a wartime chaplain with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and immediately after the war he served as Warden of St. Michael's House and Secretary of the Student Christian Movement.

discovered your footsteps in some P/W [sic] camps.”²⁵ Often, interpersonal connections turned into tangible gains for POWs, as Goodchild’s friendship with Rieger translated into a greater involvement by Rieger and his congregation in the affairs of the POWs.

Interpersonal connection most often acted as a medium by which pastors felt increasingly more comfortable with contributing to the POW mission. Goodchild took a particular interest in both POW affairs, but also in the personal connections that he could forge among pastors from both Britain and Germany. Goodchild brought a delegation of pastors to the British zone, and took them throughout the country on the way to Berlin via Düsseldorf, Herford, and Hamburg, in an effort to catch up with old friends and create a relationship between delegations.²⁶ Goodchild spoke with the Sydenham church board and showed their representatives, who had donated furniture, around the St. Michael’s House, located in Hamburg.²⁷ He hoped to show the church board how their efforts aided the process of repatriation. As interpersonal connection improved between pastors, requests for visitations to camps were more quickly obtained because of the frequency and the positivity of the interaction. In October 1948, Mrs. Russell of the German Education Department of the Foreign Office in Whitehall requested approval from the British Council of Foreign Workers Committee in order to bring three German clergymen to Britain to work in the POW camps.²⁸ The committee approved the request, citing Dekan Rieger’s authority on the matter, and the clergymen traveled to Britain.²⁹ The authority of many key

²⁵ Ibid: 3.

²⁶ Ibid: 14.

²⁷ Ibid:15.

²⁸ The Foreign Workers Committee was actually part of the British Council of Churches. The efforts of these particularly committees dealing with labor were coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, and was designed to help in the employment of foreign workers.

²⁹ LMA/4288/A/04/008: 59.

figures helped not only to give credibility to the mission, but also to assist pastors in establishing the connections with each other that could translate into tangible gains for improving the position of POWs.

Pastor Supervision of POW Transition Stage

As the process of repatriation sped up, German pastors recognized the critical stage that the POWs were entering. With more than 400,000 POWs needing to return home, Britain was not equipped to prepare POWs adequately for their journey home, or their resettlement in Germany. In November 1948, Pastor Boeckheler, in negotiation with Rev. Harland and Rev. Dakin of the Bureau of Christian Reconstruction in Europe, expressed a particular concern over the number of POWs received from the London Office in October.³⁰ Boeckheler discussed problems of employment and housing, with over 10,000 former POWs traveling through shipping warehouses to come back to Germany, and staying at temporary hostels in London before their final journey.³¹ Pastors recognized the ineptitude of the British government in preparing the POWs for repatriation, and pastors took it upon themselves to develop a transition camp where POWs could not only receive religious instruction, but also undertake a critical period of “processing,” before they returned to a Germany that looked very different from the home that they had left. In *Civilizing the*

³⁰ LMA/4288/A/04/007: 68. Matthew Hilton et al, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society, and the Voluntary Sector since 1945*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012: 128. The Bureau of Christian Reconstruction was formed in 1945, as the merger of one of the WCC’s Department of Reconstruction merger with the European Central Bureau for Inter-Church Aid. The Bureau of Christian Reconstruction would later become a department of the BCC.

³¹ The housing shortage of postwar Germany not only affected POWs, but the average German citizen as well. Gareth Pritchard’s *Niemandland: A History of Unoccupied Germany, 1945-1955*, stories over 500,000 citizens cut off from food and shelter, while trapped between the American and Red Army lines. The housing shortage continued after the war. See K.C. Fuhrer’s “Managing Scarcity: The German Housing Shortage and the Controlled Economy, 1914-1990,” *German History*, Volume 13, Issue 3, 1995: 326-354.

Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West, Patrick Jackson takes the creation of a “New Germany” a step further, by arguing that not only was society remade, but also the creation of a rhetorically created “West” that was used throughout the postwar period as a distinction from the Soviet Union. By “civilizing the enemy,” Germany now had a postwar place in the West, but unfortunately for POWs, this transition would create only seemingly contradictory realities inside the new “western” Germany.³²

As more POWs expressed a desire for repatriation, British officials faced a dilemma: how should they distinguish POWs who were soon to be repatriated from the rest of the POW population, who had either not yet been approved, or who had not expressed a desire to return? British officials also faced enormous pressure from various Christian relief organizations, particularly those involving German pastors, to create preparatory measures to ready POWs for their reintegration into German society. Designed as so-called “transition camps” used in the period between the permanently established bases and an eventual return to Germany, these camps were populated only by those who were to be repatriated in the ensuing month. They housed approximately 1000 POWs at a time, typically for two weeks, at which point they were shipped out and another unit arrived.³³ Transition camps were used with great frequency; in November 1947, German POWs occupied several different locations including Camp 186, which could house multiple units at one time.³⁴

³² Patrick Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

³³ LMA/4288/D/04/032: 12. For instance, one unit stayed in Camp 186 from November 16th-23rd in 1947, at which point they were shipped to Germany.

³⁴ Ibid: 12.

The transition camps became critical locations where German pastors could make their mark on the POWs. German pastors, as part of their mission to regain the credibility of German churches in the postwar period, saw the transition camps as an opportunity not only to prepare POWs for reentry into society, but also as settings in which to evangelize many of the young POWs. Pastor Jentsch negotiated with the British Council of Churches and the British War Office to bring Bishop Wilhelm Stählin to Britain to speak with the POWs.³⁵ As a prominent and powerful Confessing Church member, Jentsch argued that Stählin would create not only a positive representation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), but credibility for the German pastor mission in the POW camps.³⁶ Furthermore, Jentsch argued that in the current political situation, involving the alienation of these German churches from Christian reconstruction efforts by the larger religious community, he hoped that proposals for greater cooperation would be heard and liked, particularly those that incorporated British church networks.

One of the mediums through which pastors sought to get involved with POWs was through their “young youth leaders’ course,” which was designed to increase both the moral and religious competencies of young POWs on the list for repatriation.³⁷ Jentsch described a timeline for the youth leader course and the eventual examination period, which was to be done by various pastors that Jentsch and other officials had recruited. The examination period would take place over a period of one month, and included both written and oral examinations. The written exams, taking place from March 15-19 required

³⁵ LMA/4288/D/04/028: 46.

³⁶ Ibid: 46.

³⁷ Ibid: 46. *Jugendleiter kurs* means “young youth leaders course.”

that the POWs write an essay every night, and complete exercises on catechesis.³⁸

Furthermore, POWs were instructed on cultural patronage, dogmatic theology, and exegesis.³⁹ This period was followed by oral exams from March 22 to March 24, administered by pastors who were brought in from Germany. Pastor Jentsch himself led the *Jugendseelsorge* or “youth minister” exam; Pastor Stange led the Old and New Testament exam; and Pastor Burket led the dogmatic theology exam.⁴⁰ Non-church officials were also involved in the process. Mr. Miethke administered the “cultural patronage” tests and Mr. Labs administered the “social questions” exam.⁴¹ The express purpose of these exams was not only to help the POWs to improve their moral and religious competencies, but to show the positive aspects of German church programs to the POWs, and the other religious groups watching the German efforts. Throughout the trainings, German pastors began not only to analyze POWs response to repatriation, but to plant the seeds of the Christian transcontinental network that would emerge in the postwar period. Led by German pastors, a new network would connect both British and the West German world, as the German pastors hoped to reshape Christianity and save immoral Germany from rising atheist communism.⁴²

³⁸ Catechesis is a religious instruction given to a person in preparation for Christian baptism or confirmation. It is interesting to note that the pastors use the term “catechesis,” to describe the lessons given to the POWs, as if they viewed the POWs as unbaptized. This was not actually the case, as the vast majority of Germans during this period were baptized before adulthood, suggesting that German pastors viewed the POWs as needing to be rebaptized, before they returned to Germany. The process of “rebaptizing” is one employed by Protestant faiths when a member is viewed to have lapsed in their religious commitment.

³⁹ “Dogmatic theology” is the part of theology dealing with the theoretical truths of faith concerning God and God’s works, while “exegesis” is the critical of scripture.

⁴⁰ Pastor Stange is likely Erich Stange, a German YMCA leader later expelled from the NSDAP in 1933 when he protested against the Hitler Youth. He later worked for the Universal Christian Council for Life and work. Pastor Burket could not be identified.

⁴¹ LMA/4288/D/04/028: 50.

⁴² Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

In order to prepare for repatriation, German pastors also included in the curriculum educational elements of a more practical nature, designed to help prepare POWs for a return to a very different Germany. In lectures given by Padre Pompe from Luebeck on request from the YMCA, POWs were forced to consider issues that would plague the German populace as they struggled to rebuild the German state. Pompe created lectures titled, "Relief at Work in Postwar Germany," "What is Germany Expecting from You?," "What Did We Learn From the Last War?," and "What Do You Intend to Do in the Future?"⁴³ These lectures found "a very strong interest," and Pompe acted at the disposal of POWs, who were encouraged to discuss problems with him of a private or general interest. POWs from eastern Germany, or those with families belonging in the category of "refugees," such as those from newly-occupied Soviet territory, were invited to attend smaller discussion sections in order to help prepare them for that new reality. German pastors, while highly focused on evangelizing the POWs, still made sure that pragmatic considerations were taken for the POWs in order to help prepare them to be productive members of German society.⁴⁴

The response to the transition camps, particularly those for the younger POWs, was fairly positive. Director John Barwick of the War Prisoners' Aid for Great Britain stated that he "had heard quite a lot about the importance of this Youth camp," and that he "was not disappointed in his expectations," upon visiting from July 16 to 18 in 1947.⁴⁵ Barwick remarked that while the POWs did not voluntarily come to the camp, "the astonishing

⁴³ LMA/4288/D/04/032: 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid: 8.

⁴⁵ LMA/4288/D/04/028: 69. The War Prisoners' Aid for Great Britain was part of the YMCA, and John Barwick would later serve as secretary for the War Prisoners' Aid fund.

success of sound re-education that has been reached.” Barwick’s opinions were not entirely echoed by the pastors who were directly involved in the camp, particularly Pastor Jentsch, who stated that “as a German,” he expected “to find open ears. But at first... [he found] disappointment.”⁴⁶ Jentsch, who was responsible for assessing the success of the camp and leading some of the discussion sections in the camps, tried to “demonstrate some of the problems” that he had observed in German youth at home. However, he was met by “cold silence and icy reserve.” Jentsch did not totally blame the POWs, instead noting that they probably feared an interrogation or even worse, a new ideological captor. Jentsch stated, “nobody wants to be taken in by new ideologies after having been disappointed so bitterly by National Socialism.”⁴⁷ While the POWs displayed some initial resistance to Jentsch’s methods, he did experience greater success as he built a personal relationship with the camp. Jentsch barely scratched the surface of the complications of the German soldier psyche, and this topic has been a source of debate for historians throughout the past fifty years. Psychologists themselves have gotten involved in the debate, arguing that German soldiers in the postwar period experienced a form a paranoid psychosis delirium, in which a subject’s ideological fanaticism “cannot handle criticism and leads them to commit against the prevailing social norm.”⁴⁸

The transition camps, designed as processing facilities for POWs, provide a unique look into the psyche of younger POWs, particularly as they experienced the religious teachings of the German pastors. Jentsch worked to disprove the notion that the young Germans were “nihilists,” and that National Socialism had left them too damaged. Jentsch,

⁴⁶ Ibid: 69.

⁴⁷ Ibid: 69.

⁴⁸ SM Lopez and G Jemar, “Speaking of Delusions and Passion of Clearambault: the Nazi Soldier,” *European Psychiatry*, Volume 30, 2015: 1.

on the contrary, argued that the POWs had questions, and “only should be awakened...to be taken seriously, as men, in their own private humanity.”⁴⁹ Jentsch believed that if the POWs were placed in the “light of God,” their humanity could be returned. It was impossible to ignore, according to Jentsch, “that in the Third Reich the individual and his private life were not taken seriously by any means, for ideological reasons.”⁵⁰ When asked about their experiences under the Third Reich, POWs stated that they often experienced guilt, which Jentsch attributed to “a feeling for Good or Evil that is obviously not dead among young men.”⁵¹ The German pastors believed that through “spiritual radicalization,” POWs could break through to a greater honesty towards their own guilt. Jentsch wrote in July 1947, “the younger he is [the POW] the more open for a Christian explanation of history. If you explain it in a comprehensive manner, he will be spared the danger of cheap nihilism.”⁵² Jentsch did not speak of a spiritual absolution of the soldiers’ actions, which would have likely infuriated his British counterparts. Instead, Jentsch seems to argue that the only hope for POWs was an acknowledgement of the savagery of their actions, and a tangible desire to move forward and reshape the world in a more positive way. POWs still retained the

⁴⁹ LMA/4288/D/04/028: 70.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 70.

⁵¹ Ibid: 72. When Jentsch conducted these surveys in July 1947 in the POW youth transition camps, names were not requested in order to preserve a degree of privacy for the POWs. This adds a greater credibility to the POW responses, because there was not a potential for punishment based on their answers. It is also worth noting here that much of the “German guilt” was attributed to “survivor’s guilt.” One POW described in great detail the sinking of the *Scharnhorst*, a German capital ship of the German’s Kriegsmarine, which was sunk by the British Royal Navy’s HMS Duke of York in 1943. The POW wrote, “my salvation from the death of drowning which I could not grasp with my mind, appeared a miracle to me. Why did he save me, just me, as one of 36 out of 2,000?” Guilt over atrocities committed, as discussed in Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men*, often did not occur during the war or during the immediate postwar period, if at all. That guilt would only emerge later on during the German period of *vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the 1960s and on. See also Raphael Gross, “Relegating Nazism to the Past: Expressions of German Guilt in 1945 and Beyond,” *German History*, Volume 25, Issue 2, 2007: 219-238.

⁵² Ibid: 73.

capacity to ask questions, “of the deepest problems of heaven and earth,” leading pastors to believe that “there is still hope for an inner regeneration of German youth.” The pastors believed that it was their duty to take the situation of the POWs seriously, because Christianity had something to offer POWs: hope “given to him in the right form.”⁵³ There is an undeniable political element to the statement of “hope given in the right form.”⁵⁴ For German pastors, they saw their spiritual message as the only way to not only redeem soldiers, but to redeem Europe in the face of atheistic communism. Because of the atrocities of fascism, communism was an attractive option to the disillusioned youth of Europe.⁵⁵ The pastors aimed to reshape the direction of that hope.

Pastor Involvement in POW Reintegration into Germany

Although Anglo-German pastors often supported the repatriation of interned Germans, many pastors harbored serious concerns about what would happen to these soldiers once they returned to Germany, and with good reason. In a letter from the German Church Chancellery in April 1947, pastors worried that “those whose home...no longer existed, or exists in the Russian Zone, would be excluded from exchange, or very unfairly placed.”⁵⁶ The creation of the Soviet zone of occupation, and the subsequent severing of relations led to hunger, mass violence, and a stagnation of development. Combined with the ill treatment of German soldiers in the Soviet Union, German pastors were extremely hesitant about trying to send POWs back to their Eastern homes; those concerns were

⁵³ Ibid: 75.

⁵⁴ Ibid: 75.

⁵⁵ The German film, *Das Wunder von Bern* created by Sönke Wortmann in 2003 details the appeal of communism to the disillusioned youth of Germany, particularly to those that had parents who supported the Nazis or fought in the war.

⁵⁶ LMA/4288/A/03/003, 11 April 1947: 55. This in particular refers to the challenges faced by German pastors attempting to restart their parishes in Germany.

amplified as the prospect of dividing Germany seemed to be more of a reality in 1947.⁵⁷ Instead, the pastors decided to try and resettle them in the west.

The lack of an “evident central authority” also led to huge challenges in repatriation efforts, which the British Council of Churches, Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service attempted to eliminate. Under the guidance of Pastor Bethge, an informal British-German Conference was held in London to assess “what has been done during the year on British-German relations,” in an attempt to remedy difficulties of settling prisoners back in Germany. Pastor Höckheler expressed deep concerns over the 23,000 German POWs who arrived to Germany in July 1948, who were given “civilian status.” The British Council of Churches and other pastor groups supervised many of the men, but Höckheler worried about how well they could continue to provide for POWs at the rate of repatriation. As repatriation increased, the demands on pastors grew, spreading thin their resources.⁵⁸

In *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe*, William Hitchcock writes “however much we wish to assign [Allied victory] a benevolent nature, liberation came to Europe in a storm of destruction and death.” The postwar homeland to which German POWs returned was one ransacked by violence, shelled and bombed, with towns, cities, schools, hospitals, and ports all annihilated by the Allied force. The difficulty of the transition was unimaginable. An example of this is the case of a prisoner named Erich Engers, who was released and repatriated by the British government back to Germany in 1948. In a letter from Reverend Burlingham to Dekan Rieger, Burlingham discussed his fears of what would happen to Engers. He described Engers as having not seen his German family for nine years; “he professed a strong desire” to “remain in this country [Britain] and

⁵⁷ Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

⁵⁸ LMA/4288/D/04/019, 23 February 1948: 13.

convert to the Anglican Church.”⁵⁹ Engers clearly responded positively to the involvement of the German immigrant community and wanted to remain in Britain. However, the British government would eventually force him to return to Germany; still, the support for Engers did not end at that point. Instead, Burlingham noted Engers’ exact address in the American zone, and encouraged Rieger to send what aid he could. Rieger offered detail that he had written to the pastor in the Wiesbaden-Bieberich area where Engers lived, and had arranged a “hearty welcome from the local congregation.”⁶⁰ Instead of abandoning Engers once he landed on German soil, the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche and other German congregations located in Britain continued to support the POWs throughout their reintegration process.

Visits to Germany by London pastors proved that the POW mission did not end on the British Isles. Rev. Birger Forell visited Germany from April 29th to May 26th of 1947, visiting different hotspots of repatriation including Hamburg, Stuttgart and Munich, and garnering the support of international relief organizations such as the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA, the World Alliance of the YMCA, the United States Religious Affairs Branch of Berlin, and various pastoral groups. He also met with various POWs, such as Admiral Lohnmanr who was resettled in Cuxhaven in January 1947, in order to discuss his transition back into German society. Throughout his trip, Forell was struck by the problems of searching for relatives, a general absence of jobs, and a sense of depression and unhappiness.⁶¹ Forell visited one London-German attempt to combat these problems: the Espelkamp, located in North Rhine-Westphalia. Espelkamp was a renovated munitions

⁵⁹ Ibid, 23 February 1948: 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 23 February 1948: 14.

⁶¹ LMA/4288/D/04/025, 25 May 1947: 10.

factory in which London and German donors had contributed over two million Reichmarks to create a working and recuperation center for interned German POWs. This center was designed to bolster the previously fragile networks that had connected London's German migrants to various different parts of the country. By providing the backbone necessary, Forell hoped that Espelkamp would be able to recreate the bonds that existed between the German camps and Anglo-German society in Britain, once the German POWs returned home.⁶² Those connections continued once various soldiers were repatriated, creating a basis for communication established as the Cold War loomed. This critical communication network would also provide information about opportunities in Britain and London, which would encourage the mass migration networks that show up in the coming decades. That network would give Germans the confidence to uproot their lives and move to London with the aid of groups like the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche.⁶³

The critical communication can be seen most poignantly in a letter to Reverend Burlingham from Dekan Rieger during a visit to Germany in 1948. He wrote on one of the most extraordinary parts of his journey to Germany; "I met everywhere people who had belonged to a camp congregation," and they "remembered the special kind of Christian fellowship with which they had enjoyed in this country".⁶⁴ Critically, German POWs not only received favorable treatment in the camps, but they also remembered that treatment once they returned to Germany. While undoubtedly experiencing anger and frustration with their internment experience, POWs instead focused on the positive support from the British-German communities. Unquestionably self-serving and potentially disingenuous,

⁶² Ibid, 25 May 1947: 11.

⁶³ Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Postwar Britain*.

⁶⁴ LMA/4288/D/04/019, 4 June 1948: 18.

the evidence seems to support the notion that the POWs did have some positive memories and associations with Britain. Rieger would continue on to write about his trip to Göttingen, where he met “no less than twelve former students at Norton Camp,” including a student of theology from Camp 147 whom he encountered on a train to Berlin.⁶⁵ These encounters were not limited to one singular community in Germany, but instead reinforce the idea that these kinds of networks spread from London across the entirety of Germany, even in the more difficult east.

Those bonds would continue to be reinforced by Rieger, who said himself that it was of the utmost importance to strengthen “the invisible but real bonds,” in his letter to Burlingham. Rieger encouraged the immediate creation of a list with the names of all camp chaplains who were now living in Germany to be sent back to London in order to reinforce the network they had created. Burlingham replied almost immediately, with an effusive enthusiasm for the list, which would come to include over 500 pastors who could act as contacts for various German communities across the Continent. This letter proves that the linkages between German POWs and their British church benefactors did not end after the war, but continued into the rebuilding efforts of the Cold War. These efforts were sustained and expanded vastly beyond the initial scope of the POW camps in Britain. However, the prisoners who did decide to return to Germany took with them not only a positive response towards the community they encountered, but also memories of the systems put in place to help them. Those connections did not stop once the prisoners returned to Germany, but rather continued as Anglo-German pastors helped the men get reestablished in their homes.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 4 June 1948: 18.

Conclusion

Inside the uncertainty of the postwar period sat the German pastors, whose credibility with their British Anglican and Western allies was damaged in the aftermath of German Protestant complicity in the Nazi Regime. In this turmoil and external disapproval, bordering on disgust, the pastors recognized that a dramatic effort would be needed to change the global perception of German Protestant Christianity internationally. Led by German Lutherans, members of the Confessing Church, pastors who fled Nazi persecution and allies of a Protestant renewal, German pastors saw one opportunity to revitalize their church and German society through the evangelizing of POWs. The German pastors worked to prepare POWs not only for life in Germany, and spread their religious teachings among them. As the POWs returned home, German pastors with the aid of British networks, created a system of aid to help ease the transition into society, by providing dislocated POWs with employment, shelter, and food. Through their aid networks, German pastors would also create the avenues for communication and connection between Britain and Germany that would be essential during the Cold War. When the war ended, the real fight began for German pastors: remaking the image of German Protestantism into something that could be a force for positive change in the postwar world. As the threat of communism continued to loom, pastors made every effort to use a theological argument to heal POWs and reshape German Protestantism.

Chapter III:

“Thrown Between Heaven and Hell:” German POW life in Britain after the end of the Second World War, 1945-1955

In May 1947, Pastor Werner Jentsch had a front row seat at one of the largest ecumenical events of the year in Britain as pastors, politicians, and human rights activists converged on the Norton Camp to discuss the state of German POW treatment. In his reports back to the German Young Men's Christian Association, which he headed, making him part of the official German delegation invited to the meeting, he described the influx of Allied personnel, headed by the British Young Men's Christian Association and General-Secretary Sir Frank Willis.¹ The General Secretary arrived with "great ceremony" and led an entourage of well-connected people, which contrasted with the comparatively small German delegation.² Clearly put off by the fanfare, Pastor Jentsch instead began speaking with Pastor Rieger, his close friend, who then introduced him to Reverend Burlingham and Dr. Hirschwald of the British Council of Churches.³ The event was a who's who of religious personnel, and even included various professors such as Professor K.L. Schmidt and representatives of the YMCA at the North Camp. However, by far the most distinguished guest was Dr. John Mott, the long-serving leader of the YMCA, who had just received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 for his work on establishing and strengthening international Protestant Christian organizations to promote peace. As the last guests arrived at the event, the real work could begin: discussing the state of German POW treatment in Britain.

The speakers during the Norton Camp meeting began by acknowledging the treacherous situation in Germany. With deep concerns regarding employment, denazification, and scattered families, Pastor Jentsch recognized the seemingly

¹ The German acronym for YMCA is CVJM, but for the ease of reading and translation, I will use the English "YMCA." The British YMCA supported displaced people, refugees, and prisoners of war during the Second World War, and had been in operation for over one hundred years.

² LMA/4288/D/04/028: 5.

³ Ibid: 5.

insurmountable challenges involved in rebuilding Germany.⁴ However, Pastor Jentsch argued, if the British YMCA and other Christian groups worked together to support the mission of helping prepare POWs for an eventual return home, they could begin to repair the linkage between Britain and Germany.⁵ Critically, Pastor Jentsch stated that Germany was in no position to support the incoming POWs and that for the time being, Britain must continue to support the German POWs and begin to truly integrate them into society for the first time.

This chapter contends that while some German POWs expressed a desire to stay in Britain, they faced many challenges in the postwar period; however, German pastors stepped into the dislocation of the postwar world to help rebuild the POWs humanity within Britain. In *Group Captives*, Henry Faulk writes that the pastors' feared the "militarism bred in [the POWs'] soul."⁶ The pastors deepened their assessment of POWs by not just preparing them for repatriation, but by trying to understand their feelings and expectations about the process. With conflicted feelings for both Britain and their German homeland, POWs expressed strong feelings of dislocation, trapped between a British government that no longer wanted them, and a highly uncertain homecoming. For many German POWs, isolation from home and a lack of desire to return to Germany motivated them to stay in Britain and become part of the British rebuilding era. However, the British authorities believed the German POWs were overstaying their welcome, and put up many barriers that made it difficult for POWs to find permanent employment. Into this void stepped the German pastors once again, in order to aid German POWs with adjustment to

⁴ Ibid: 6. Judt, *Postwar*: 52-61.

⁵ Ibid: 6.

⁶ Faulk, *Group Captives*: 14.

British society. Furthermore, the next section will argue that the populations of Britain with a stake in the “POW question,” such as German migrants, politicians working on the POW issue, labor unions, and British citizens who had interacted with the POWs, had highly varied and heated opinions on the future of German POWs in Britain. Editorials from prominent British national and local newspapers reveal not only a strong group of support for German POW integration into British society, but also a questioning by some parts of the British population of the morality of continuing to employ POWs without pay.

As the atrocities of the Second World War came to light, some British citizens began to question their own complicity because of the mistreatment of POWs. On the opposing side, the landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1945 seemed to bring a mandate for raised wages and employment standards, causing large agricultural industries to turn once again to unemployed POWs willing to work for lower earnings as temporary workers as a way to avoid these new coming standards.⁷ These economic and moral considerations were coupled with a still hostile attitude towards the “ethnic German,” and whether or not a German could have a place in British society.⁸ However, these two conversations took place inside two larger debates occurring in British society at the time. In *Now the War is Over*, Paul Addison describes the public debate in Britain post-1945 as centering in two main

⁷ Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, London: Pelican Books, 1982: 27-39. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*: 454-56. The Labour Party, while having a historically intimate link with trade unions, did have to fend off fairly consistent internal threats from communist sympathizers, particularly in the electrical industry. The perception of communist influences seemed to “weaken the authority of the trade unions,” especially after 1950.

⁸ Berghahn, *Continental Britons*: 127. These considerations were further complicated by the status of Jewish refugees. At first, Western states treated Jewish displaced persons like other refugees, corralling them at times in camps with their former persecutors. However, after 1945, President Roosevelt of the United States led the call for separate Jewish camps because the “refusal to recognize the Jews...has the effect...of closing one’s eyes to their former and more barbaric persecution.” See “Letter from President Truman to General Eisenhower on the Treatment of displaced Jews in the U.S. Zone,” 29 September 1945. Coupled with the inability to return Jews to the east, Britain, the United States, and Israel would bear the majority of the displaced Jews.

veins: the war itself, and the peacetime future at home.⁹ German POWs were unique in that they straddled both of these discussions, making them a point of interest for the British population.

This tumultuous debate not only reflected a British population concerned with their postwar legacy, but also their increasing concerns about Britain's moral, economic, and political authority in the postwar world.¹⁰ Finally, beneath the heated debate of the British populace, German POWs struggled to find a place in the postwar world. For many of the POWs, life outside of the camp was shocking and dislocating, and while an improved economic status may have alleviated the pain, the German POWs still struggled to identify Britain as a "homeland" as opposed to Germany. Particularly after the emergence of a divided Germany in 1948, with American influence dominating the larger, western segment and Soviet influence in the East, the POWs would return to a home totally different from the one they left.¹¹ Once again, German pastors stepped into the void, to begin to assess the damage done to the POWs. Through both individual interviews and familial reconnection, German pastors began to rebuild German humanity inside of Britain and give the coming waves of German migration a waypoint.

For German migrants, including German Jews, and German POWs in Britain, London offered an opportunity to start a new life.¹² Over 60,000 Germans migrated to Britain from 1945 to 1951, and an additional 15,000 ex-POWs decided to remain in the United

⁹ Paul Addison, *Now the War is Over*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985: 1.

¹⁰ Judt, *Postwar*: 206.

¹¹ Ibid: 206.

¹² See previous discussion from 19-21 on German Jewish migration and German migrants.

Kingdom.¹³ The German POWs who arrived in Britain during the war and were interned through the immediate post-war years, experienced a hint of what the British community had to offer them. With a high demand for labor and an established, ethnic German community of over 300,000 people, 70,000 of which had been in Britain since before the First World War, many POWs questioned if repatriation to Germany would be a step forward, and instead could lead to an even more uncertain future.¹⁴ German POWs began to weigh their options, setting an uncertain return to a ruined Germany, against a permanent relocation in a divided Britain.

Legal and Political Concerns of the British Government for Remaining POWs

As the war ended, the British faced a huge manpower problem. With over 400,000 German POWs interned in Britain, the Government had to reconcile this foreign, unpaid manpower, with the returning British soldiers who were demanding employment. Desperate to promote repatriation while not crippling the economy by removing labor too fast, the British government began to expedite the process of POW return to Germany. In a transcript of a Parliamentary debate about the German POWs published in *The Manchester Guardian* on January 21st, 1948, Secretary for War Emanuel Shinwell stated “repatriation has been going at a rate of about 15,000 a month for over a year, and all those who desire

¹³ Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-War Britain*: 18. The number of migrants included both Jewish displaced persons and German refugees throughout Europe fleeing the destruction of the continent.

¹⁴ See Judt, *Postwar*: 19, for his comments on the “humiliated, diminished status of German males – reduced from the supermen of Hitler’s burnished armies to a ragged group of belatedly returning prisoners.” Coupled with a tense local situation in which all ethnicities and religions continued to fight each other, exemplified in the Massacre of Jedwabne, where Poles massacred Jews, there was not a stable home to which POWs could return. Jan Gross detailed this massacre in *Neighbors*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

to remain are likely to have left by the end of July.”¹⁵ For those who decided to remain, their livelihood would continue to be tied to ration books, clothing coupons, and identity cards, a continuation of the previous internment system. Indeed, reflecting a disturbing lack of a change of official status, POWs had a standard wage of only four pounds and ten pence a week, identical to their “wage” during internment. However, around 15,000 German POWs decided to remain in Britain, posing a particular problem for a British government that no longer had a clear place for them.

The political hurdles to remain in Britain were numerous in the postwar period, and reflected the discontent of the British government with the continued employment of POWs. The British authorities were very wary of POWs remaining in the country as permanent residents or even citizens: a Home Office White Paper from June 13th, 1945 stated the “primary consideration...is that nothing shall be done which carries with it an implication or may be used as an argument for permanent residence in this country.”¹⁶ The British government, content with using the German POWs as labor during the Second World War, expressed significant discomfort with integrating Germans into British society. The British authorities voiced particular unease when POWs attempted to work on issues of “national importance,” which during the war meant defense projects but increasingly in the postwar period, meant projects that took the jobs of wage laborers.¹⁷ In order to

¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1948. Emanuel Shinwell was a British trade union official, Labour politician and Secretary of State for War from 1947- 1950. Shinwell was an important Jewish figure who served in the House of Lords until shortly before his death in 1986.

¹⁶ NA, HO 213/500, 13 June 1945: 1.

¹⁷ This stance did not seem to soften over time. Throughout the NA records, the British government officials continuously expressed their preference to move POWs into positions in Germany, rather than having them involved in home industry. Even as the British actively recruited displaced persons, ethnic Germans, and migrating Germans to help fill the demand for labor in Britain, the

ascertain exactly which fields the POWs were allowed to work in, the British authorities transferred responsibility to the Board of Trade, who actually gave out a license for work inside Britain.¹⁸

The license for work inside of Britain also varied greatly depending on whether the POWs were contracted out to private individuals. Only the Ministry of Labour had the right to contract out labor to private individuals, entities, and companies, often to work for firms in agricultural or industrial production. If the POWs worked through a public company that received funds from the British government, their employment could be terminated if the government deemed the company “unsuccessful” or “unnecessary.” If the company was terminated, POWs had no guarantee of receiving another job, and could instead be trapped in limbo, unable to leave, but also unable to find employment in Britain. The labor contracts that POWs signed also were subject to review each year, in order to deem the industries in which they worked as “luxury” or “non-essential” industries. If the industry was deemed “luxury” or “non essential,” the British government reserved the right to deem those industries “a charge on public funds,” and to force the POW to seek another form of employment.¹⁹ The muddled bureaucratic system not only discouraged POWs from remaining, but kept those who wanted to stay trapped in low paying jobs, where working conditions were largely unmonitored and unregulated. POWs also never truly transitioned out of their “prisoner of war” status, with the term “POW” used to describe them through the mid-1950s. While the war was over, their status was unchanged; German POWs were forced to live and work as prisoners, without ever fully entering the employment world of

authorities simultaneously worked to return POWs to Germany. See Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*: 23-50.

¹⁸ NA, HO 213/500, 13 June 1945: 2.

¹⁹ Ibid: 2.

Britain. For prisoner “18” the concern for the future was “when will it be, and how will it be? This is what worries not only me but most of us...when shall the day come that the gate opens to us?”²⁰

Beyond the initial hurdles of permission for employment, the Government also required POWs to submit an application through the Refugee Committee. The Refugee Committee posed a particular challenge for POWs because it was designed for dealing with refugees or aliens interned during the war.²¹ During the immediate postwar years, the POW application for refugee status was so slowed because of competition among refugees, alien migrants, and POWs for access to applications. The application requirements were also stringent, with POWs needing to have some claim to skills or experience in the work they desired to undertake, and their employment could be taken away if they were deemed to be in ill health.²² Many of the POWs who wanted to remain in Britain were stuck in a sort of refugee limbo, unable to access the resources necessary to prepare them to leave the camps, while also unable to remain in the camps much longer. Exploited by a British government that reached a critical labor shortage, German POWs faced huge hurdles to remain in the country in the postwar period. German POWs did not know what to expect in the postwar period, but the continued status as a “prisoner” proved to be unbearable. Prisoner “46” wrote, “I now know very well that the English people would like to send us all home, if we were not cheap labour. I have talked to a few civilians and all they say that they

²⁰ “Report by Pastor Werner Jentsch, Psychological Tests in Youth Camp 180,” LMA/4288/D/04/028: May 1945: 40.

²¹ NA, HO 213/500, 13 June 1945: 1.

²² Ibid: 1.

are very “sorry” because we have to remain here for so long.²³ Instead of becoming members of British society, German POWs were passed around, unable to fit anywhere.

The British Populace Debates “the German POW Question”

Throughout most of the Second World War, Britons with a stake in the POW experience expressed alarm over the treatment of POWs interned on the Isles, but their concerns were stifled because of concerns for winning the war. However, in the postwar period, Anglo-German citizens, some concerned Britons and left-leaning politicians demanded greater care given to POW affairs, and those demands translated into a larger national conversation about the role of Germans in Britain.

Despite the assurances from governmental officials that German POWs were being taken care of, British citizens, either acting independently or in conjunction with German church organizations, demanded higher quality care of POWs, and proof of that improved treatment. The earliest records of a debate on POW treatment appearing in a public forum occurred on January 31st, 1940, when Mr. Thorne, identified only as a “British citizen,” questioned British Secretary of State for War Oliver Stanley on the treatment of German POWs in Britain, due to rumors of alleged mistreatment of POWs.²⁴ Stanley informed Thorne that in accordance with the provisions of the international convention of 1929,

²³ “Report by Pastor Werner Jentsch, Psychological Tests in Youth Camp 180,” LMA/4288/D/04/028, May 1945: 42.

²⁴ Oliver Stanley was a prominent British Conservative politician, who was extremely active in the British government. He served as Secretary of State for War from January 1940 through May of that same year. Stanley experienced a fall from favor upon the appointment of Winston Churchill, possibly because Stanley’s father-in-law Lord Londonderry was a prominent Nazi sympathizer. His political fortunes returned when Churchill appointed Stanley as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1942, a post he held until the end of the war. After the Conservative defeat in 1945, Stanley worked to rebuild the party.

“German POWs were supplied daily with the same rations as British troops at home.”²⁵

However, reassurances in Parliament did not seem to translate to the ethnic Anglo-German community, whose members continued to express outrage over the internment of German POWs in what they deemed to be “slave labor.”²⁶

A prominent example of this outrage was the action of Helmut W.B. Schroeder, of German and English descent, who set up a relief committee, which “sent out circulars to a number of English people asking them to send donations for the assistance of German prisoners of war and internees in this country.” The local publicity given to Schroeder’s activities was so high, that his behavior was eventually brought to the attention of Secretary Stanley, in March of 1940. While Stanley continued to assure the populace for several months about the quality of POW care, many Anglo-Germans remained skeptical of Stanley’s assurances, including Schroeder, who wrote that he would forbid sending comforts to POWs if the care proved to be of an adequate standard, in which case “the money...may be diverted to better uses.”²⁷ After Schroeder’s comments, Secretary Stanley stated that while he has no power to forbid the sending of comforts to German POWs, he “[thought that] such a practice [was] both unnecessary and undesirable.” His response was reportedly met with cheers from the British government officials witnessing the exchange, which took place in an open forum with Secretary Stanley, showing a seeming divide between the motivations of those in Government, and those with a stronger connection to the ethnic German population.²⁸

²⁵ “Mr. Oliver Stanley Responds to Questions about German POWs,” *The Times*, 31 January 1940.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “Relief Committee Brought to the Attention of Secretary for War Stanley,” *Times*, 6 March 1940.

²⁸ “Comforts for German Prisoners,” *Times*, 13 March 1940. The actions of Schroeder were brought to the attention of Secretary Stanley in an open forum by Mr. Vyvyan Adams of Leeds.

Some members of the British populace chose to frame the German POW debate in the context of Nazi treatment of British POWs. This debate in the press stemmed from concerns about the treatment of British POWs by Nazi Germany, and whether or not that treatment should impact how the British treated their prisoners in turn. In *The Evening Telegraph and Post*, Violet Barbour in her December 1940 article “Are They Getting a Fair Deal?: Our Prisoners – and Theirs,” delved deep into the issue of German POW treatment. She first began by describing the rumors that had reached the British citizenry concerning British POW treatment in Germany, contending that they were not being cared for “with the consideration and respect prescribed by international law.” While Barbour stated that there is “no doubt considerable truth in the allegation of bad treatment,” she argued that it does not alleviate the moral obligations the British have toward German POWs. Upon her investigations into the camps, she discovered while German POWs had rationed food and clothing, they have “no legal ground for complaint,” and POWs “admitted they are better fed than they had ever been while on active service.”²⁹ When given bacon and eggs for breakfast, one German POW divided the food with the intention of giving half to a fellow prisoner, and could not believe that he was given a whole egg to himself. He stated, “he had never enjoyed such a luxury while serving in the Wehrmacht.” In *German Migrants and Post-War Britain: An Enemy Embrace*, Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert detail the continuous reporting on the treatment of POWs in the camps. From 1946 to 1948 various newspapers including *The Lancashire Daily Post*, *The Manchester Guardian*, and *The*

²⁹ *The Evening Telegraph and Post*, 6 Dec 1940. While the German POWs experienced rationing, so did the rest of the British population, and this rationing would continue after the war. See Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, 19.

Edinburgh Evening News often published information about the condition of German POWs, reflecting a clear, albeit isolated, public interest in POW affairs.³⁰

Barbour represented an early concern over the morality of interning German POWs and using them as part of the labor force. Both the British government and its citizens, out of a belief that the war was the first priority, coupled with a huge demand for labor, ignored many of the early concerns in the 1940s. Moreover, many members of the British populace undoubtedly viewed the German POWs as simply an extension of Nazism, and not worthy of any significant protections under the law, as evidence by the anti-Nazi propaganda of the period.

However, as the war came to a close in 1945, some citizens grew uneasy about the morality of holding so many German POWs as a labor force, with an unclear timetable for repatriation, and seemingly insufficient guarantees by the British authorities for adequate treatment. An editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* on August 16th, 1946 stated the “greatest injury ever done by the Allies to Germany since the fighting ended is not in the severity of our demands upon her, but in the haphazard, indefinite, and opportunist way their fulfillment is exacted.³¹” Specifically, the unnamed writer attacked the Allied demand for German labor to repair the damage done to the British economy, through “no systematic programme but through the expedient of retaining prisoners of war to labour in the country which happens to hold them.” Furthermore, the writer maintained that this injustice could not be sustained as the public awakened to the moral crisis before them,

³⁰ Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*: 51-70.

³¹ “Letter to the Editor on POW Treatment,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1946.

“Fulfillment” here refers to the fulfillment of German debt to the Allies in the postwar period. While the reparations expected of Germany were nothing like those issued after the First World War, the Germans were still expected to contribute significantly to the rebuilding effort.

with over half a million POWs remaining in the United Kingdom. The implications of using German POWs as forced labor for the rebuilding of economies even led to POWs being contracted out to the United States and France as repatriations labor, whose value should be credited to their account.³² While people like Barbour argued that the POWs were better off in Britain than in Germany, supporters of POW rights argued that Britain needed volunteers who could benefit from the standard of living offered in Britain, and not those who had no choice in the matter³³. Former Labour Member of Parliament Noel-Baker wrote, “now [we are] forcing to make special expiation of Germany’s guilt.”³⁴

However, a conflicting line of argumentation stated that the Soviets’ substandard treatment of POWs allowed Britain to lower POW wages and living conditions in the postwar period. Citing the USSR’s status as an ally, British officials asserted that they only had to maintain the standard of POW care provided by other Allied nations. This line of argumentation was widely rejected by supporters of German POWs, who vehemently scorned using comparative morality to absolve the British government of protection of POW rights.³⁵ Noel-Baker wrote that “the dinginess of the neighbour’s washing does not, however, absolve us from looking to our own,” after news broke that the Soviet Union had released over two million Germans with no notification of their families nor transportation home. Noel-Baker argued that the British government forced POWs, who either wished to

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Noel-Baker was a British politician, diplomat, academic, and renowned campaigner for disarmament. At the period when he wrote this editorial, Noel-Baker was a former Labour Member of Parliament, who would rise to the position of Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, which he would hold from October 7th, 1947 to February 28th, 1950. He is the only person to have received both a Nobel Prize and an Olympic Medal (silver in the 1500 m). Noel-Baker also wrote frequently to the *Manchester Guardian* regarding disarmament, nuclear deterrence, and reunification.

³⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1946.

remain in Britain or were on the waiting list for repatriation, to work “with no stated time limit” and they could only be repatriated to Germany if they became physically ill.³⁶ While acknowledging that agricultural and housing developments were absolutely necessary, men like Noel-Baker wondered if “a German held here in captivity would work with the same will as one who tills the home land for the livelihood of his own dependents?”³⁷

Furthermore, in an editorial written on February 17th, 1945, Vernon Bartlett, J.C. Flügel, Hans Gottfurcht, C.E.M. Joad, Michael Redgrave and Olaf Stapledon raised the concern that “under the present official policy most of [the POWs] seem to be barred from access to outside influences which might help them discard their Nazi ideas.”³⁸ The writers continued that in the name of increased socialization, “the organizations of political and trade union refugees have repeatedly offered their assistance in the matter...and we feel that their assistance should be welcomed and encouraged in every way.” While many expressed valid concerns in the postwar treatment of POWs, it is clear that Bartlett, Flügel, Gottfurcht, Joad, Redgrave, and Stapledon, were unaware of the efforts of German pastors in matters of socialization and denazification, who had been working towards many of the described goals of “socialization.” In *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Tony Judt

³⁶ Ibid. Judt, *Postwar*: 23-26. The Soviets also executed many of their German prisoners, or left them in horrific prisons where POWs would die of starvation, dehydration, torture and disease.

³⁷ Noel-Baker, “Letter to the Editor: British Treatment of POWs,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 1946.

³⁸ Vernon Bartlett, English journalist, Member of Parliament and Independent Progressive; J.C. Flügel, British experimental psychologist; Hans Gottfurcht, German and international trade union official and founder of the National Group of German Trade Unionists in Britain; C.E.M. Joad, English philosopher and broadcasting personality; Michael Redgrave, English stage and film actor, director, and author; and Olaf Stapledon, British philosopher and author of science fiction, *The Times*, 17 February 1945.

argues that the importance of denazification did not escape the British, but did have “a greater skepticism and fewer resources [than the Americans].”³⁹

In response to many of these queries about the treatment of German POWs, the *Manchester Guardian* ran a piece from their Special Correspondent concerning the treatment of POWs in May of 1947. The Special Correspondent wrote that while the German Section of the Foreign Office, the point of contact that organized a visit to an unnamed POW camp, was short on staff and money, the “spirit of political enterprise” was strong in the camps. He described camps with plentiful books, monthly digests, lecture series, tools for free discussion and self-education, and an “exceptionally happy atmosphere,” with a “more than cordial relationship” between the British and Germans.⁴⁰ While this picture seemed to be exceptionally rosy, it is interesting that the only mention of the work of German pastors came briefly at the end of the piece: “one becomes increasingly aware of the importance of the personal factor in political and religious education,” a seeming nod to the work of German pastors in both reeducation and evangelizing works, who remained largely invisible to much of the British population. The visit by the Special Correspondent was likely heavily-controlled by the British authorities, but evidence from the pastors, as presented above, confirms that description of the lectures, books, and atmosphere of reeducation reflect the evidence of the article.⁴¹

However, accounts diverge in further analyses of the ways in which German POWs received reeducation tactics. While results seemed to be somewhat “positive” based on the pastors’ accounts, it seems to have been a stretch for the Special Correspondent to write

³⁹ Judt, *Postwar*: 56.

⁴⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 22 May 1947.

⁴¹ See chapter “Camps Without Walls” for more information of the reeducation program implemented by the pastors.

that German POWs were “exceptionally happy.” The Special Correspondent’s exaggeration was suggested by the *Manchester Guardian’s* letter to the editor of the same month; an anonymous writer stated: “to my personal knowledge, the Germans have nothing but praise for...the camp newspaper, occasional lectures, and library...but as political education, it has been a pathetic failure.”⁴² British officials such as Duncan Sandys, Minister for Works and Emanuel Shinwell, Secretary of State for War, apparently had varying opinions on the status of reeducation, and the importance of the project; with Sandys’ arguing that this project was “unique,” and not capable of assessment.⁴³ Even in the midst of “exposing” the POW camps, the press at the time, and the citizens writing in to the press, seemed to understand only parts of the total picture, struggling between what was “known” and “unknown.” But in the midst of the immediate postwar years, Anglo-German citizens, the editorial staff of *The Manchester Guardian*, and some Left politicians expressed a great concern over the fate of German POWs, in particular, their ability to become productive, pro-democratic members of society.

Further concerns by some British citizens referenced the treatment of those POWs who decided against repatriation, particularly in regards to working conditions and wage rates. A letter to the editor of *The Times* titled “‘Civilian’ Agricultural workers” argued, “many [POWs] signed on in the belief that they would be allotted to individual farmers and enabled to lead a more or less normal life.”⁴⁴ Instead, the writer continued, many found themselves tied to war agricultural committees, being drafted to jobs at the will of the committee, and still living in dreary camps and working in gangs. Under these committees

⁴² *Manchester Guardian*, 21 May 1947.

⁴³ “Employing German Prisoners at Work,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 May 1945.

⁴⁴ “‘Civilian’ Agricultural Workers,” *The Times*, 2 February 1948.

designed to regulate POW labor with greater efficiency, POWs were denied the privilege of working on personal farms with considerable responsibility. Instead, POWs were forced to work in gang labor groups, their output “nearly half” that of the production levels of small farms.⁴⁵ The writer stated, “a man cannot be expected to give his best when he may be suddenly transferred,” and critically reframed the central question flowing throughout much of the debate surrounding POWs in the late 1940s: “if these men are not given a reasonable degree of freedom, how can they shed the outlook of the prisoner of war or regard this as a free and democratic country?”⁴⁶ As members of the British public became aware of the conditions that German POWs faced, they began to worry that POWs would fall back on Nazism. In an editorial of *The Manchester Guardian*, the editorial argued that with “starvation, misery, and bureaucratic ineptitude...[the POWs] look back to the golden age of Hitler’s pre-war period.”⁴⁷ Just as some began to worry about the trials faced by POWs in the postwar period, they may have begun to examine their own morality and their own obligations towards POWs in the postwar period.

Reestablishing the Connection Between POWs and Germany

German pastors continued to focus their attention on the experience of German POWs in Britain, and in particular, the pastors now began one of the greatest challenges of the period: reconnecting German families dislocated by war, in both Britain and Germany. In September of 1948, a letter to Reverend J.B. Dakin discussed two pastors who were planning to make the journey from Germany to Britain, “in order to help with ministering

⁴⁵ It is unsurprising that output was less than wartime efforts, due to the postwar shortages. See Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, for more information.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “The Failures of Reeducation,” *Manchester Guardian*, 21 May 1947.

to Germany voluntary workers for several months.”⁴⁸ Pastor Dr. Kurt August Julius Thuda, who worked in Hope-Eickel inside of the British occupation zone in Germany arrived in England in later 1948 with Martin Boeckhelor, of Stuttgart, a city under the US zone of occupation. Both Boeckhelor and Thuda were in England before the war and agreed to come for a limited period in order not only to perform ministering to POWs, but also to help to reconnect POWs with their German families, who had been searching for them since the end of the war in 1945. In a letter to Rev. Dakin, who was assistant general secretary to Reverend L.W. Harland of Christian Reconstruction in Europe, he thanked Dr. Julius Rieger, for his “spiritual duties amongst German workers in this country.”⁴⁹ Dr. Rieger would gain a powerful reputation for reuniting families in the late 1940s, because his constant travel between Britain and Germany allowed him to become intimately familiar with both populations, particularly those with strong ecclesiastical ties.

A letter written February 9, 1946 to Herr Amtsbruder from St. Andrews’s Presbyterian Church, which sponsored large numbers of POWs, began by discussing the huge financial opportunities to work in England, while acknowledging the serious obstacles keeping POWs in Britain.⁵⁰ The Presbyterian Church’s letter stated that many POWs had no news of their family, and the Church itself had been getting requests for information concerning family members interned in Britain.⁵¹ The information provided to Amtsbruder was very specific, and included people from many different parts of Germany. For instance, “Frau Martel Loick” of Berlin was looking for her husband Rudi Loick; the Heinz-Michalsky

⁴⁸ LMA/4288/A/04/008: 48.

⁴⁹ Ibid: 49.

⁵⁰ Amtsbruder worked on behalf of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche in London.

⁵¹ LMA/4288/D/04/026: 20. This text read, “es handelt sich um einige Kriegsgefangene hier, die keinerlei Nachricht von ihren Angehörigen, die in Berlin lebten, haben.”

family was looking for their son Hermann; and Christian Friedrich was looking for his brother Mark. The Church requested that when Amtsbruder had some information about the POWs and their locations, that he deliver this information to a church employee who would convey it accordingly.⁵²

Often, the pastors themselves were responsible for delivering messages from POWs to their families in Germany. For instance, Pastor Heinrich Grüber announced his upcoming trip to Germany in February of 1946, and alerted churches that he would take messages to relatives on that particular journey.⁵³ The messages were often very personal and very specific; one even included a hand drawn map from a POW of the exact location to which the letter should be delivered. From 1948 until late 1952, one of the primary tasks of the pastors was to act as couriers, bringing information and messages from family members in Germany to the POWs who decided to stay in Britain either for employment, or because their repatriation had not yet been approved. Frau Lieschen and her children wrote to her POW husband, Alfred Butsch of Ashley Road, Tottenham Hale in London, to say that though their house was totally destroyed and they had few material possessions, God had not forsaken them, and they hoped to be reunited with him in Britain as soon as possible.⁵⁴

As the work of the pastors spread throughout Germany and Britain, news of their services spread as well, and even families who were not searching for POWs per se, began to use the networks created by pastors in order to search for their missing family members. In a letter to Pastor Grueber of the Church of England Committee at Bloomsbury House,

⁵² Ibid: 20. The information is very specific and included the street address of every individual listed. For instance, "Frau Martel Loick" of Berlin, could be located at N.W. 7 Albrechtstraße 22. The pages of families searching for information went across almost ten pages, easily numbering over one hundred families in one file alone.

⁵³ Ibid: 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid: 59.

Marie Rausch von Trauenberg of Swansea wrote that upon a visit to Berlin, she discovered that her parents had disappeared, and she hoped that they had perhaps fled to Britain to stay with cousins, and she requested Pastor Grueber's help in locating them.⁵⁵ In 1946, Mrs. E. Wassermann wrote to the British Council of Churches in the hopes that they could give a letter to her friend located in Berlin. Reverend E. Burlingham, wrote in late February to his counterpart in Britain to say that he hoped that the pastor had "any means of helping Mrs. Wassermann with the information she so sadly needs," and had received the letter.⁵⁶

In the 1945 aftermath of the release of information about the extermination of the Jews, German pastors began to take an especially active role in reuniting German Jews with their family members who had fled to England before the war.⁵⁷ For instance, Marie Blass of Dahlem, Berlin wrote to Heroert Whel that her husband had been killed when the Gestapo took him in in August of 1944.⁵⁸ She and her daughter were forced into the concentration camp Ravensbrück, while her son was separated from them and placed in Buchenwald. She wrote that while they had miraculously all survived, they were in desperate hope to reconnect with family and friends in Britain.⁵⁹ At this point, German pastors began expanding their network of contacts in order to aid not only German POWs and German migrants, but also those of Jewish descent. This is a break from much of their earlier work, which focused only on German POWs and migrants, because the pastors created a committee distinction between the German POWs and the Jews, in order to more

⁵⁵ Ibid, 14 February 1946: 50.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 27 February 1946: 55.

⁵⁷ Judt, *Postwar*, 54. The investigations and trials from 1945-1948 (both the UN War Crimes Commission and the Nuremberg Trials) "put an extraordinary amount of documentation and testimony on record (notably concerning the German project to exterminate Europe's Jews), at the very moment when Germans...were most disposed to forget as fast as they could."

⁵⁸ Heroert Whel was a pastor that worked in conjunction with the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche.

⁵⁹ LMA/4288/D/04/026: 58.

effectively help both groups. It is unclear what exactly prompted the German pastors to take such an active role in the plight of the German Jews, but it may have stemmed not only from guilty consciences about the role of Christian churches turning a blind eye to the plight of the Jews, but also from the strong networks, of both pastors and physical locations of refuge in Germany and Britain, built up in support of the German POWs. The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Kirche helped set up a Jewish Refugee Committee in April 1946, where Jewish refugees could come and request information about their family and friends in Germany, and pastors during their trips would make enquiries on their behalf.⁶⁰ At a time when most of Germany was striving to forget about the actions of the Nazis and the extermination of the Jews, German pastors instead got more involved in the plight of Jewish suffering. This reflected their strong connections to more liberal, Labor and Left optimism about how to approach the postwar period: the pastors hoped to bring forgiveness to the postwar period, not further punishment.⁶¹

From 1948 to 1952, German pastors acted as couriers between POWs and their families abroad, reestablishing a connection lost during the war. That connection would be critical as POWs decided to remain in Britain, with many of their families eventually joining them in the postwar period. The dislocation experienced by many groups during this period, including German-Jewish refugees, was somewhat eased by German pastors carrying messages and taking part in the massive movement to reconnect families after the

⁶⁰ Ibid: 90. The files contain huge numbers of charts that show the sender on one side, and the person they wanted to contact on the other. The files included a mix of POWs who wanted to locate family and also German-Jewish refugees. For example, Günther Stallner, GEF-NR B. 556600 located in 174 Norton-Camp, Cuckney nr. Mansfield Notts, written to Fritz Stallner Krakow amSee/Mecklenbg. Ziegelburch 13 or Willi Stallner Berlin-Charlottenbg Kneesebeck 68/69. Also Lothar Kalleberg GEF-NR B110688 174 Norton Camp, same address to Willi Kalleberg 15 Erfurt Gartenstr 442, Gehrard Last B. 39454 to Otto Last in Berlin n. 20 Soldierstr.

⁶¹ Faulk, *Group Captives*: 16.

war. With their efforts, German pastors were able to take their POW networks a step further, and begin impacting not only German migrants, but Jewish refugees as well. In this way, German pastor influence now began to expand from dealing specifically with POWs, to feed into other areas of postwar migration.

POW Reactions to Staying in Britain Postwar

Through interviews with German POWs and personal journals kept by pastors, it is possible to get a much more unfiltered look at the true reactions of POWs to their experience in Britain. In many interviews that were given to British officials or newspapers, the POWs expressed happiness with their experiences, but this information cannot be taken literally, given that British officials largely dictated how their internment would go, and the interviewers had a clear relationship with these officials. Pastor Werner Jentsch of Waldeck wrote that while there was important work that needed to be done both by POWs and by British citizens, the work that POWs were doing involved a great deal of contact with British society, and the POWs “[were] going through all the pains and contractions of trying to adjust to a new life.”⁶² He argued that the interests and issues of POWs, in addition to their role as forced laborers, must be taken into consideration when linking organizations to them. As the representative of the German YMCA in Britain, and director of the Religious Department for War Recovery, he expressed particular concern for the POW’s ability to get better jobs after the experience, and throughout Jentsch’s camp visitations, he wrote that he had seen not only religious introversion, but resignation, and skepticism.⁶³ While the German-British relationship had “improved because of the POW experience,” he

⁶² Ibid: 2. This statement applied to German veterans at large.

⁶³ Ibid: 3. The German quotation: “resignation, Skepsis, verletztes Geschtigkeitsempfinden, religiöse Introversion, Kompetenzstreitigkeiten und Gersiztheiten waren die Folge der tragisch langen Dauer des Gefangenendassins (prison assassination).”

stated in May 1947 that there were no words to describe the potential negative impact of the experience on the POWs.

Because of his concerns about the mental health of the POWs, Pastor Jentsch developed a psychological survey used to assess various different “types” of personalities and to examine ways in which the POWs were reacting to the internment experience, and particularly their remaining in Britain. He was given authorization to complete this survey because of his status as the official German head of the YMCA in Britain, and the YMCA’s concerns over POW reaction to either repatriation, or deciding to remain in Britain. Jentsch’s work largely took place in 1947 and 1948 during which time the majority of POWs were beginning to leave Britain, and thus cannot be used with any degree of accuracy as a psychological profile of the POWs at large, since Jentsch dealt with such a small number of POWs. However, the statements made by various POWs offer a unique window into their experiences. Jentsch’s findings revealed that a great many found “thinking about the past [led] to the experience of guilt...[and many had] ‘the problem of destiny’.”

Jentsch described the “problem of destiny” as a feeling of intense confusion and distress when thinking about the future; many POWs possessed strong survivor’s guilt, coupled with feelings of homesickness.⁶⁴ An unnamed POW wrote in his survey in May 1947 that he “could not sleep for [he] was continuously at home with [his] beloved ones in [his] thoughts”, and another described with great detail his father speaking to him at home around the smoking table. POW “16” worried about the economic welfare of his relatives because of the food shortages in Germany, and the fear of starting a vocation from scratch,

⁶⁴ Ibid, May 1947: 40.

stating that he “does not know what [sic] to begin.”⁶⁵ One POW lost himself repeatedly in recollections of the past, and stated that “he [could not] go through life like a stone,” but he felt that he remained so uncertain about the future that perhaps it was better to remain frozen. While many expressed a striking fear of the past, such as a fear of the Gestapo, the POWs also expressed something new: “now it is another feeling of fear: you might not satisfy the screener, you might lose the chance of repatriation, you might shock somebody with a not too clever word.”⁶⁶

Some POWs expressed an uneasy relationship with repatriation, and others expressed a desire to stay, even while simultaneously expressing conflicted feelings towards their homeland. In *Soldaten*, Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer describe the “contradictory nature” of the POWs, where they in one sentiment express horror, remorse, fear, and happiness. Neitzel and Welzer argue that this contradictory nature reflects a desire to act as they think is expected of them; therefore, once the war was over, the POWs no longer knew what was expected of them.⁶⁷ Some cursed that they even had a decision to make at all. POW (46) wrote the names of all his schoolmates whom he knew had been repatriated and asked “why, just I, had to go to England in the last month of the war?”⁶⁸ However, for all their fear of Britain, those that decided to remain, expressed deep fears about what a return to Germany would mean. An unnamed POW wrote,

We are so often told that at first every boy shall work with his hands for reconstruction. Are we to be exploited again? There was once a regime that succeeded in winning over the youth by empty phrases and in making it docile. Unfortunately it seems as if in our time idealism often meant hunger.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid, May 1947: 40.

⁶⁶ Ibid, May 1947: 41.

⁶⁷ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*: 6.

⁶⁸ LMA/4288/D/04/028, May 1947: 40.

⁶⁹ Ibid, May 1947: 41.

Prisoner 14 wrote that even on “this island,” he has some kind of freedom, the “freedom of the mind,” which was more bearable than having to return to a world where he was restricted. Throughout the surveys from POWs, a common fear expressed was of the continued control exercised by either Britain or Germany over them. Both countries were viewed with varying degrees of suspicion, and a future in either country was plagued with uncertainty. In his survey, POW 18 expressed concern over when the day would come when the German POW could finally be an agent in his own space, assess his world, and make his own choices. POW 18 argued that a POW was not always weary, but instead each had a secret flame, with “a beautiful inner vitality.” He argued that until that day comes when a POW could take his fate in his own hands, “it is not child’s play to be thrown about between Heaven and Hell.”⁷⁰

Conclusion

In *German Migrants in Post-war Britain*, Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert note that as the cultural exchange and migratory networks between Britain and Germany grew in the postwar period, there was a softening of tensions between the two nations. Many factors influenced this change in attitude by the British, most principally the implementation of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) in 1948. The Marshall Plan created greater economic ties between Britain and Germany, while simultaneously strengthening political ties between the two nations.⁷¹ Underneath the larger political trends and in the context of the Cold War, “the suffering of the population in post-war

⁷⁰ Ibid: 42.

⁷¹ Judt, *Postwar*: 144. The Anglo-American occupation forces not only had serious concerns about lingering pro-Nazi sentiment, but also the state of affairs in postwar Germany. Officials worried that if Germans remained impoverished, with no prospect of improvement, they would return to Nazism, or potentially even Communism.

Germany and the positive behavior of German POWs in Britain” swayed the British population towards a renewing of relations.⁷² For German POWs, the postwar period was filled with uncertainty. The British government had begun to question their presence in the Isles, and British authorities, Anglo-Germans, Left politicians, and concerned citizens, seemed to have conflicting views over the role POWs should play in postwar British society. In the context of a powerful Labour Party from 1945-1951 and the influence of left-leaning figures like Noel-Baker, the German POW issue gained some national traction. However, throughout 1945 to 1950, the German pastors once again helped guide the POWs through the experience. As the pastors expanded their mission beyond reeducation and repatriation, they were able to expand their networks to connect other parts of the British and German populations.

The POWs represented not only an initial intrusion into the labor force by the British public, but also represented the intrusion of an enemy. However, Britain faced a moral reckoning through the lens of the German POWs: what moral obligation did Britain have to Germany in the postwar, Cold War world as reconstruction began. British morality took a backseat as American attempts to rebuild Western Europe ramped up. The United States desired inter-European cooperation to combat a rising Soviet Union, so British-German tensions had to be, at least on the surface, resolved.⁷³ But as the interactions between Germans and Britons became more pronounced, the relationship developed from hatred to eventual cooperation.⁷⁴ This warming of the relationship can best be described in

⁷² Weber-Newth and Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-War Britain*: 19.

⁷³ Judt, *Postwar*: 155-160.

⁷⁴ Ibid: 155-160.

the words of a German migrant interviewed about his experience in the late 1960s. He was asked if Britain could identify as a *Heimat*, or homeland, for the Germans:

No Britain is not a fatherland for me. But I feel a tremendous appreciation for Britain. England has many attractive traits. We have all grown into English culture a little bit, we have all...encountered many people, have breathed in the atmosphere of the country...the atmosphere is much better than it was in Germany: friendlier, more polite, calmer, more helpful...I feel a critical solidarity with England.⁷⁵

In the postwar years, German POWs faced a whole new world in which a future in either Britain or Germany was extremely uncertain. While the British government wanted to repatriate most of the POWs, German pastors instead worked with those who wanted to remain, and worked to bring more German migrants, and German Jewish refugees to Britain. Pastor mediation required the POWs to reflect on their loss of home, and awakened pastors to a deep issue under the surface of the POW experience: a sense of dislocation and isolation in the postwar world. During these critical postwar years in Britain, German pastors and members of British society began to try and return the humanity to the soldiers Nazism left behind, and try and find a place for them in British society.

⁷⁵ Marion Berghahn, *German-Jewish Refugees in England: The Ambiguities of Assimilation*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984: 174.

Conclusion

"A pastor should never complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Gemeinsames Leben*, 1939.

Walter Ulbricht, leading figure of the Communist Party of Germany and the East German head of State from September 12th 1960 to August 1st 1973, said of the formation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR): “Something new has happened: for the first time in German history our fatherland is guided by a plan that considers only the needs of the people, and aims at building prosperity and reconstructing of our fatherland.” However, for the West, the rise of the Soviet Union and the solidification of the division of Germany was not the future intended or desired. Instead, communist appeal was growing amongst not only Germany’s disillusioned youth in the late 1940s, but throughout East-Central Europe, and the postwar world seemed even more uncertain.¹ In the postwar, bipolar world, the German Protestants tried to form a united front against communism, and from 1945 to 1958, worked against the harsh treatment of refugees and denazification policies.² Fearing that collective guilt only strengthened communist appeals, the German churches, including German Catholics, sold themselves to the West as an “alternative way” against communism.³ The Allies’ belief in the success of an “alternative way” translated into support for “good Germans,” like those in the German Democratic Union, which would become a powerful force in postwar Germany.

However, eventually German Protestant leaders would lose favor with their Western Allies, because of the Protestants continued push for a unified Germany from 1945-1950. A division would leave over 80 percent of Protestant parishioners behind Soviet and East German lines, terrifying German Protestant pastors in both East and West

¹ David S. Mason, *Revolution in East-Central Europe: the Rise and Fall of Communism and the Cold War*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.

² Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 18.

³ Ibid: 19.

Germany.⁴ However, German Catholics, who did not speak out on division and rearmament, appeared to be more attractive allies for Britain and the United States. Because of this schism, German Protestants began to find themselves on the outs with their Western Allied backers, and that careful niche of influence that the German pastors worked so hard to create in Britain, began to disappear. The West needed an ally that supported the partition of Germany, and therefore, the British and Americans were far more comfortable with a supportive Catholic hierarchy, even though throughout most of the 1940s and 1950s, it would actively ignore its complicit Nazi past.⁵ Tossed away by their British allies in favor of Konrad Adenauer and the West German State, German Protestant pastors saw their political gains disappear.⁶ However, for men like Martin Niemöller, the anti-Nazi theologian, Lutheran, and the President of the World Council of Churches as of 1961, the mission to rebuild Europe required continued Protestant efforts. He believed that only through Protestant good works could communism be defeated, and Germany come to terms with its Nazi past.⁷ Only under the guidance of Protestant men like Niemöller, Jentsch, and Rieger, could East and West Germany be reintegrated, and move forward in the postwar world.

While their political relationship with the West may have lost some of its power, the German pastors' work with the POWs left a lasting impact on the climate of the communities in both Britain and Germany. Through the German POWs, the German pastors were able to maximize their impact on German Protestantism, postwar rebuilding efforts,

⁴ Ibid: 20.

⁵ Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust*, 94-139

⁶ Wyneken, *Religion and the Cold War*: 19.

⁷ Hans Karl Rupp, "Martin Niemöller," in *The World Encyclopedia of Peace*, edited by Linus Pauling and Ervin László, Volume 2, Oxford: Pergamon, 1986: 45-46.

and Western perceptions of Germany. They not only reunited families and assessed the state of the POW psyche, but also offered both Germans and Britons an opportunity for rebuilt linkages. What had once been a thriving connection between two historically associated nations had been brutally maimed by two vicious wars, and German pastors stepped into this arena in order to help reestablish the link between them. This link not only existed across religious channels, but also migratory channels, which would become critical in the massive ways of postwar movement.

At a turning point in European and international history, German pastors offer a window into larger discussions of migration, ethnicity, rebuilding, and global Christianity. These actions were undertaken under the umbrella of the end of the Second World War, and the onset of the Cold War. Both British authorities and German pastors recognized that these POWs presented them with an opportunity to impact a part of the German population that would rebuild Germany, and for German pastors, the opportunity to assist in influencing the transformation of the image of Germany in Britain and the world. By examining the German pastors as a window into the experience of captive German soldiers in Britain, much has come to light about the many roles of these men. Motivated by political and religious concerns, the German pastors shepherded a new flock of the German POWs in the hopes of restoring POW humanity, while also creating a place for themselves in larger conversations about the rebuilding of Germany and its Christian faith.

Had time allowed, this thesis would have gone into greater detail about the establishment of international and national church organizations such as the WCC and the BCC, and the impact of the German pastors upon those networks. Further research would

also have explored the migratory patterns of the 1950s and the role of German pastors and POWs in facilitating and influencing that process.

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