THE ALLIED OCCUPATION OF GERMANY

THE REFUGEE CRISIS, DENAZIFICATION AND THE PATH TO RECONSTRUCTION

FRANCIS GRAHAM-DIXON

BLOOMSBURY

Francis Graham-Dixon holds a DPhil in History from Sussex University and was Visiting Fellow at the Centre for British Studies, Humboldt University.

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Front cover: Detmold, North Rhine-Westphalia, circa 1946

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*Auswärtiges Amt* [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
ABCA	Army Bureau of Current Affairs
APW	Armistice and Post-War Committee
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BdV	*Bund der Heimatvertriebenen*
BMG	British Military Government
BZ	British Zone (of Occupation in West Germany)
BZR	*British Zone Review*
CAB	Cabinet Papers
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge
CCG (BE)	Control Commission of Germany (British Element)
CDU	*Christlich-Demokratische Union* [Christian Democratic Union]
COGA	Control Office for Germany and Austria
CSU	*Christlich-Soziale Union* [Christian Social Union]
DBH	*Deutsche Bewegung Helgoland*
DHG	*Deutsche Hilfsgemeinschaft*
DKP	*Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* [German Communist Party]
DMG	Deputy Military Governor
DP	*Deutsche Partei* [German Party]
DPs	Displaced Persons
DRC	Deputy Regional Commissioner
EAC	European Advisory Commission
EKD	*Evangelische Kirche*

ELAB	*Evangelisches Landeskirchenarchiv in Berlin*
EZAB	*Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin*
FAZ	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
FDP	*Freie Demokratische Partei* [Free Democratic Party]
FES	*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, Bonn
FO	Foreign Office
FORD	Foreign Office Research Department
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FRPS	Foreign Research and Press Service
FRS	Friends Relief Service
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the US
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GER	German Educational Reconstruction, Institute of Education, London
HC	House of Commons
HL	House of Lords
IA & C	Internal Affairs and Communications Division
ICTGP	Interdepartmental Committee on the Transfer of German Populations
IMT	International Military Tribunal
IRO	International Refugee Organisation
IWM	Imperial War Museum
KMP	Kingsley Martin Papers
KPD	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* [Communist Party of Germany]
KRO	*Kreis* Resident Officer
LAM	Lambeth Palace Library
LAS	*Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein*, Schleswig
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, London
L/K	*Landkreis*
M-O	Mass-Observation, University of Sussex
MRCUW	Modern Records Centre, Warwick
MUA	*Ministerium für Umsiedlung und Aufbau*
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia

NSDAP	National Socialist Workers Party of Germany
OMGUS	Office of Military Government for Germany, United States
ORC	Overseas Reconstruction Committee
PORO	Public Opinion Research Office
PORS	Public Opinion Research Service
POW	Prisoner of War
PDB	*Pressedokumentation des Deutschen Bundestags*
PUS	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
RAF	Royal Air Force
RC	Regional Commissioner
RGO	Regional Governmental Office
RRC	Refugee Resettlement Committee
SEN	Save Europe Now
SH	Schleswig-Holstein
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SHVZ	*Schleswig-Holsteinische Volks-Zeitung*
S/K	*Stadtkreis*
SPD	*Sozial Demokratische Partei* [Social Democratic Party of Germany]
StaK	*Stadtarchiv*, Kiel
SSW	*Südschleswigscher Wählerverband* [South Schleswig Voters' League]
TNA	The National Archives
TVA	*Torpedoversuchsanstalt* (torpedo testing station)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
WAC	BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham
WCC	World Council of Churches
WO	War Office
ZAC	Zonal Advisory Committee
ZR	*Zentrale Rechtsschutzstelle*

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Germany, 1945–1949', *German History*, 28, 2, (2010), 193–213. I would like to thank Oxford University Press for permission to republish material from this in these chapters.

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For Alex, Freddie, Charlie and Celia, family
who mean everything to me.

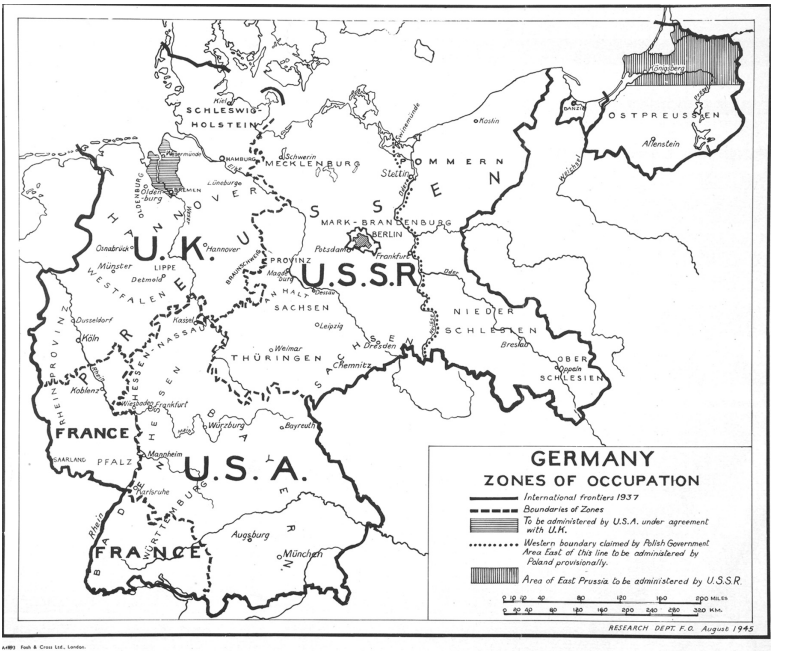

Figure 1. Germany, Zones of Occupation, August 1945.
Courtesy of TNA UK, MPI/1/694.

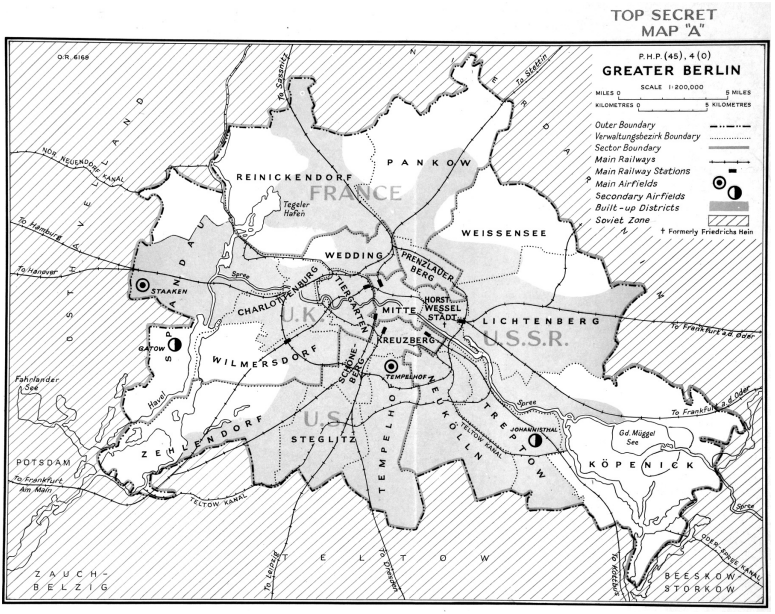

Figure 2. Greater Berlin, Zones of Occupation, 1945.
Courtesy of TNA UK, FO 371/50831.

INTRODUCTION

In 1945 Germany's infrastructure was devastated, and its people defeated, destitute and demoralised as the victorious Allies set out to reconstruct a civilised society and reintegrate it into the Western family of nations. This book asks how Britain integrated its liberal values as an occupying power in post-Nazi Germany. Why did a refugee problem in Germany escalate into a humanitarian catastrophe? How could Britain reconcile wartime bombing and post-war demilitarisation with comprehensive and coherent plans for reconstruction? How far did the punishment of war crimes chime with a new mood for reconciliation? This story takes up these and other critical questions by considering the paradoxical legacy of ten years of British rule and analysing its wider impact on Germany's rehabilitation as a democratic nation.

Despite wartime planning for the aftermath of the Second World War, millions of refugees and expellees poured into the Western zones of Allied-occupied Germany from the former eastern European territories. However, Britain's decision to delegate refugee matters to the Germans while claiming moral leadership exposed a gulf between policy and its consequences for German civilians. Almost 70 years after German populations fled the advancing Soviet army, European Union enlargement and rapidly increasing global migration highlight persistent and as yet unresolved problems concerning future national policy on the status of political refugees, economic and forced migrants, and their access to equal rights of citizenship.

The methodology used in this book will be twofold – comparing the relevant British and Military Governments' policies and actions, and assessing their combined impact on German refugees, expellees and civilian populations from the former eastern and central European territories. In the final chapter, the story shifts its previous focus from British policy and its impact on the 1945–9 refugee and expellee crisis, and addresses

how the wider consequences of the previous five years left an indelible imprint on the 1949–55 phase of Germany's occupation. The aim is to shed light on how continuities in British policy impacted on the new German Federal Republic. Moreover, underpinning this book's central argument is that narratives of British rule over ten years can be explained as a form of militant liberalism, a controlling impulse that underscored key policies in its mission to export democracy to Germany. As the Cold War intensified, Britain sought to recast the uneasy relationship between former enemies into a prospective partnership within a new Western European order. However, the slow return to West German sovereignty failed to erase unresolved grievances over some contentious policies such as industrial dismantling, with its adverse impact on economic recovery, or the prolonged incarceration of German war criminals and delays in implementation of sentence reviews. From 1950 the rationale of these and other policies, which are explored in the earlier chapters, appeared not only to German but to some British observers too both to contradict and obstruct the new British High Commissioner's stated aim to eliminate all cause of Anglo-German friction.

Building on recent research on migration and refugee issues relating to early post-war Germany, and connecting this study to a broader reading of the 1949–55 period of British rule, this analysis of the occupation differs from others in the field by offering a new interpretative pathway into a topic that hitherto has been examined usually from a singular national perspective. This is the first study of the topic comparatively to link British policy and the theories behind it with its reception by Germany and how this impacted on policy, using a wide range of British and German archival sources.[1] These shed new light on the fundamental question proposed in this book – was it possible to reconcile British liberal democratic values as an occupying power, and if so, how?

It will be shown that since the more traditional historiography of the refugee crisis has tended to concentrate on 1945–50, crucially important links between events in 1943, such as the bombing of Hamburg, that impacted directly on the later problems for evacuees, refugees and the British, largely have been missed by historians. Also sidelined in the existing literature are the roles of the German press in their sustained highlighting of the refugee problem and British reactions to this, and how the functions of the British and German churches inadvertently undermined what the British saw clearly as legitimating their moral mandate as occupiers.

Much of the formative impetus behind British occupation policy lay in a deeply held conviction that Germany needed to be 'civilised', but any claims Britain might advance over its appropriateness to be regarded as the standard-bearer for such a task were demonstrably contradicted by earlier wartime decisions taken by the Allies over agreeing future territorial borders and the homogenisation of ethnicity within those borders. A defeated Germany paid a heavy price in such considerations, for these policies effectively cut the ground beneath millions of German refugee and expellee civilians who lost their homes, their livelihoods, their individual rights and, in many cases, their lives.[2] This study builds on this research by offering a closer reading of Britain's particular role in the early experience of expellees and refugees in one region particularly affected – Schleswig-Holstein. It will be shown that British government responses to the unfolding expellee and refugee crisis were marginalised by its wider occupation policy aims towards Germany and a broader interest in ensuring the future security of Europe. How significant a role did British attitudes and policy play in contributing towards what remains the greatest single forced population shift in European history?[3] It has been estimated that the expulsions and the flight of refugees from the advancing Soviet armies starting during the war's final months and, continuing into the 1950s, accounted for the removal of up to 15 million Germans from their former homelands in eastern and central Europe. It is now generally agreed by historians that of these, some 12.5 million German refugees and expellees found sanctuary in areas west of their previous native lands, and that approximately 8 million settled in what later became the Federal Republic of Germany, as is explained with a chronology of the refugee/expellee problem that opens the case-study in Chapter 4.[4]

The main differences offered by this approach to existing studies in the field lie in an analysis of the difficulties and contradictions encountered by a British policy that sought to justify its claim of exporting social liberal and democratic values as part of what many might now term as an 'ethical' foreign policy mission – a recurring theme discussed in the book. As is repeatedly shown in contemporary public figures' public pronouncements, archival documents, the secondary literature of the Second World War and the early years of occupation, Britain's real policy, as Lord Palmerston observed in an earlier age, continued to be 'the champion of justice and right'. He maintained that as long as England kept herself in the right, and as long as 'she wishes to permit no injustice', she would never find herself

isolated in the world. His dictum was recalled during a key wartime British parliamentary debate on Poland's post-war future. Conservative MP Victor Raikes went on to say that this principle had continued to be 'the foundation of our greatness as a nation, that principle has given us the moral leadership of Europe'.[5] Nevertheless, three years later, Harold Macmillan, recalling Churchill's remark in 1945, reminded those responsible for British occupation policy, 'it is not so much what we say during a war: it is what we do after the war that matters.'[6] He may have been reminded too of Ernest Bevin's comment in 1947 that he saw Germany as 'still the greatest danger in Europe', a potent admixture of a Nazi doctrine 'so deep in Germans' in combination with 'national characteristics'.[7]

As will be shown, Britain's attitude as an Allied occupier of defeated Germany was largely informed by a more cautious and pragmatic policy than the rhetorical confidence in its sense of moral righteousness might suggest. As a victorious power, those politicians and advisers at various stages in positions to influence Britain's approach to its occupation of Germany[8] barely paused to consider the inherent contradictions underlying Britain's stated mission; namely, to dismantle one culture of authoritarian militarism only to impose its own bespoke brand of indirect rule that was on occasion cast in a similar mould. As discussed in Chapter 2, despite Churchill's general election landslide defeat by Attlee, Labour's foreign policy from 1945 emphasised a willingness to continue with much of the tough and uncompromising post-war policy towards Germany planned for and set in motion during the preceding conflict. This was unsurprising, for the attitudes within the Foreign Office [hereinafter FO] covered 'a very broad and ideological spectrum'.[9] Its instincts were driven by a determination to ensure that Germany could never again threaten Britain militarily, as Germany had waged a war of aggression, murdering and disenfranchising many of its own people as well as millions of others. According to this argument, from many a British perspective, those Germans who had survived were guilty by association, forfeiting the right to be treated by the same standards the British would demand for themselves. This becomes evident in aspects of the wartime area bombing policy, which of itself contributed greatly to the death and displacement of millions of civilians, as is explained in Chapter 2, and directly to the many thousands of evacuees who found themselves in Schleswig-Holstein [hereinafter SH], discussed in Chapter 4. Moreover, as British eyewitness accounts of concentration camp atrocities emerged in May 1945, it was in many ways understandable that public opinion might well harden in

the shorter term. In one response typical of many British popular reactions towards Germany, the Conservative MP Mavis Tate returned from Buchenwald convinced that: 'The Hun ambition may be foiled, but the Hun spirit still lives.' She continued:

> There is undoubtedly a deep streak of evil and sadism in the German race, such as one ought not to expect to find in a people who for generations have paid lip service to Western culture and civilisation . . . Only with extreme firmness will we eliminate the beast from the German heart.[10]

This book will show through the case-study in Chapters 4 and 5 that the vast majority of the German refugees who managed to survive the war, expulsion and flight, and later were able to build a new life in the British Zone, did so despite British policy and not because of it. Most were left to fend for themselves by a British policy that had devolved responsibility for refugee matters to the Germans by July 1947.[11] The refugee crisis and continuing problems throughout the purview of this book, it will be argued, were casualties of earlier political decisions informed too, as Matthew Frank has shown, by a widespread belief in the principle of population transfers, despite major doubts about its feasibility in practice.[12] Britain's major responsibility had been to win the war, and so it felt the moral right had been earned to delimit its own responsibilities in making the peace. The welfare of German refugees was not one of these tasks. The Control Commission of Germany (British Element) [hereinafter CCG] and British Military Government [hereinafter BMG], the chosen instruments for centralised rule in Germany, effectively devolved the refugee problem still further from Whitehall, but as the crisis grew, this policy rebounded on them.

There were, to be sure, several outspoken and dissenting voices in Britain, alarmed by facets of its policy towards Germany during wartime and after May 1945, who persistently advocated a principled policy of magnanimity, reconciliation and even-handedness towards Germany on moral, religious and humanitarian grounds. Opposition to the questionable proportionality of bombing policy, the prolongation of war crimes trials and the marginalisation of German civilians ably demonstrated, on one level, that the traditions of British fair play were still very much alive. However, while regular interventions and appeals by leading public figures in Parliament, the press and at public meetings on moral, religious or

humanitarian grounds, attempted – sometimes successfully – to prick the consciences of policy-makers, their efforts, critically, were not ultimately matched by any substantive change in policy towards German refugees and expellees. The intercessions by the British churches and the humanitarian agencies on their behalf were therefore only marginally successful, as is shown in Chapter 3.[13]

As the wartime 'strategic bombing offensive' gathered momentum, several high-profile critics of Britain's increasingly punitive stance towards Germany persistently questioned the Allies' bombing policy and British policy in particular. Many of the appeals for a policy of greater proportionality and moderation came from leading figures in the Church of England, such as Bishop Bell of Chichester, and the Quaker pacifist Corder Catchpool. Bell's speeches invoking values of humility and tolerance linked with the deeply held religious beliefs of Victor Gollancz, who became synonymous with the post-1945 extra-parliamentary campaign arguing for a greater humanitarian-inspired response towards Germany. Writers and public intellectuals such as Vera Brittain,[14] George Orwell and George Bernard Shaw, and parliamentarians such as the Marquess of Salisbury and Richard Stokes,[15] articulated their abhorrence towards what they perceived as British indiscriminate air attacks, and were roundly patronised or castigated by government ministers, such as Sir Archibald Sinclair, for holding such opinions.[16] Their views were certainly seen as an embarrassment to the government, who nevertheless sought to present their unwelcome interventions as hindering the war effort or as 'anti-British'.

The Catholic peer Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent, in his prequel to the government's reply by Lord Cranborne to the Bishop of Chichester's appeal was unambiguous: 'I am an out-and-out bomber, and I approve of the bombing action the Government have taken against Germany, and I hope that there may be more to come'[17] (see Fig. 3). Such statements were redolent of a more dominant opinion that further marginalised the opponents of the area bombing policy, for the moral arguments in 1944 and earlier did not revolve around whether area bombing should be regarded as 'taboo' but on questions of necessity or proportionality.[18] In one of a series of rapid and robust exchanges from November 1944 to January 1945 between Bomber Command and the Air Ministry, who were 'being pressured by outsiders [the government] not to lose any opportunities to attack priority targets' – in this case Germany's oil supplies – the disputes centred around how the war's end could be most

Figure 3. Lord Cranborne, Secretary of State for the Colonies, inspecting Cypriot muleteers who served for some months in England after their evacuation from France.
Courtesy of TNA UK, CO 323/1740/18.

efficiently expedited. Sir Arthur Harris wrote: 'In Bomber Command we have always worked on the principle that bombing anything in Germany is better than bombing nothing.'[19] As we see in Chapter 7, this principle continued to be applied with the appropriation of Heligoland as a British and American bombing range after 1947. The expropriation of the islanders' homes, or to put it plainly, their summary expulsion, facilitated the task.

Criticisms by those who saw British actions as evidence of a revanchist tendency towards Germany did not end once victory had been assured. Amidst the devastation of 1945 Germany, many of the same voices of public conscience, such as Bell, Gollancz, Stokes[20] and Kingsley Martin, perceived a moral and spiritual vacuum that had seeped from the British wartime coalition into the Attlee government. They continually reminded those now charged in peacetime with executing policy towards Germany that they shared a collective duty in treating Germany justly. Their target for opprobrium, formerly the bombing of innocent civilians, now moved, logically, to highlight and then pinpoint the harsh realities faced by the German refugee, expellee and indigenous populations. Potsdam's

declaration that the 'transfer' and 'resettlement' should be carried out in 'a humane and orderly manner' was frequently invoked as an appeal to Britain's sense of fair play as well as a reminder of its continuing responsibilities.[21] The more refugees' and expellees' living conditions deteriorated in the British Zone, the more opponents of the 'transfer' policy reacted to the gap between what Potsdam had offered and the reality now unfolding, thus further politicising the issue, as the case-study makes clear.

Their disdain for particular occupation policies was fuelled by perceptions of a Britain overly consumed by greed and self-interest, its hard-line approach to retributive justice and a lack of moral courage exacerbated by its abandonment of a Christian conscience, a theme discussed in Chapter 2. Many advocated a policy that would offer practical help to Germany in its efforts to recover from military defeat and to re-establish itself in the international community, rather than one that held up its own model of Western civilised values as a template for Germany whilst imposing a peace that treated it as a pariah people. Germany's official exclusion from the United Nations [hereinafter UN] Charter as an ex-enemy state was but one example of this contradiction. In the view of many British politicians and the British electorate, the more pressing concern was a lack of sufficient economic means to justify the costs of occupation to British taxpayers, whilst having to provide materially for the vanquished, including the refugees, without the financial means to support Britain, let alone their zone in Germany. Of equal importance to the new British government was its determination to minimise the pace of a German economic revival after 1945. This was as much a matter of Britain trying to shore up its own severely weakened economic power to help maintain its status as one of the major world powers, whilst affording the opportunity to steal a march, albeit temporarily, over a commercial rival, as is examined in Chapters 3 and 5 in the sections on 'Economic constraints' and 'A double mind: dismantling and refugee unemployment'. The policy continuities emerge in Chapter 7.

The roots of what became the policy towards German expellees and refugees could be traced back to earlier British responses to Germany that were characterised notably by more wide-ranging and historically defensive attitudes towards her expanding industrial and military power. These perceptions manifested in latent anxieties and certain fault-lines in British–German relations shaped by the years leading up to and including the First World War, and if 1918 marked their watershed, the Treaty of Versailles drew fresh battle lines that entrenched much of the negative

tone of suspicion that coloured the relationship during the inter-war years whilst concealing deep-rooted British fears about their ability to compete with a European neighbour and economic rival. In Britain's eyes, her stand in defeating Nazism 20 years after Versailles represented a victory against tyranny, authoritarianism and militarism – a triumph of good over evil. The result of two world wars provided the moral mandate for the Allies to impose terms of 'unconditional surrender', a 'doctrine' put forward by Roosevelt at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943,[22] one that had profound implications for how Germany and its civilian population were to be treated following military defeat.

The continuing justification for adopting a high moral tone with Germany was formally prolonged by an extended Nuremberg Trial and the trials that followed. Despite securing its reputation as a legal milestone in the evolving debate about the accountability of states and individuals for waging 'wars of aggression', war crimes, 'crimes against humanity' and 'crimes against peace', Nuremberg bore witness to a somewhat self-aggrandising display of victors' justice, one that set the benchmark for further military trials as part of the denazification purges. Again, startling contradictions emerge in the contrast between Britain and its determination to pursue the more 'minor' war criminals, and its pragmatic policy of denazification, where for all practical purposes, 'purging and rehabilitation were fused into one and the same process'.[23] Its effect was to place former Nazis in key German administrative posts. This theme is explored in Chapter 2, and again in Chapter 7 where we see that the much criticised policy of continued incarceration of many so-called war criminals did not end until 1957, and was shown to be largely self-defeating. It should be mentioned at the outset that this book does not set out to analyse the denazification policy, well documented by others, but rather to address its influence on other areas of British policy-making.

As we shall see, there are several explanations for the vast scale of the early post-war German refugee and expellee crisis. These open up the possibility for revised analysis and interpretation. Arguably the most important explanation was the self-limiting scope of British refugee policy. The perfunctory handling of this may have been due to the intensive diplomatic discussions of more pressing concerns bearing on diplomats before the Teheran Conference. Notably, these included negotiations that went through 15 drafts with America and the Russians over the 'Military Aspects of Any Post-War Security Organization', and the shape of post-war Europe after Germany's defeat.[24] Discussions took place

at Dumbarton Oaks to discuss the framework of discussions for such a 'new world organisation'[25] and the role of the UN and territorial compensation for Russia and Poland for land annexed by Germany.

This problematic question of territorial 'reparations' had loomed large, particularly in Anglo-Soviet relations, since Eden's visit to Moscow during December 1941 when Stalin repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, pressed Eden to accede to Soviet demands to secure its 1941 north-western borders. Amongst Stalin's proposals was that East Prussia should be transferred to Poland and German territory to the north of the River Niemen be transferred to the USSR's Lithuanian republic. Eden made it clear to Stalin that Britain had been asked by the Americans not to agree to any altered boundaries in Europe and that 'it was premature to attempt a post-war territorial settlement in relation to clause (ii) of the [Atlantic] Charter which laid down that territorial changes should accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned'. This tied in with Stalin's statement of 6 November that 'we cannot have such war aims as the seizure of foreign territory'.[26] Nevertheless, the thorny issue of borders was now firmly established in Allied minds and was one that would eventually have to be settled definitively. As the section in Chapter 5 on refugee organisations shows, the expellees cited the Charter's clause concerning the freely expressed wishes as ample justification for being allowed to return to their former homelands. With reference to Poland's frontiers, Eden reassured Stalin that Britain would always 'be glad to do anything we can to help in reaching an agreement. We want to agree to the frontiers before the Peace Conference, but we have not yet reached that point.'[27] He was well aware of Stalin's reminders of how the Russians were bearing the brunt of heavy military and civilian losses in the common cause of defeating Nazism, and so, whilst not initially capitulating to Stalin's demands, sought time to consult his government and the Americans. It was the British in February 1942 whose first initiatives paved the way for their June 1942 proposals for territorial changes. In July, the War Cabinet declared that the Munich Agreement was void, and voted for the population transfers where it seemed desirable.[28] A consequence of this decision, for example, meant that Danzig and Upper Silesia could be given to Poland. This was part of a policy to 'homogenise ethnicity in Poland and Czechoslovakia' that targeted minorities and systematically and effectively 'radicalised the expulsions policy'[29] that would have such a direct impact on the refugee catastrophe towards the end of the war and beyond. Eden's 28 January 1942 memorandum to the War Cabinet

on post-war collaboration with the Soviet Union came down firmly in favour of agreeing to accommodate the Russian proposals for fear it might later turn to Germany. Churchill now told Roosevelt that owing to the seriousness of the war situation, the Charter 'ought not to be construed so as to deny to Russia the frontiers which she occupied when Germany attacked her'.[30] Others have seen the population exchanges as a peace move to forestall wars, moves that differed according to the 'designs of systems' managers'.[31] These early negotiations prefigured the first of the 'Big Three' summits at Teheran in 1943 where the post-war territorial alterations were discussed and were effectively rubber-stamped at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945, although not finally recognised by the West until the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.[32] These collectively played a major part in determining the fate of the refugees, and their impact on 'refugee policy' is analysed in Chapter 2.

The lip service paid to refugee questions, and the resulting slow progress in achieving international consensus on minority and human rights that might have provided a better outcome for their interests, reached their nadir by the late 1940s. As is shown in Chapter 6, it was only after 1949 that refugees and expellees gradually began to enjoy a higher priority for positive action among the so-called civilised nations, a legacy by default of the Western Allies' policy towards Germany. The delays were due in part to the slow process of post-war reconstruction, and of misplaced British fears over the possible resurgence of a nationalist ideology that once more might foment German aggression and therefore pose a threat to world peace. Just as significant in diverting Allied attention from addressing the human costs to war's victims were the Western Allies' controlled and gradual rehabilitation of Germany into the new European family of nations, currency reform in the Western zones signalling Germany's reintegration into plans for Western European recovery,[33] and its division as a result of the Cold War.

Notwithstanding this, Germany had been collectively called to account. As we see in the Schleswig-Holstein case-study, the region absorbing the highest concentration of refugees and expellees of all the German states in the Western zones in relation to its indigenous population, many refugee civilians felt completely disorientated. They wanted to forget the horrors of the past, to rebuild their lives and return to the places from which they had been forced to flee. A German identification with the landscape and nature became a metaphor for many expellees' hopes of survival; the 'abjectness of defeat and destruction . . . led them to

seek solace, and one of the places where they found it was in nature – the idealized natural world of the local *Heimat*.'[34] Or as Frank Biess put it: '*Heimat* stood for the persistence of seemingly trans-historical values and customs that had remained untainted by the catastrophes of the twentieth century.'[35] The reality, in contrast, was large numbers of refugee, expellee and evacuee survivors forced in these early years into protracted struggles for survival with minimal supplies of food and shelter, and with little hope of a return 'home'. Accommodation was often requisitioned to Military Government and Control Commission staff whose own needs were commonly prioritised. A sometimes heavy-handed style of occupation rule helped perpetuate a widespread sense of total capitulation, feeding into a nascent and peculiarly German sense of guilt and victimhood that official British policy did little to discourage. As has been well documented, refugee associations were banned,[36] part of a policy of pragmatic containment that set a benchmark for a more zealous style of military rule that further problematised refugees' chances of integrating and assimilating into a new and alien environment. Many had lost almost everything, including close family and their home, all integral to their sense of identity.

Although the organisation for refugee matters was eventually 'handed over' by Britain to the German administration, it was a poisoned chalice, stemming from the earlier crucial phase of occupation that had witnessed a mounting humanitarian catastrophe managed by an improvised, piecemeal approach – as will become clear. This created a recipe for exacerbating larger social problems for refugees and expellees. It is the contention of this book that the delegation of the 'refugee problem' to the Germans removed the gloss from some of Britain's rightly lauded achievements in the early phase of their reconstruction programme, the rebuilding of the railway network being one noteworthy example. Thus, the low political prioritisation of the entire German refugee and expellee question undermined Britain's credentials as a civilising, democratising and liberating power.

CHAPTER 1

OCCUPATION POLICY AND GERMAN REFUGEES: THE CASE FOR REVISION

The literature on refugees and expellees has tried either to provide a digestible overview of an area of scholarship that is demandingly complex by its very nature, or has sought to address certain very specific aspects – for example, their expulsion, flight, arrival, integration and assimilation. Neither of these two distinct approaches places the entire topic in the wider Anglo-German comparative framework needed to understand these extraordinary events. Likewise, much of the British and German historiography on the British occupation has tended to examine specific aspects of British foreign and occupation policy – for instance, denazification, education, industrial dismantling, reparations, economic reconstruction and the rebirth and rehabilitation of the political parties – without paying sustained attention to, or indeed drawing wider links with, the problematic role of the refugee question in such surveys. As one German-based British official aptly summarised the daunting challenge, 'the so-called "refugee" problem touches every aspect of Military Government'.[1] Such historical approaches, while undeniably valuable, tend to compartmentalise these various major contributory aspects of Germany's post-war reconstruction at the expense of analyses that might show the importance of seeing the elements as part of an interrelated whole. A unique feature of this book is that it aims to redress the imbalance in the historiography by synthesising the study of the refugee and expellee problem within this broader comparative analytical framework. It is perhaps in recognition

of the challenges in reconstructing the complexities of this period that much of the groundbreaking German scholarship of the last 20 years or so has looked at regional and locally based studies of refugee integration and assimilation in Germany after 1945, encompassing a broader purview of the refugee problem by focusing on a single town or area. It is thus difficult to offer new interpretations without presenting this wider focus that elucidates the interplay between significant political, diplomatic, economic and socio-cultural factors that impinged upon and exacerbated the refugee and expellee crisis.

For this reason, this study examines the occupation in the context of wider British policy, but in Chapters 4 and 5 focuses on one key geographical region within the British Zone – Schleswig-Holstein (SH) – to illustrate how this policy functioned in practice from both German and British perspectives. Amongst the many reasons for choosing this region is that, of all the Western zones, it absorbed the greatest concentration of refugees and expellees as a percentage of its indigenous population. The following sections in this chapter address a wide-ranging historiography, and have been divided so as to reflect the book's subsequent structure. However, for ease of reference, the literature specific to refugees and expellees has been integrated within the SH case-study and its introduction.

As suggested above, the British and American historiography on ethnic German refugees and expellees has suffered by comparison with other aspects of policy more commonly discussed in assessments of British occupation policy. This is understandable in the American case, where historians have preferred to look at aspects of US or overall Allied occupation policy. Consequently, the magnitude of the refugee problem has been insufficiently integrated within this literature,[2] often reduced to no more than a general paragraph in most studies, as is shown later in this chapter. German historians have dealt with the topic more systematically, but in their generally more exhaustive studies often concentrate on a single town or location within a particular zone of occupation. Both the German and British historiography on British Military Government and the Control Commission have looked at an entire province or region (*Land*), but have hitherto excluded discussion of many of the wider moral issues about the implications for ethnic German civilians of wider wartime policy towards Germany that shaped ideas about its later occupation. Instead, attention has focused disproportionately on political debates, decisions and consequences behind the 'population transfers', or focused on milestone events such as the conferences in 1941 at Moscow, and later at Teheran, Yalta

and Potsdam, without analysing the broader questions of the victors' moral mandate as role models in shaping the post-war settlement. In this sense, the refugee question becomes of central importance to the arguments put forward here. This book also contends that extrapolating the complexity of the crisis requires this broader analytical framework, by placing the refugees and foreign policy within the contexts of British attitudes towards Germany, notions of retributive justice with regard to wartime bombing policy and the Nuremberg Trials, international debates on human rights, the efficacy of the British churches' and humanitarian organisations' interventions, and Britain's adverse economic situation. The case-study is situated within these discussions.

Britain's 'moral leadership'

Much of the more recent extensive secondary literature on British foreign policy has reached a broadly consensual position insofar as most historians have rightly argued that Britain's approach towards a defeated Germany was largely informed by pragmatism.[3] Their conclusions are supported by several edited survey collections of foreign policy studies, whose omissions of any chapters concerning the British occupation suggest the greater relative importance attached by policy-makers to other geopolitical priorities, for example, reviving the wartime Anglo-American alliance as a bulwark against anticipated Soviet hegemony,[4] or maintaining British superpower status by developing the British Empire's global network as an alternative power bloc.[5] Other historians have emphasised the primacy of Britain's relationship with the Soviet Union to help evaluate the motivations of Labour's foreign policy.[6] One argues that Labour's 'entanglement' in the Cold War began with the Foreign Office's decision during the Second World War to secure Britain's role as one of three Great Powers, and to sustain Britain's 'world-wide mission'. Bevin regarded Britain's world role as beyond question and writes to the Cabinet of the Soviet 'Threat to Western Civilisation'.[7] Others see 1945–50 with Britain no longer a superpower but still a 'Great Power of the first rank'.[8] Most historians concur that the overriding constraint on Britain's entire post-war foreign policy was the relative decline of its own economic base. There is another view that limitations in the scope of foreign policy were domestically driven. This foregrounds a critique of how hopes were dashed on the Labour Party Left for a more socialist approach to foreign policy, seen here as Britain's missed opportunity.[9] More recently, it was argued that

Labour's approach tried, not always successfully, to elide its democratic principles with universal moral norms. This assessment concludes that Labour's 'missionary zeal to reform and reshape the world in its likeness, [was] sometimes at odds with its commitment to working through international institutions'.[10]

To develop a fuller picture of occupation policy, it is necessary to examine published memoirs and diaries to glean the first revealing insights into Cabinet and Foreign Office thinking concerning Germany during wartime when occupation policy was first formulated. Despite interesting accounts by diplomats, framing part of Chapter 2's discussion of Britain's 'civilising mission',[11] these alone do not offer a full picture. Private papers of British officials and advisers closer to the practical realities of life in occupied Germany lend these perspectives added weight and significance, particularly as they witnessed the formulation of key policy decisions in London or by CCG in Berlin. Much of the evidence here, therefore, is drawn from archival papers and documents from post-war government ministers or key advisers on Germany such as Austen Albu, John Hynd and Lord Strang,[12] and Frederick Lindemann (Lord Cherwell), Churchill's key wartime scientific adviser on bombing policy[13] and other Germany policy matters. These are supplemented by War Cabinet minutes and the cabinet secretaries' notebooks, the latter only released by the National Archives in 2006–7, and papers of officials such as Sir Maurice Dean, an expert on RAF history who served in the Control Office for Germany and Austria [hereinafter COGA], and was familiar with arguments adopted by such 'official' historians as Frankland and Webster, Woodward, Harris and later by Martin Middlebrook. These give sharper focus to FO documents and other official publications on Germany's treatment after its capitulation.

Whilst it is true that America, Russia and France each held their very distinctive views about how Germany should be treated after victory was assured, Britain's particular stance made as strong, and arguably a more pronounced impact in influencing the course of policies that would determine the future of German refugees and expellees. This book shows that within certain political and diplomatic circles, prosecution of the war entrenched certain rooted negative British attitudes towards Germany whilst further radicalising more preconceived anti-German views of the Vansittartist sympathisers,[14] well before the final decisions were taken between 1942 and 1945 over what to do with a defeated Germany. In its wartime propaganda, the American government made clear distinctions

after 1945 between 'Nazis' and 'Germans', lending itself to differentiating between 'guilty' Nazi leaders and 'innocent' German civilians, or as described recently, 'even at the height of the war, American views of Nazi Germany never coalesced into a well-focused, negative image of the enemy.'[15] Consequently, America was the one power to prioritise an expeditious withdrawal of troops 'with as little political involvement in German affairs as possible'.[16] Richard Merritt's study claims the Germans realised early that if they had to submit to a foreign military power, '[Germany] could do worse than have the United States as its occupier'. One reason given was the USA's early abandonment of 'bureaucratic pettifoggery'. As we shall see, this contrasted with Britain's leviathan bureaucracy. He suggests Germans increasingly saw the USA as the most sympathetic of the occupiers to German concerns, particularly when contrasted with 'vindictive France and the unspeakable Soviet Union'.[17] The uniqueness of the British case can also be shown by outlining how the other powers tackled the refugee and expellee question. Britain, more interventionist in German affairs and committed to a lengthy occupation but without the means to finance this, was forced into compromise, as it was not in a position to adopt policies that in reality might have secured better outcomes. Primarily, Britain's economic dependence on the USA made it difficult for the British to persuade America – which was safeguarding its own interests – to accept a redistribution of further numbers of expellees, as Chapter 5 shows. France, in trying to compensate for its diminished world status in 1945, preached the virtues of its own civilising mission,[18] its Germany policy characterised by de Gaulle's comment that after three invasions in one lifetime, 'we never wish to see the *Reich* again.' Britain hoped that a French occupation zone, proposed by Churchill at Yalta, might reduce its own responsibilities, but the Governor of the French Zone, the Gaullist General Robert Koenig,[19] was intent on maintaining its very low refugee and expellee population, despite British pleas for a more equitable distribution, as Chapter 5 also explains. The Soviets, reacting to their own high numbers of refugees and expellees, had to plan for their long-term integration through an active social policy, the redistribution of accommodation and land reform. Redistribution aimed to pass on property from indigenous Germans to refugees,[20] very different to Britain's approach, as Chapter 4's section on the housing crisis shows.

Adolf Birke drew a distinction between British occupation policy success, duly acknowledged in reviving German traditions of self-government and parliamentarism, with continuing British reservations, distrust

and occasional enmity towards the Germans as people. In his view, the catastrophes of the twentieth century, in British eyes, were closely linked to the idea of German exceptionalism (*Sonderweg*), a deviation from the ideals of Western democratic principles that fuelled deep British resentments over supporting a former enemy.[21] This theme is echoed in reverse by William Wallace who showed how Britain's adherence to the notion of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism exerted great strains on foreign policy, and that earlier rivalries between Britain and Germany were to overshadow their later successful partnerships.[22] Anthony Nicholls took this a stage further, showing how an apparently harmonious relationship at the turn of the twenty-first century has obscured the difficulties, suggesting the need for a more revisionist view of the so-called 'exemplary' regime of military occupation,[23] a consensus that is shown in many of the earlier 'official' accounts by ex-government officials of the day.[24] The Federal Republic was born out of defeat, and at the first *Bundestag* elections, all political parties in Germany were very critical of the British occupation authorities, as the Schleswig-Holstein case shows. For example, the chronic coal shortages and food crises, discussed in Chapter 4, were increasingly blamed on the British. This is hardly surprising, as Britain – Germany's longest-serving enemy from 1939 to 1945 – had, with their allies, played a major and decisive role in devastating through bombing the zone they subsequently administered, and the consequences of this left enduring scars for the early post-war generation of civilians and refugees. Regarding residual negative attitudes towards Germany, some have concluded that as anniversaries pass, certain stereotypes are reinforced,[25] many rooted in attitudes to the experience of war and British reactions to victory in 1945. Tony Kushner has suggested that modern anti-Germanism 'is one of the most unrecognised and virulent forms of racism in contemporary Britain, scarring the lives of people of both recent and distant German origin'.[26] It will be shown that British policy founded on total German capitulation helped to perpetuate such stereotypes. As suggested, many other battle-hardened Britons had adopted a fairly unsophisticated view of Germany and the Germans. They knew as much as they cared to about the positive turns in Teutonic culture or history. The subtleties of *Innerlichkeit*, *Geist* and many other expressions of Germanness enunciated by Thomas Mann in his June 1945 lecture in Washington's Library of Congress on 'Germany and the Germans' were lost on or misunderstood as alien concepts by the rank and file Englishman.[27]

It is for this reason that the book within its central argument shows that the subsequent occupation did little *per se* to advance future British–German friendship, and certainly did little to help the refugee problems that were left to the Germans to resolve. It is therefore misleading to see the refugee question in narratives emphasising post-war reconstruction successes, such as the rehabilitation of German politics or education. The crisis adversely affected far more German refugee and expellee civilians who struggled to become assimilated into a 'new Germany' than those who found themselves better placed to reap the benefits of the 1950s economic boom. Rapid transformations in West Germany's fortunes thus helped to reflect retrospectively disproportionately greater credit on British achievements. So it is important to evaluate how far occupation policy may have been perceived within Germany as a repressive measure, or even a continuation of hostilities. Examining Schleswig-Holstein's refugee problem helps to shed new light on this.

The relationship between an occupying nation and one under occupation logically leads to considering the moral facets of what has become known as 'victors' justice', germane in analysing the extent to which this concept may have coloured British treatment of German civilians and refugees. The concerted area bombing raids of German cities, the consequent loss of life and displacement of civilians raise difficult moral questions, in particular, the justification for a wartime military policy that failed to differentiate adequately between the acknowledged need to defeat Nazi Germany whilst mitigating the collateral destruction of non-combatant civilians, from the damage wrought on vital civil infrastructure not considered necessary to achieve Britain's military objectives. In that sense, Britain's bombing policy on Germany can be described as a failure on its own terms, diverting resources away from crucial areas of the war effort, such as protecting convoys in the North Atlantic in 1941–2, when had each German U-Boat sunk one more merchant ship, 'the course, perhaps even the outcome, of the Second World War would have been entirely otherwise'.[28] Similarly during much of the autumn and winter of 1942–3, although bombers were diverted to help in the Battle of the Atlantic,[29] they were B-24s from Coastal Command and not from Bomber Command, despite the Admiralty's repeated requests to Harris for more resources to be diverted from the air assault on Germany.[30]

The saturation bombings of Hamburg in late July and early August 1943 present as convincing an argument for examining this issue as did