England For the English! Anti-Alienism and German Internment in England, 1870-1918

Master's Thesis

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By
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ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Department of History

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The problems being addressed in this paper surround the internment of German civilians in England during the Great War. It addresses how and why this policy transpired, its origins, and who was the driving force behind its implementation. The government or the public? In examining this issue debates from the British Parliament are analyzed along with proposed legislation concerning aliens. To look at the public’s role letters written to The Times, petitions, and demonstrations are broken down. What was found is that government and the public had a common interest in implementing internment. Contrary to many interpretations locking up foreigners seemed to be a joint operation with the public and the government sharing that agenda. In conclusion the British government had a larger role in bringing about and sustaining the practice of internment than has been previously acknowledged by scholars.
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Introduction

_Time stands still._ Days, weeks, months, years, all these artificial divisions follow each other in endless monotony, time has ceased to have any signification; where there is no aim, no object, no sense, there is no time. One gives in, one surrenders, one’s will is broken...the space allotted to a prisoner in a hut was exactly six feet by four (a coffin is six feet by two). ¹

- Paul Cohen-Portheim, 1932

This was the dark view of life for many of those interned in England during the First World War, a sense of timelessness and congestion. Camps were routinely pushed beyond capacity as the infrastructure for internment was hastily improvised. Internment as a policy started with a very small target group; spies and _enemy_ aliens, and expanded rapidly throughout the war. An examination of how internment came about, its implications, and motivations must start well before the outbreak of World War. Beginning when the alien population of England as a whole was under attack. Anti-alien sentiment in the late 19th century manifested itself into the passing of legislation aimed at restricting immigration. Although this legislation proved largely unsuccessful, the underlying sentiments fed into the public discourse surrounding Germany and the potential outbreak of war. This paper seeks to explore the connections between anti-alien mentalities in the pre-war and wartime periods. Focusing on the provenance of these ideas and their implications for the German population living in England during the Great War. Before discussing the

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complexities of internment policy, a survey of the work that has already been completed on the subject is necessary.

While the historiography on European internment is well documented it lacks significantly when it comes to the events that transpired in England during the First World War. In a 2005 article written by Panikos Panayi, entitled “A Marginalized Subject? The History of Alien Enemy Internment in Britain”, the section that covers The Great War is only a page and a half long. The title of the article and the time devoted to the period of The Great War are very telling of the extent of the scholarship on the subject.

In the fall of 1915, an article appeared in The Quarterly Review entitled “The Treatment of Enemy Aliens”. A retired diplomat, Sir Ernest Satow, who had served Britain’s interests for forty-five yeas in Japan, Morocco, and China, was the authored the article. He traced the treatment of aliens from The Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 through issues in the American Revolutionary and Sino-Japanese Wars, ending with a discussion of German internment. In his discussion, he examined the treatment of these enemy aliens through the lens of international law. The point of his publication was to elucidate the changes, from the Napoleonic wars to WWI, which made WWI so savage in its treatment of neutrals and enemy aliens. Satow

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2 In the case of the Great War, in England, there has been a good deal of literature on the experience of the men in interned, how the camps were set up, how they occupied themselves, etc. However, explorations of how internment as a policy arose have a comparatively minuscule bibliography.

believed that the origins of internment in WWI lie in Germany, which did not set a
grace period to allow foreigners to leave at the outbreak of war. In the English
context it was “the pressure put upon the Government by certain members of
parliament”. As this paper will discuss, this is not the understanding that most
people have; on how internment took root and propagated in England during the
Great War.

During the 1920’s and 1930’s there were a handful of memoirs published by
internees detailing the conditions of their respective camps, how they occupied
their time, and the treatment they received from their captors. Two that stand out
are C.R. Hennings’ 1923 writing, Deutsche In England, and Time Stood Still: My
Internment In England by Paul Cohen-Portheim, published in 1931. In Deutsche,
Hennings attacks internment as a policy and gives a historical account of the
German people in England. Cohen-Portheim’s work is much more concerned with
the living conditions, treatment he received, how the camp functioned, and what
people did with their time. While these memoirs provide an interesting portrait of
life in an internment camp, they do not really tackle the motives behind why
internment was undertaken by the Government and the political climate at the time.
Many scholars have focused on camp life and operations but that is not what this
paper is concerned with. These memoirs are interesting and revealing, but they do
not directly supplement the discussion at hand.

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5 Payani, “A Marginalized Subject?”, 18.
Following the publication of Cohen-Portheim’s memoir there was a lull in interest and work surrounding internment during the First World War. The work that reignited the conversation around internment in Britain was *Control of Enemy Alien Civilians in Britain: 1914-1918* by J.C. Bird. The book is essentially his dissertation from London University, published in 1986. It sought to examine the policy and attitudes of the Government towards its enemy alien population before and during the Great War. His argument hinges on the buildup of anti-alien sentiment and fear that he believed was quietly building up in England as early as the 1870’s. Bird argues that Britain was riddled with xenophobia and that the coming of war only exacerbated this existing culture of fear. Given this backdrop he paints a picture of the British government bowing to public pressure on the question of internment as the public was pushing their anxieties about foreigners onto the Home and War Offices. There has been little debate about the significance of this work. It is referenced in almost every account of the Government and the alien question that has been published since. But it fails to highlight key factors in the Government’s role that we will examine.

In 1991 Panikos Panayi produced a book titled *The Enemy In Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War*. In a book largely based on his dissertation, Panayi paints a picture similar to that of Bird in that he believes that the government’s decision to intern German civilians was aimed at appeasing the public. However he argues that it was not simply this building anti-alienism that caused this but more immediate factors. He points to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in
May of 1915 as the catalyst for the wider internment policy’s being undertaken. He acknowledges that this burgeoning sentiment existed however Panayi does not believe that it was the decisive factor in the advent of internment. Throughout the work he pays special attention to policies enacted by the government and their implications on the German population. One issue he does bring up is the debates that were raging in parliament surrounding the question of what to do with the German population. Panayi seems to shirk off the opinions of parliament and focus instead on the public’s view and their role in the internment campaign.

In May of 1990 a conference was held in London entitled “Internment Remembered” where numerous presentations were given on a multitude of different aspects of internment in both World Wars. From this event a book was published with a selection of essays taken from the conference. Within The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain there are two essays of note in relation to the social and political considerations of internment in WWI.

In the first article, “An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940” by David Cesarani, the origins and continuities of Anti-Alienism are traced beginning in 1886 and ending during WWII. Cesarani argues that Anti-Alienism as a movement began in the London press in 1886 and in

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parliament in 1888.7 He believes that actors in both the government and the public pushed the Anti-Alien movement but that it was largely a popular movement and those politicians involved were simply opportunists.8 According to Cesarani, the detention of foreigners during WWI did not come “like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky”, but followed a build up of negative discourse on aliens dating back to the 1880’s. The second important idea he shared with Panayi, is the view that the sinking of the Lusitania was a trigger for beefing up internment increasing pressure from the public sphere.9 These themes crop up again in other relevant articles from this collection.

The second article of note in the publication titled “An Intolerant Act by an Intolerant Society: The Internment of Germans in Britain During the First World War”. It was authored by Panikos Panayi who’s writings are ever-present on this subject, and true to its title the article deals with the supposed decline of liberal values in England portraying this society as increasingly intolerant in the build up to the Great War. Panayi also deals with the internment camps in both England and Scotland, describing the logistics in setting up facilities for all these people and how they were treated and how they were able to cope with their circumstances. His main argument was that the coming of war brought about a spike in feelings of national unity and “the state and the public turned on real and perceived

8 Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?”, 33.
enemies”. The article is of importance to the discussion because it provides a glimpse into the context of internment against the larger social and political changes that were occurring in England before the war.

The most recent work done on the subject of internment in England during the World Wars is a collection of articles put together by The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies in 2005. Edited by Richard Dove, the compilation, ‘*Totally Un-English? Britain’s Internment of ‘Enemy Aliens’ in Two World Wars*,’ is filled with writings on all aspects of internment, mostly focusing on World War II. The few on the Great War delve largely into general conditions and the logistics of maintaining the numerous internment camps in Great Britain. Panayi’s historiographical article is the most useful and relevant to this discussion but that it is somewhat limited and was written mostly about the Second World War.

Historical accounts of interment in England are very limited. Panayi’s article, “A Marginalized Subject?” is an apt title for describing the question of internment in Britain during the Great War. However, the work that has been published sheds some light on the role of the public in bringing about internment as a policy and it is important to go back and examine the feelings and actions of actors within the government throughout these events. Placing the public at the forefront in the push

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for internment takes autonomy away from the government. While this study does not seek to argue that the government’s role was greater than that of the public it does endeavor to restore a balance between the two sides.

To fully investigate the forces driving internment in England during the Great War, the study is broken up into three chapters, largely defined chronologically. In the first, origins of Anti-Alienism will be examined via newspapers, periodicals, and the discourse within parliament. In the wake of the Long Depression, there was a spike in emigration from mainland Europe to Britain and the United States. Given the large influx of new immigrants and the unstable economic climate tensions were high as businessmen were concerned with competition from Jewish immigrants. The labor market itself was strained by an influx of Germans and Eastern Europeans. With negative sentiments on the rise during this period we can see heated debates rising in both the public and governmental spheres. The chapter concludes with the proposed Aliens Act in 1904. By tracing the origins of the Anti-foreigner movement the intention is to show that the discourse on aliens was at least as heated and passionate within the government as it was at the public level.

Chapter two opens with the passing of the Aliens act and an analysis of its implications on immigration as a practice and on the immigrant population already present within England. This section describes the period between the passing of the Aliens Act, in 1905, and the outbreak of the Great War. During this period Anti-Alien sentiment ratcheted up due, in part, to the spy scare that occurred combined with the publishing of invasions novels and scaremongering from major presses. To
elucidate some of the tensions that were building in the lead up to the outbreak of the war, a handful of specific incidents will be examined, including the capture and trial of Max Schultz, a German spy, and the buildup to the Defense of the Realm and Aliens Restriction Acts in 1914.

Questions surrounding the development and implementation of internment policy once war broke out in 1914 will be examined in the third chapter. The Aliens Restriction Act, put into effect August 5, outlined in the London Times on August 7, said, “The Order places alien enemies under certain disabilities in the respect of the possession of fire-arms, motor-cars, motor-cycles, petroleum, and other articles, and requires them to register themselves with the police under stringent penalties”.11 The implications of this Act will be examined as the sweeping decree set in motion the project of registration for all Aliens, which played into their eventual internment. Additionally, the attitudes of the public and the government will be examined, as the topic of foreigners was hotly debated in the public and private spheres. Internment was a hot button issue during the early years of the war and public pressure on the government was high. Debates in parliament and the discourse between the MP’s highlight how prevalent that same sentiment was within the government. As a consequence of these anti-alien undercurrents, repatriation of those Germans interned during the war was undertaken. At the end of the war 24,255 aliens were still interned in Britain and by October 1919, 84% of those people had been repatriated. As a result of internment the German population

11 The Times, August 7, 1914, Page 3, Column G.
in Britain declined from 57,000 to 22,000 over the course of the war. The chapter will endeavor to show that the members of parliament and other government officials were pushing just as hard as the general public for restrictions on aliens, internment, and repatriation.

Sources for this study come from a variety of angles and locations. Opinions of MP’s are found in transcripts from the sittings of Parliament via the online repository HANSARD. On the public side come from letters and editorials in The Times online archive, reports and lectures from private societies, and memoirs. Finally, census data will be used to track the growth and decline of the German population throughout this period. It is important to acknowledge that while these letters do reflect the author’s opinions they do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the British public as a whole. These letters give us a glimpse into what some members of the public are feeling and only combined with other evidence; petitions, editorials, demonstrations, etc. will a full picture materialize.

Throughout this discussion the opinions of those individuals who could affect policy, e.g. Reginald McKenna of the Home Office, and prominent MP’s will be weighed against the public feelings in an attempt to show a common ambition. The aim of this project is not to debunk the theory that the British government caved necessarily but to bring the explanation of the advent of internment to a middle point between public and governmental interests. To say that the government threw in the towel on internment means that they were actively resisting the policy, which was not the case. They were very much active in the process of implementation. The
object of this study is not to re-write how internment became policy within England. It is, however, the objective to slightly tweak our understanding of its implementation by viewing the issue in a broader social and political context. It can be said that the sinking of the *Lusitania* galvanized a public movement to expand the practice of internment but we should not overlook the Government's opinions and actions before that time. In essence, this study seeks to restore autonomy back to governmental officials rather than portraying them as simply reacting to the desires of the mass public. With that as a backdrop we can shift to a discussion of the origins of the anti-alien feelings in Britain.
Origins of Anti-Alien Sentiment: 1880-1905

“It should be remembered that we [are] an asylum for political refugees, but not an asylum in the sense that Rome was, to receive all the robbers and murderers that might be sent here. [We have] got[ten] beyond that stage of national development”\textsuperscript{12}
- Sir George Trevelyan, House of Commons, July 1882

“Why do we find every restaurant and hotel full of German waiters and French and Germans in the hairdressers’ shops? Why do Englishmen allow themselves to be undersold by foreigners who must eat and drink and be clothed the same way as they are?”\textsuperscript{13}
- C. C. Fitz Roy, \textit{The Times}, March 1883

During the late 1800’s there was a marked rise in emigration from the mainland Europe to the United Kingdom. People were coming into the United Kingdom from all across mainland Europe including Germans, Russians, and Greeks among others. Their reasons for emigrating varied. Many of the Germans were seeking employment in British industrial works as well as in clerical capacities. Many Jewish immigrants were fleeing persecution in numerous places, with the largest number coming from Tsarist Russia. A majority of these immigrants were coming over without a job in mind or even the prospect of one, which was a source of concern for the British public and the Government. Additionally, there was an influx of Irish émigrés who were both looking for employment and, in some cases, recruited by industrialists to work on the cheaply. Immigration began to

\textsuperscript{12} HC Deb. 07 July 1882 Vol. 271 cc1790-1865 via HANSARD
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{The Times}, March 27, 1883, Page 3, Column F.
take a toll on the British public who saw these people as threats to the British working classes and anti-alien sentiments began to build up amongst the populace. Quoted at the beginning of this chapter are reflections on this phenomenon and some of the perceived implications of this influx of foreigners. Many scholars have argued that this was a popular movement, in which the public was the driving force in anti-alien discourse, which is accurate when looking at the demonstrations and attitudes that prevailed in newspapers and periodicals about foreigners. However, the attitudes of the individuals who made up the Alien Commission, the Home Office, and Parliament have been obscured in all of this. How they felt about this influx of immigrants, and what they thought needed to be done about it will be examined in this chapter in attempt to show that anti-alienism was not simply a bottom up movement.

To examine the origins of these sentiments it is necessary to look at the perceived threat these immigrants posed to the British people, what they were afraid of, and what they were saying about the issue. Given that the interment of Germans during The Great War is the focus of this work it is the opinions toward that group of immigrants we will be looking at as we move forward. However, the anti-alien sentimentality in England was not confined to one race. It encompassed all nationalities albeit with differing degrees of severity.

In 1871 the foreign born population of England numbered 139,445, which constituted 0.6% of the total population of the country at the time. While the number is very small in terms of overall population, it was a large jump from only
twenty years earlier when the 1851 census reported that 50,289 foreigners were residing in England at the time.\textsuperscript{14} In two short decades the foreign born population in England almost tripled and it continued to increase steadily as the century came to a close. Between 1881 and 1901 there was a rise in foreign-born occupants from 117,999 to 247,758, which is an increase of 209\%!\textsuperscript{15} This mounting foreign presence within England was concentrated in London with roughly 197,00 people of various nationalities living in the city in 1901.\textsuperscript{16} As the general extra-English population in England was increasing during this period so was the German presence. Although it was a smaller sect than the Russians they still comprised a significant portion of the alien population in England.

It has been acknowledged by scholars that the German population in England before the 1861 census has been very difficult to quantify.\textsuperscript{17} 1861 marked the first time that the category of “foreigners” in the census tables was broken down by nationality. Therefore we can start at that census and track the growth of the Germans into the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{14} Census of England and Wales, 1871 via Hathi Trust Digital Library. Panayi, \textit{The Enemy in Our Midst}, 11.
\textsuperscript{15} Census of England and Wales, 1911 via A Vision of Britain Through Time (Digitized Census Tables)
\textsuperscript{16} This is my own calculation, and while very close to the exact figure it is not perfect.
\textsuperscript{17} Panayi, \textit{The Enemy in Our Midst}, 11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population(^{18})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>28,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>32,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>37,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>50,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>49,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>53,324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**German Population in England 1861-1911**

From the table we can see that the German population followed the trend of the immigrant population generally between 1881 and 1901 with the influx of 11,832 émigrés from the continent, an increase of 32%. Given these figures it is possible to ascertain that in 1901 the German population in England only constituted 19.8% of the foreign born population and 0.2% of the population of England and Wales. It is curious then how such a small slice of the populous garnered so much ire from British society in the decades leading up to the war\(^{19}\).

Panikos Panayi wrote that while there were a large number of German expatriots living and working in London they did not sequester themselves in the East End like many other immigrant groups, most notably the Russians\(^{20}\). Much of the perceived German threat was based on the competition for jobs. German clerical

\(^{18}\) Census of England and Wales, 1911 via A Vision of Britain. Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 11. The table shows the growth of the German population in England from 1861 to just before the war in 1911.

\(^{19}\) Census of England and Wales, 1911 via A Vision of Britain.

workers had great success finding employment in England during the late 19th century and their good fortune was a source of much public debate. Much of this was blamed on English educational shortcomings and the German's own efficacy in the same realm. One commenter wrote into *The Times* arguing that,

> If English merchants will not be troubled to teach grown men the technicalities of business, it is evident that when they want minds to grasp something beyond the routine of office work they will have to betake themselves to foreigners.\(^\text{21}\)

In this letter to the editor of *The Times* a commenter, identified only as M.A. Oxon, laments the superiority of the German commercial education system as shown next to that of Englishmen in clerical offices. His concerns appear again in a study titled “German Clerks in England, 1870 – 1914: Another Aspect of the Great Depression Debate” where Gregory Anderson noted that,

> The specialized language and other skills required of foreign correspondents meant that 'ports of entry' were created for German clerks into what may otherwise have been fairly closed internal labour markets with most jobs within the firm filled by clerks who had been recruited at a general entry level and then been trained and selected for advancement.\(^\text{22}\)

The implication of these ‘ports of entry’ was that Germans were entering into the clerking system at a higher rung than the average white collar Englishman thereby constantly relegating him to the lower position and barring him from promotion. Concerns of job theft were not confined to the white-collar sector by any means; in

\(^{21}\) *The Times*, September 14, 1886, Page 3, Column D.

fact much of the anti-foreigner mentality was rooted in the working classes. Fearing loss of employment at the hands of poor, unskilled immigrants who made up the bulk of the alien population.

Discourse surrounding restriction the immigration of aliens started up in earnest in the mid to late 1880’s with both the public and the government calling for investigations on the problem. In a letter to The Times in 1887, titled “Pauper Immigration”, a man named Brabazon wrote,

I have for some time been of the opinion that the wholesale immigration into this country of more or less destitute foreigners should, in justice to our own working classes, be placed under some kind of control. Not a few manufactures which used to employ a large number of persons in the East-end are now almost entirely in the hands of Germans and Jews.23

During the first part of this letter Brabazon states that he has knowledge of the conditions of the working classes and therefore his thoughts on the matter should be taken seriously.24 That being said, this letter shows that outrage at immigrants taking jobs formerly held by Englishmen was gaining a lot of steam in the public sphere even by people, like Brabazon, who were not of the working class. A further illustration of this can be seen in an editorial published by the times only a month after the above letter. In the column, the author writes,

"[I]t is impossible not to sympathize with the dislike of the working people to the coming of strangers who take the bread from them and their children. Every political or industrial movement or disturbance on the Continent – the anti-Semitic – agitation in Germany and Poland and Roumania, for example –

23 The Times, April 13, 1887, Page 13, Column C.
24 The Times, April 13, 1887, Page 13, Column C.
sends to our shores a crowd of hungry competitors who, needy themselves, drag down others to their level of misery.\textsuperscript{25}

Within this statement we again see how people were feeling about these émigrés. Even though the author was not directly affected himself, he sympathizes with the plight of the workingman. This is especially significant in an English context because of the severe class stratification that characterized their society. David Cesarani argued, “Anti-alienism was thus one strand in the weaving of a British national identity that would integrate all classes into the nation and assuage class divisions”.\textsuperscript{26} This assertion is important in understanding immigration as a rallying point that transcended class. Stemming from the flood of anti-alien feeling the idea that immigration numbers should be restricted began to crop up frequently in public rhetoric.

Private citizens and politicians alike had plans framed for how the country should deal with the problem of immigration. Discussion had started in the public sphere in 1886 and we can see evidence of one of those plans here,

Hundreds of such [alien] paupers could never have landed at Hull or in London had permission to disembark been given only after the exhibition by the immigrant of the equivalent of half-a-crown. However moderate may be the guarantee against becoming a public charge hereafter imposed on foreign immigrants, it will be sufficient to exclude most of those whose admission is contrary to the public welfare.\textsuperscript{27}

Arnold White, the author of this letter, wrote in several times during the late 1880’s and early 90’s on the subject of foreign immigration and the government’s actions.

\textsuperscript{25} The Times, May 19, 1887, Page 9, Column C.
\textsuperscript{26} Cesarani, “An Alien Concept?”, 29.
\textsuperscript{27} The Times, May 30, 1887, Page 3, Column F.
His sentiments were echoed, albeit for slightly different reasons, by a number of people during the early 1890’s. At the Amalgamated Society of Tailors conference at Liverpool in 1891, the man presiding over the event, a Mr. Hollings, pledged, “To support, irrespective of our politics, any legislation that seems likely to lessen the evils of foreign immigration”. While they did not suggest any ideas on their own the conference agreed to support the government in any action that curtailed the influx of foreigners. One of the events that did not help the cause of these immigrants was an outbreak of cholera on the continent in 1892 that exacerbated anti-alien sentiments in the public and further entrenched the status of these people as paupers.

There were numerous calls for immediate action to be taken halting all immigration from all sides. On August 27th, 1892 two separate letters were published by The Times calling for the halt of immigration they stated that,

Cannot the Ministry meet and at once issue an order against the influx of these pauper aliens? Surely the working classes and the taxpayers generally of this country have suffered and are suffering enough already from the unlimited overcrowding of the labour market with pauper aliens without having this further pestilence brought into their midst.

In this connexion it is relevant to add that cholera on the Continent and at Hamburg gives point to our efforts to restrict the immigration of pauper aliens. If the scourge spreads to London and Eastern England, the supporters of a weekly invasion of over 2,000, will be largely to blame.

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28 The Times, August 27, 1891, Page 5, Column F.
29 The Times, August 27, 1892, Page 6, Column E.
30 The Times, August 27, 1891, Page 3, Column B.
These letters are from J. Blundell Maple and MP C.E. Howard Vincent of Sheffield Central respectively. While the two of them came from different parts of society the sentiment is the same, something needed to be done immediately. While these responses did not galvanize the government immediately there action was taken a couple years later. Robert Cecil, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, lead the charge to curb the flow of immigrants.

On July 6, 1894 Lord Salisbury rose to address the House of Lords and propose a bill designed to reform the current legislation on aliens. It would reinstate the power, within the office of Secretary of State, “of expelling ‘any foreigner whose presence in this country is either dangerous to the public peace here or is likely to promote the commission of crimes elsewhere’”.31 While this power does not seem to be directed at paupers, officially it targeted anarchists; much of the speech Lord Salisbury gives is riddled with anti-foreigner rhetoric that encompasses all immigrants. He summarized an investigation conducted by a committee within the House of Commons in 1889,

“The state of the parishes in the East-end indicated that there was an increase of pauperism, due to the crowding out of English labour by foreign immigrants; that they believed that this foreign immigration had a deteriorating effect upon the moral, financial, and social conditions of the people”.32

Much of what Lord Salisbury backs up his bill with is evidence of this type, not dealing with anarchists, as others do, but with the working classes. He singles out

31 The Times, July 7, 1894, Page 8, Column A. “Reinstating” refers to the Aliens Bill of 1848 where this power was conferred by Parliament onto the Secretary of State.
32 The Times, July 7, 1894, Page 8, Column A.
the working class; arguing that they are suffering the most from this influx of aliens. Lord Salisbury’s views were spelled out during the second reading of the bill on July 17,

Do not imagine that because you do not find the names of pauper aliens on the workhouse lists that therefore they exercise no influence to the injury of your own population. It is these people who diminish the chances of earning a livelihood which your own population feels so much. Their difficulty of finding employment is increasing more and more, the number of those who are seeking public relief gets greater and greater, and there is a very general belief among working men, and I think that belief is founded upon facts, that the introduction of these aliens, who are content with the very lowest conditions of existence, has a tendency to drive our own population out of employment and to increase the hardness of that battle which they have to fight in finding the means of living.\(^{33}\)

Here he really cuts to the heart of the matter, employment and the ability to earn a livelihood. He is angry that Englishmen are being undercut and pushed further into poverty because of the influx of poor immigrants. Additionally he believes their presence puts unnecessary stress on the state, which is being forced to deal with an increasing number of dependents because of rising unemployment. This bill passed on its second reading by a count of eight-nine to thirty-seven but would ultimately be withdrawn by Lord Salisbury due to disagreements over the form the bill would take when it went to the House of Commons and because that house “proposed to prorogue” come August.\(^{34}\) The implications of this on the Alien discourse are significant for a variety of reasons.

\(^{33}\) HL Deb. 17 July 1894 vol. 27 cc117-56 via HANSARD.

\(^{34}\) The Times, July 18, 1894, Page 10, Column B, HL Deb 14 August 1894 vol. 28 cc889-90 via HANSARD. ‘WITHDRAWAL OF ALIENS BILL.’ The Mercury, July 24, 1984 pg. 3.
Looking at the progression of events this bill, while not being enacted, passed its second reading in the House of Lords by a margin of fifty-two votes despite its fragmented nature.\textsuperscript{35} In addition to all the notes of (cheers) in the transcripts, this shows that the fear of immigrants was common amongst the MP’s despite removed from the workers plight.\textsuperscript{36} Additionally, and more significantly, this was a bill introduced by a Peer into the House of Lords. These men, who do not owe their positions to the laity, are the ones attempting to provide them with relief. Members of the House of Lords clearly shared this anti-foreigner sentiment and fear from an early point and were not simply pushed into this mentality later on. Many of the sentiments expressed by Lord Salisbury and the framework he laid down for his bill returned while the debates surrounding the framing of 1905 Aliens act were being undertaken. Before getting into that it is important to highlight a joined effort between the public and Parliament, ‘The British Brothers’ League’.

In January of 1901, ‘The British Brothers’ League’ was formed with the goal of supporting and agitating for “restrictive legislation with reference to alien immigration.”\textsuperscript{37} The league

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{British Brother’s League Flyer}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Times}, July 18, 1894, Page 10.
\textsuperscript{36} In the transcripts of Parliament the stenographer would note assent of the non-speaking members by typing in where MP’s would cheer as (cheers) or (here here!)
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{The Times}, January 15, 1902, Page 12, col. B.
consisted mostly of working class men but as the poster indicates they had support from members of Parliament as well. On the day after this rally was held The Times reported that there were 4,000 working me in attendance and that “Letters of regret for non-attendance but sympathizing with the objects of the meeting were received from 27 members of Parliament of all parties, ministers of religion, mayors, councilors, and aldermen.”\(^{38}\) This again illustrates that this was a common cause between the classes and not one group coercing or acquiescing to the other. Their slogan was ‘England for the English’. Members of the league testified before the Alien Immigration Commission that was set up to investigate the problem by the House of Commons.\(^{39}\) Testimonies hit again on the aliens ability to undercut Englishmen in all realms of production and the negative impact these destitute foreigners had on the British worker.\(^{40}\) ‘The British Brother’s League’ would be especially active during the build up to the vote on the Aliens Act, where, in December of 1904, they gathered “40,000 signatures to a petition to Parliament in favour of restrictive legislation.”\(^{41}\) While they had a fairly significant following, groups in direct opposition to them feared that legislation of this kind would hinder free trade. Despite some challenges the bill passed into law and it is to that event and the build up to the Great War that we now turn.

\(^{38}\) The Times, January 15, 1902, Page 12, col. B.
\(^{40}\) The Times, July 29, 1902, Page 10, col. E.
\(^{41}\) The Times, December 29, 1904, Page 8, col. E.
Public Pressure and Government Action 1905-1914

On August 11, 1905 the Aliens Bill was given the perfunctory Royal Assent becoming the Aliens Act of 1905, placing restrictions on potential immigrants to the United Kingdom. Provisions for exclusion of a migrant stated,

(3) Such permission [to enter the country] may be withheld in the case of any of the following persons:

(a) Any alien who cannot show that he has in his possession, or is in a position to obtain, the means of decently supporting himself and any dependents whom he may bring with him.
(b) Any alien who is a lunatic or idiot or owing to any infirmity appears likely to be a charge upon the rates or otherwise a detriment to the public.
(c) Any alien who has been sentenced in a foreign country for an extraditable offence. 42

Largely viewed as targeting the large numbers of Polish Jews fleeing persecution in Russia this Act also provided grounds for turning away peoples of any nationality deemed unfit. The Board of Jewish Deputies published an analysis of The Aliens Bill in May of 1905 that addressed issues of scope and impact of the then pending legislation. Pointing out flaws in the bill, the commission stated of the above clauses that,

The exclusion clauses in the Bill which, in the Committee’s opinion, are directed only against the industrial aliens, and against such only of the criminal and immoral classes of aliens as voluntarily avoid the loopholes which the Bill offers to them.43

43 The Aliens Bill, 1905, via Open Library, 7.
It also points out that a number of groups are being targeted through this Act that included those Germans who, finding themselves want for employment in Germany, were trying to acquire it in England. Parliamentary debates during the bill’s passage were heated, as liberals were defending asylum privileges and free trade. Believing that this bill compromised those ideals.

While introducing the bill to the House of Commons the Home Secretary, Aretas Akers-Douglas said to the house, “The evils which these aliens bring in their train—overcrowding, living in insanitary conditions, the lowering of the general standard of life and morality, and crime—have also, unfortunately, increased. There is no doubt about these facts”. Much of the rhetoric dealt with the idea that these immigrants were lowering the quality of English life and taking opportunities away from the working classes. In opposition to the previous attempt to pass a bill about aliens this one was introduced into the House of Commons. Opponents of the bill were quick to point out that there was an election drawing near, insinuating that the conservatives were pandering to the public. Sir Charles Trevelyan stated during the second reading, “We (Liberal Party) are ready to make allowance for Members making use of this Bill as a Party measure. We are nearing the election, and hon. Members opposite feel it is a very popular measure to go with to the country.” Trevelyan elucidates a point that many others were also keen to acknowledge. Namely that a large movement against aliens was fermenting amongst the populace.

44 HC Deb 18 April 1905 vol. 145 cc464-73 via HANSARD
and with an election coming up championing their cause would be politically beneficial. This bill passed the House of Commons easily, because of the dominant Conservative and Liberal Unionist alliance that had introduced the measure. As it passed through the Commons it would too pass through the Lords. Preceding the second reading of the bill The Lord Belper, Henry Strutt, echoed the sentiments of his peers in the commons,

Many of these immigrants are quite destitute and without any trade by which they can earn a living. They are of a low type of civilisation; and they lower the standard of living among our own working classes. In the East End of London especially and in other crowded centres they work for very low wages.\footnote{HL Deb 28 July 1905 vol. 150 cc749-75 via HANSARD}

The efficacy of this bill was dubious at best, but the underlying mentality of people in power is its most striking feature. They display anti-alien sentiment at the peaks of British society.

Given all the concerns about the Act it was only fitting that it failed to make an impact as legislation. Part of this stemmed from the fact that the Conservative government was torn down in the next election. Leaving the implementation of the Act in the hands of a Liberal government that had fought against it in the first place. Jill Pellew summed it up adroitly, “As it was the act was not a success. No-one was satisfied about the way in which it worked: neither the Conservatives who enacted it; nor the liberals who had to interpret it; nor the civil servants who had to see to its
execution”.\(^{46}\) As all of this drama surrounding the Aliens Act 1905 was unfolding there was a building anti-German sentiment growing amongst the public and the government in the form of what has been termed “Spy Fever”. Rumors abounded about the activities of the German population within England. Helped on by the work of novelists such as William Le Queux and Erskine Childers who spun tales of potential German invasions.\(^{47}\)

Many of these rumors originated from the public; who were concerned with the possibility of a German invasion of mainland England if a war were to happen, they viewed the masses of German workers in Britain as a threat to national security. One of the first instances of spying reported in the papers was from The Times in 1905. The Times reported that a fine was imposed on Franz Losel who had been caught taking pictures of Ravelin Battery in Sheerness.\(^{48}\) From this point forward, a fear began to grow among the British public regarding the possibility of spies infiltrating the country and gathering intelligence on Britain’s naval fortifications for a future invasion. People wrote into the London Times reporting possible espionage activities and voicing the concerns that they had about espionage, German immigrants, and the possibility of invasion.


\(^{47}\) One such source of the hysteria was author William Le Queux and his novels, one, published in 1909, was entitled, Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England. Additionally, Erskine Childers published a novel in 1903 called The Riddle of the Sands that detailed two Englishmen’s efforts to uncover a German invasion plot. Both of these authors were wildly popular and their works sold thousands of copies.

\(^{48}\) The Times, August 10, 1905, Page 10, Column F.
Letters written to the editor of *The Times* concerning espionage often challenged members of the British Parliament, who played down the rumors and spy mania. The main debates and minutes from the sessions of Parliament were published in the newspaper the next day so that the public could see the debates and who supported particular issues. In this way people were able to speak out against people like Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War who, asked by one Colonel Lockwood if he had received any worrying reports, said in 1908,

Unofficial reports have reached me with regard to the presence of supposed spies in various parts of England, and certain inquires have been instituted. They do not, however, lead me to attach great importance to the matter, or suggest the necessity of immediate legislative action.\(^49\)

With the public's increasing concern over German espionage, these transcripts provoked anger at the government for its inaction against espionage. Three days after the debate between Colonel Lockwood and Haldane a letter to *The Times* addressed Haldane's comments and the spy mania that was gripping the country:

Judging from the questions put yesterday into the House of Commons by Colonel Lockwood to Mr. Haldane, and also from the appearance recently of certain warnings in the Press, there exists in this country at the present moment, what some people would term a 'spy scare,' and I use this word 'scare' in the sense given to it in the first clause of its definition in the 'Century Dictionary' – namely 'a sudden fright or panic.'\(^50\)

In his opening statement, Lonsdale Hale is speaking to the increased concern that Haldane has sparked by deflecting the questions posed by Lockwood and affirming the public belief that this spy mania is justified. He goes on to talk about German

\(^49\) *The Times*, July 14, 1908, Page 6, Column E-F.
\(^50\) *The Times*, July 17, 1908, Page 9, Column D.
workers in England and how they could be delivering small bits of information back to Germany upon their annual return, which can be pieced together to provide Germany with invaluable intelligence. One of the big perpetrators of the spy mania was the press,

Apprehensive publicists invite us to believe that, at a given signal, the foreign servants who throng some of our hotels will suddenly be revealed as far more formidable phalanx of warriors than the wooden horse disclosed to the disconcerted vision of the people of Troy.51

This quote, from an article in the *London Times*, suggested unfounded, even laughable public fear. While this view was not common amongst the public’s writing, the author does point out one of the main sources of this paranoia the press. Christopher Andrew makes a similar inference in explaining spy mania during 1907 stating, “Not a single case was reported to the War Office by the police. All the reports came from members of the public, many of them influenced by alarmist press reports.”52 Public concern over spying was enormous at the time and the sheer volume of claims coming from the people warranted some kind of investigation. This suggests a rise in public concern, even paranoia, about German spies working in England. MO5, the agency in charge of counter-intelligence, was in its infancy and therefore it did not have a crack squad of individuals or a large budget to deal with these issues.53

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51 *The Times*, August 21, 1908, Page 9, Column C.
52 Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: the Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 10. Andrew cites the sub-committee of imperial defense’s meeting minutes which are not available to the public.
53 The agency was referred to as MO5 until sometime during 1909.
LT. Colonel James Edmonds, the head of MO5 at the time, completed a report on German espionage in 1908 although his work was largely unfounded. Hiley notes, “In fact few of the dozens of reports collected suggest any origins more substantial than the lurid spy stories and invasion novels then in circulation, and some quite clearly arose from Edmonds’ own prejudice."54 Hiley is acknowledging that many of the sources Edmonds claimed as credible came from alarmist articles, and were no better than many of the rumors and hysteria that were created by the British media. Soon Edmonds prejudice and the public’s fears would be validated with the capture and trial of a genuine German spy, Max Schultz.

Max Schultz was caught attempting to procure information about the British navy for the German Government. His case is significant on a number of levels; one, he was caught during the first wave of spy mania in 1911; two, his case was highly publicized and attracted a great deal of interest from the public; and three, he was not executed, which was the standard punishment during the war. In the coverage of the trial the Times outlined Schultz’s plan,

The prosecution alleged that the prisoner incited these two men to commit the offenses, and counsel said that if all Englishmen acted as Mr. Duff and Mr. Tarran had done England would have no need to fear any system of Espionage. Schultz first suggested to Mr. Duff that he was the agent for an important paper for continental correspondence; but added that what he really wanted was information about that army and the navy before it got into the newspapers for the purpose of it being published in a newspaper in Germany.55

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55 *The Times*, August 29, 1911, Page 4, Column C.
Within this passage we can see the intentions of Max Schultz; he wanted to obtain information about the army and the navy through two British citizens in order to strengthen Germany’s intelligence pool. *The Times* reported cases of espionage in this manner leading up to and throughout the war. It simultaneously fueled the imagination of the readers and the anti-German discourse within England.

From the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905 to the outbreak of war in August of 1914, a general anti-alien sentiment continued to grow in England as plebeians and patricians alike championed the rights of the worker and disparaged the aliens. Within this broad movement a more focused fear was forming in the minds of the British public: a possible invasion of the Isles planned from within. Every German was suspect; waiters, barbers, the clerks at work, neighbors all were possible agents of the enemy, plotting the doom of the nation. While the public was up in arms over the problem, the government too was concerned about the threat taking action to deal with realistic reports that crossed the desk. Anti-immigrant sentiments were a shared phenomenon between the government and the public during this period and when internment is brought up members of Parliament are keen to see it undertaken. Germans, and immigrants generally, were a source of mistrust and fear for many within the British public and Government that laid a fertile foundation for anti-alien legislation once war became a reality.
Wartime Action and Internment: 1914-18

On August 4, 1914 the United Kingdom declared war on Germany, citing a less than favorable response to the U.K.’s demand that Belgium remain a neutral entity. Many people have documented the surges of nationalist sentiment that characterized the coming of war in most countries, the rush to enlist, to serve ones’ country proudly. Next day, behind closed doors higher-ups were pushing legislation, introduced by the Home Secretary Reginald McKenna, which would impose restrictions on the movement of enemy aliens. Whilst introducing the measure to the House of Commons McKenna stated that,

One of the main objects of the Bill is to remove or restrain the movements of undesirable aliens, especially with a view to the removal or detention of spies. The arrangements contemplated by the Order have been designed with a view to cause as little inconvenience as possible to alien friends, while leaving effective control over dangerous enemy aliens.56

Here we can see the original intent of this legislation. It was targeted at rounding up German spies that many in both the government and public believed riddled the countryside. Additionally, the Home Secretary was keen to state publicly that aliens deemed to be non-threatening would experience little inconvenience. However, the import of the bill is truly reflected in clause (1f) of the bill, “Requiring aliens residing in the United Kingdom to comply with such provisions as to registration, change of

56 HC Deb 05 August 1914 vol. 65 cc1986-90 via HANSARD
abode, travelling, or otherwise as may be made by the Order”. Obligation to register as an alien with the home office would have massive implications on the efficacy of coralling the German population.

Many scholars have identified the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the consequent public outrage as the moment that forced the government into engaging in mass internment of the German population within England. They are quite accurate in this assertion; it was a massively important event in the history of the war and internment. However, claiming that the government’s hand was forced in this matter implies that they were resisting the strategy prior to that point and that they had no previous interest of their own in internment of aliens. In short, these sorts of arguments take autonomy away from the actions of government officials and make them into puppets of the public. What will follow is a demonstration of the opinions held by these leading men prior to and after that famous ship’s demise showing that internment was also on the minds of policy makers, as the German threat loomed ever larger.

There was very little debate surrounding the passing of the Aliens Restriction Act in 1914. Most of the MPs agreed that it was a necessary measure. The only real documented dissent was directed at the time limit these restrictive powers would be held by the Home Secretary. However, debates over the alien question would be rampant throughout the war. Who was being interned, who should be

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57 HC Deb 05 August 1914 vol. 65 cc1987-90 via HANSARD
58 Mentioned during the introduction. See Panikos Payani, J.C. Bird.
interned, who is exempt, questions of space, impact, and timeline were all
questioned. One of the earliest calls for internment came from Rowland Hunt, a
Liberal Unionist MP, addressing the Home Secretary in the House of Commons on
August 28th,

In view of the fact that there are thousands of German and Austrian aliens in
employment as well as unemployed, could [he] see his way as far as possible
to fill up with British subjects during the War the places now held by German
and Austrian aliens, and place all unemployed alien German and Austrian
males over fourteen years of age in concentration camps?59

Hunt’s idea is a good bridge from the sentiments we saw in the pre-war period
about the negative economic effects of aliens in Britain and the burgeoning idea that
all these “Enemy Aliens” should be segregated from the public. His conception of the
scale of internment was ultimately the plan imposed on the German population in
England but it took a while for the Government to reach that end.

Panikos Panayi rightly identifies the middle of October 1914 as the peak of
anti-German feeling within England as numerous articles and statements featured
MP’s calling for tighter regulations.60 On the 19th an editorial was published in The
Times that was titled “Enemy Aliens Among Us” and it addresses the issue of both
naturalized and un-naturalized German loyalties. This article brings up the question
of the feasibility of whole scale internment and the rationale behind implementing
such a policy. With so much anti-German sentiment floating around, it suggested, it
might be in the best interests of both the state and the German population to engage

59 HC Deb 28 August 1914 vol. 66 cc266-8 via HANSARD
60 Panayi, The Enemy in Our Midst, 155.
in mass internment. The column appeared in the wake of a wave of anti-German
violence that had seen a number of storefronts bearing German names in South
London ravaged.\textsuperscript{61} What we see in this column is the beginning of a transition from
the concerns about espionage and threats of invasion to the re-emergence of an
anti-Alien veneer over the collective mind of the public.

An example of this shift could be seen only a few days after the publication of
the previous article. A report that 3,030 German men of military age were arrested
prompted an apology by \textit{The Times}.\textsuperscript{62} The paper had previously published editorials
and letters admonishing the Home Secretary and the Government for dragging their
feet on the issue that they now recanted. These arrests illustrate that the number of
peoples interned were rising but it would not be enough come May when public
outrage spiked after the sinking of the \textit{Lusitania}.

The sinking of a British passenger ship laden with civilians was the last straw
for many members of the public and parliament alike. While some newspapers took
this as another opportunity to call for mass internment the public took to the
streets, with some of the worst rioting occurring on the evening of May 12\textsuperscript{th}.
However, before these protests broke out, calls and petitions advocated wholesale
internment of the German population of military age. On the day before the riots
broke out, Sir Henry Dalziel brought up the question of alien enemies in the House

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{The Times}, October 19, 1914, Page 9, Column C.
\textsuperscript{62} Military Age is defined as being 17-45. The figure mention is from my own
calculation based one the reported figure and it constitutes a ballpark, as some of
the smaller municipalities had no definite numbers.
of Commons. He did not push for an immediate internment of the German population. He wanted the government to consider the issue deliberately and thoroughly so that the right course could be found and acted upon.\(^63\) While he agreed, Lord Charles Beresford believed that the time in which they were allowed to deliberate on the matter had long passed and he stated,

> Let us take this question up strongly, fairly, with chivalrous sentiment, but with an iron hand. Intern these men as soon as possible, and before the people make you do it. Let the Government govern, and not let the people indulge in outrageous performances because the Government has not done their work.\(^64\)

By forcing the government to take a proactive stance on the matter, Beresford hoped to give the public no reason to take to the streets and to assuage its doubts about their government. The next day he, along with William Joynson-Hicks, presented a petition to the Commons of a quarter of a million signatures of women asking the government to intern all military aged enemy aliens.\(^65\) The Prime Minister delayed the consideration of these measures, as McKenna had done the previous day, which helped set off riots and a statement by Asquith on the 13\(^{th}\) of May that read,

> Dealing first with the non-naturalised aliens, there are at this moment 19,000 interned and there are some 40,000 (24,000 men and 16,000 women) at large. We propose that in existing circumstances, prima facie, all adult males of this class should, for their own safety, and that of the community, be segregated and interned, or, if over military age, repatriated.\(^66\)

\(^{63}\) HC Deb 11 May 1915 vol. 71 cc1606-16 via HANSARD
\(^{64}\) HC Deb 11 May 1915 vol. 71 cc1606-16 via HANSARD
\(^{65}\) HC Deb 12 May 1915 vol. 71 c1618 via HANSARD
\(^{66}\) HC Deb 13 May 1915 vol. 71 cc1841-78 via HANSARD
From this quote we can gather a number of things about the government’s perspective. First, at this point one-third of the non-naturalized German population were interned representing a massive jump from the 3,000 or so we saw at the end of October. This figure is important because the common thought being voiced was that the government was not doing enough to secure the country. Secondly, the government was indeed reacting to public pressure, but Members of Parliament had opened the dialogue on expanding internment prior to the riots. Thirdly, the government actively tried to reduce the German population within England by instituting a continuing policy of repatriation that included men of military age after war concluded.

A gradual ramping up of the internment of German civilians and repatriation of those outside of military age followed. In the fall of 1915, an article commented on the practice of internment and the idea of “a nation in arms”.67 The concept being that war is waged not only the by the soldiers on battlefield but also by the public on the home front. The author, Sir Ernest Satow, commented that it was “[the] consequence of the riots which followed on the sinking of the ‘Lusitania’ by a German submarine and the pressure put upon the Government by certain members of parliament” that made “the rest of the enemy aliens in this country liable to internment”.68 Here is the important distinction; members of Parliament are not included in what people then, or scholars now, refer to as “the Government”. But

MPs had already approved internment as a policy with the passing of the Aliens Restriction Act, Herbert Asquith himself was an elected MP, and these MPs had served on various immigration committees prior to the war. It was the case that the Home Secretary and the Secretary for War are the individuals who ultimately have the discretion during the war to determine who is eligible for internment. Acknowledging that fact, I do not believe that the Government and be separated from parliament given their role in outlining the parameters and implementation of its practice.\(^69\)

Examining this short article further, Satow comments on the impact Aquith’s announcement about expanding internment and repatriation had on the German population prior to its publication October of 1915. He reports, “Some 6,300 enemy aliens, including children, have been repatriated since the new policy was announced”\(^70\). This number jumped up to 10,000 by the summer of 1916 and by that point a further 11,000 Germans were interned in camps across the country. From the beginning of the war enemy aliens were allowed to apply for exemption from internment and plead their case to the Internment and Repatriation Committee and many succeeded. They were largely “Poles, Czechs, Italians, and Alsatians” accompanied by a paltry number of Germans who were naturalized or provided necessary manufacturing service for the war effort.\(^71\) During late June of 1916 there

\(^69\) HC Deb 29 June 1916 vol. 83 cc1047-175 via HANSARD.
\(^71\) Satow, “The Treatment of Enemy Aliens,” 425. HC Deb 29 June 1916 vol. 83 cc1047-175 via HANSARD,
was a debate in the House of Commons about the numbers of interned individuals deemed exempt from that process. Herbert Samuel reported,

> Unquestionably the idea has been instilled into the mind of the public that there are 22,000 dangerous alien enemies at large, and I point out to the Committee that 10,000 are women whose cases have been specially examined, 4,000 are of friendly races, 1,500 are aged people, and there remains the figure of 6,500.\(^2\)

Many in the Parliament were questioning the validity of the 6,500 exemptions. Samuel went on to explain the exemption of those who were not in vital industry, which usually had to do with the length of time spent in Britain and their family composition. He brought out several cases of men who achieved exemption because they had a British wife and numerous children joined up in the British army. As the war dragged on some of the interned were released, but there were still 24,254 at the end of the war.

The effect then of this internment is clear. Adopting a policy of repatriation meant decimating the German population within England over the next few years. Was reducing the alien population part of the government’s goal when implementing internment?

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Herbert Samuel stated in the House of Commons, “There are only a very small number of such cases. Where they exist, and where the men are vouched for on the best authority by people who have known them long as being in no way dangerous, I think we should be more likely to damage ourselves than the enemy if we were to reject the requests of the Ministry of Munitions and the War Office and prevent these men using their high technical skill in the manufacture of prismatic glasses, electrical apparatus, or whatever it may be”.

\(^2\) HC Deb 29 June 1916 vol. 83 cc1047-175 via HANSARD
As early as the passing of the Aliens Restriction Act, the Home Secretary, McKenna, brought up the idea of expelling all non military aged enemy aliens and indeed a one week period after the war began existed where Germans were allowed and encouraged to leave Great Britain.\textsuperscript{73} Even as late as the summer of 1918 there was a panic amongst the people about the un-interned German presence. A parade of 70,000 people presented a petition to 10 Downing St. in August calling for “the complete eradication of German influence both at home and throughout the British Empire”\textsuperscript{74} This call for eradication was not fully realized in England until after the conclusion of the war. Of the 24,255 aliens still interned in Britain, 84% were repatriated by October of 1919.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total\textsuperscript{75}</th>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>37,500</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>32,012</td>
<td>16,326</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>8,476</td>
<td>13,778</td>
<td>22,254</td>
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**German population in Britain, 1914-1919**

The table above illustrates the effects of the Governmental policy of public pressure on the German alien population before and during the war.

Before the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the Government had interned 19,000 Germans. It seems that the Home and War Offices took care to approach internment


\textsuperscript{74} *The Times*, August 24, 1918, Page 3, Column A, Payani 214

\textsuperscript{75} Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst*, 97.
deterently and scrupulously rather than rounding up everyone and asking questions later. The feelings that boiled over in the spring of 1915 forced the government to accelerate the process. They held fast to their exemptions when they came under attack publicly and in Parliament, maintaining their agency. The government pushed back against, not simply caved in to, public anti-alien sentiment.

War, and the coming of war, brought about a reversal in the way British people thought about immigration and aliens. Previously promoting the liberal traditions of asylum to a desire to intern and export an entire race of immigrants from their shores. This reversal was largely a response to wartime conditions and issues of security. However, it was also a reflection of the anti-alien sentiments that had been prevalent within the conservative party and the working class who felt threatened, economically and later militarily, by the presence of aliens within England.
Conclusion

When examining at the implications of the actions of the public and government during the saga of internment there are a number of important factors and events to examine. The prominence of the anti-alien discourse that evolved in the late nineteenth century provided a foundation for anti-alien legislation and the emergence of sentiments emergent in the pre-war years. Discourse surrounding pauper immigrants was not explicitly directed at Germans, but the rationale for reducing the immigrant population was. Concerns over employment and the plight of the English poor stemmed from the success German clerks, waiters, bankers, and barbers, among other professions, had within England. Attempts to restrict immigration in the 1890's and the early 1900's showed the concern that many people within the population and parliament harbored over the character of these immigrants. Many argued that serious societal decline was occurring as a result of their presence.

Concerns turned into fear as ideas of a pending German invasion permeated society starting around 1905; fueled by a rush of public discourse and the popularity of spy novels. The British people became virulently anti-German. Writing in to newspapers and the government about their barbers and waiters, claiming them to be agents procuring military information for the German government
became a common occurrence. Newspapers did nothing to quell these concerns as they published these letters and commented themselves on the possibility of an invasion adding to the unrest. A few cases of legitimate espionage were reported, strengthening public fears to a degree, energizing imaginations and hostility. Government action was taken in the form of new draft policies to restrict immigration, as they too were concerned about the impact the immigrant community was having on British society. Furthermore parliamentary committees were formed to discuss the alien problem and find ways to mitigate perceived negative effects and the public’s unease. All of these worries and anti-alien sentiments boiled over with the outbreak of war in late 1914.

As war became a reality, action was taken by the government to impose restrictions on the movement of alien enemies within the country. They addressed the problem expeditiously and approached internment deliberately and examined each case thoroughly. This approach was divergent from what the public wanted; the complete and immediate removal of Germans. While the government did expand internment after pressure in the wake of the German attack on the Lusitania it held fast to its policy of reviewing each case for exemption.

In democracies the relationship between the people and the government is curious. A political entity’s view on an issue can drive policy one way or another given their power come election day. However, the government has a responsibility to follow what, in their view, is the best policy for the nation at that time. A question arises in times of great public outcry, especially when a country is at war, of where
the power really lies in this relationship. As many people have argued in the case of the Brittan in this particular context the government caved in to public demands for internment, but there is more to the story. This discourse was long existent within the government and that at the time of the push in May 1915; they had already detained one-third of the Germans within England. Significant to this debate, the government and the public had a shared view of what was to be done about the German presence but the timeline for its execution was at issue. Unfortunately for the government an event occurred that forced their hand and expedited the process of internment. To the governments credit they developed regulation according to their own established procedures, and did not completely cave to public pressure.

Interment as a practice was not a new phenomenon to the British nor was it the last time it was practiced by the government. During the Second World War German civilians in England would again be interned for similar reasons but released two years into the war. Backlash against the practice in the interwar period, as a result of published internee memoirs, derailed the process during World War II. War changes the way cultures view each other and in the case of England it seems that much of the mentality that was exhibited during the war was bubbling under the surface in the years before the conflict. Had it not been for a war breaking out the anti-alien mentality might not have been transferred onto the German people. More likely it would have fallen on the Russian and Polish Jewish communities that populated the often-abused East End of London, as the German
population was less degraded prior to the mid 1900’s. Unfortunately these sentiments are counterfactual, the Germans were targeted and as a result they suffered greatly during the war ultimately seeing over half of their numbers repatriated, decimating their presence in England.

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