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## "You must all be Interned": Identity Among Internees in Great Britain during World War II

### **Abstract**

Between 1933 and 1940, the United States, Great Britain and most other developed nations saw an influx of German refugees entering their borders attempting to be free of the tyranny of Hitler's National Socialism. Many of those fleeing from Germany were intellectuals: authors, teachers, artists, or thinkers who faced persecution in their homeland. For the men, women, and children who chose the British Isles as their new home, Great Britain symbolized hope for a life free from persecution. By 1941, however, many refugees from Germany found themselves arrested and put into camps, not by the Nazis, but by their protectors, the British.

### **Keywords**

Great Britain, World War II, German refugees, internment camps

## **“You must all be Interned”:**

### **Identity Among Internees in Great Britain during World War II**

*Elizabeth A. Atkins*

Between 1933 and 1940, the United States, Great Britain and most other developed nations saw an influx of German refugees entering their borders attempting to be free of the tyranny of Hitler’s National Socialism. Many of those fleeing from Germany were intellectuals: authors, teachers, artists, or thinkers who faced persecution in their homeland. For the men, women, and children who chose the British Isles as their new home, Great Britain symbolized hope for a life free from persecution. By 1941, however, many refugees from Germany found themselves arrested and put into camps, not by the Nazis, but by their protectors, the British.

How were the internees in Great Britain viewed by outsiders, and how did they view themselves? The British government imprisoned German, Austrian and Italian refugees as “enemy aliens,” but did anyone outside of the government view them as a real threat? This work seeks to examine the mental state of German refugees interned in Great Britain during the Second World War, and the opinions of the people of Great Britain concerning these refugees. Responses and views varied widely both within and outside of the camps. For some, Nazis and Germans were one in the same, while many others saw a clear delineation between the two. Many refugees saw themselves not as German, but as British, wanting to leave their past behind them and embrace the culture of their new nation, and some British civilians were more than willing to accept that view as well. Some even abandoned British, German or Nazi as terms, choosing instead to define themselves as Jews. Most internees were refugees who remained strongly anti-Nazi throughout their internments, continuing to work against the Nazi party even when their adopted country let them down.

Britain had a history of interning “enemy aliens,” a policy that had begun during the First World War on the Isle of Man. Sandwiched between the United Kingdom and Ireland, this little island became a camp for enemy aliens, primarily Germans, from 1914 until 1919, after which, most of the internees were expelled from Britain, despite personal adaptations such as having married a native or having lived in Britain before the outbreak of war.<sup>1</sup> This extremely strict policy would become the forerunner of the internment of refugees during the Second World War, some twenty years later.

As soon as Hitler’s rise to power began to seriously threaten citizens of Germany, emigration from Germany began in earnest. From 1933 until 1939 and the start of World War II, approximately 300,000 refugees fled from Germany, trickling into any country willing to give them refuge.<sup>2</sup> The 300,000 refugees were made up of a wide variety of personalities, but were often young, with either university education or training in useful, mainly service-related, fields. Britain often urged refugees to use England as an intermediary point, living there only until the refugee could gain admittance to another country, such as the United States. Those who planned to stay in Britain, particularly with the dramatic increase in immigration in the two years prior to the outbreak of war, had to meet stricter standards in terms of education and economic security, so as to not be a drain on the British economy. Hilda Ogbe, age eighteen when she and her mother left Germany, remembered the hurdles she and her mother had to jump in order to save their own lives. “To enter another country as a refugee,” she wrote, “one had to deposit the sum of fifty English pounds in a bank overseas...The snag was that in Germany it was strictly

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<sup>1</sup> F. Coakley, “Internment,” 2001 [website]; available from [http:// www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/famhist/genealogy/intern.htm](http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/famhist/genealogy/intern.htm); Internet; accessed 26 November, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For comparison’s sake, in 1939, the Nazis held over 400,000 political prisoners in Germany or Germany controlled areas.

forbidden to own foreign currency.”<sup>3</sup> England offered to waive the fifty-pound rule for those trained in useful careers, leading Hilda to train as a domestic servant, while her mother trained to be a milliner.

Hilda emigrated from Germany in 1939, but many of the refugees had left Germany shortly after Hitler became chancellor in January of 1933. Many intellectuals, scientists and professionals, particularly those with Jewish backgrounds, or whose thinking did not agree with Nazi policies left for the United States and Great Britain in 1933. By the outbreak of the War, these men and women would feel their primary allegiances lay with the Allies, not their native lands. They trusted that any suspicion or abuse they encountered in England would be mild compared to the tortures inflicted by the Nazis. Because of Great Britain’s tough stance on immigration, most refugees were young, educated and productive members of society. In general, they assumed that they would continue to perform their daily occupations, or would be allowed to aid the war effort. They certainly did not expect the widespread distrust that surrounded anyone with a foreign accent as soon as the country was at war.

At the start of World War II, approximately 70,000 unnaturalized Germans and Austrians were living within the borders of Great Britain. On September 3, 1939, when Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, all of those men and women became enemy aliens and fell under deep suspicion because of their native birth. Hoping to avoid a policy of mass internment, British officials allowed, and encouraged, German refugees to leave Great Britain and return to Germany; only 2,000 did.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the government also began to crack down on illegal refugees; newspapers were filled with news and editorial articles outlining the cases of aliens

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<sup>3</sup>Hilda Ogbe, *The Crumbs Off the Wife’s Table* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books, Limited, 2002), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Peter and Leni Gillman, *Collar the Lot: How Britain Interned and Expelled Her Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980), 61. Only ten days were allotted to allow Germans to leave, but a mere one hundred Germans failed to make the deadline of September 9.

who had never been naturalized before the war, who were sneaking into the country with forged passports, or who had lied to get a passport. Sir John Anderson, Secretary of State for the Home Department, was the man who would decide the fate of every foreigner of Germanic heritage, being forced to weigh public opinion against real danger and to create a plan to deal with enemy aliens. He looked back upon Britain's policies during World War I to try to find an answer.<sup>5</sup>

Understandably, the risks of infiltration and espionage were felt to be very real and very serious, and Britain's new policies clearly reflected this fear. In October 1939, the executive branch of government began to use powers they had received for wartime use in the Emergency Powers (Defence)<sup>6</sup> Act. Throughout the last week of October, Parliament debated extending the executive's wartime powers to include the power to set curfews for some or all of society and to have more control over propaganda.<sup>7</sup> With their new powers properly defined as being for the greater good of British defense, policies regarding refugee freedom of movement were the first to be implemented. Male refugees from hostile countries, or from countries currently occupied by the enemy, between the ages of sixteen and sixty were ordered to give up their bicycles, firearms, cameras, and maps; they had to check in with the local police department weekly, or sometimes daily, and were required to obtain a permit from their local police department in order to travel further than five miles from their place of residence.<sup>8</sup> Eventually these rules were widened to include women, some children, and some older refugees. A curfew was added as well, originally 10:30 pm (midnight in London), but soon after, the curfew was changed to 8

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<sup>5</sup> Miriam Kochan, *Britain's Internees in the Second World War* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1983), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this work, the British spelling will remain in official policy names, and within quotations.

<sup>7</sup> "The Commons and Curfew Powers," *Times* (London), 31 October, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> "Alien Restrictions on Refugees," *Times* (London), 23 May, 1940.

pm.<sup>9</sup> Despite the shortage of doctors, refugee professionals were not allowed to practice during this time.<sup>10</sup>

Refugee responses to these new policies varied. One refugee remembered the hassle of having to receive permission every time he left the city for business, being in a job that required near constant trips across the country. Some men found the curfews unbearable; fines and arrests were common, particularly among young men and sailors, often leading to altercations with the police and drunken brawls in public houses. Indignation was high as refugees felt they were British; they had come to the country and learned the language; they had made themselves useful and “had to seal our windows in case of gas attacks” just as the British did.<sup>11</sup>

Under Anderson’s policies, most German and Austrian refugees were interned for at least a short time. Length of internment and the location where one would spend that time was determined by what class each refugee was placed into. Classes A, B, and C, most dangerous to least dangerous, respectively, were the simple labels used to group refugees and decide their fates. Society had even more distinctions: German, British, Fascist, Nazi, Fifth Columnist and many others became labels that were open to many variations and perceptions. The term Fifth Columnist, referring to Francisco Franco’s Fascist regime in Spain, became the most all-encompassing slur used to describe refugees, internees, or anyone suspected of aiding one of Britain’s enemies.<sup>12</sup> It was a daunting task to attach these different labels with their many interpretations to thousands of strangers, but the process was well organized, with tribunals set up across the country in front of which every immigrant from a hostile nation had to stand.

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<sup>9</sup> “Aliens Charged Under ‘Curfew’ Order,” *Times* (London), 15 May, 1940; “Curfew for all Aliens,” *Times* (London) May 30, 1940.

<sup>10</sup> Maxine Schwartz Seller, *We Built Up Our Lives: Education and Community among Jewish Refugees Interned by Britain in World War II* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 2001), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Seller, *We Built Up Our Lives*, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Gillman, *Collar the Lot*, 74.

Despite its organization, no one was really happy with how the tribunals operated. They were slow, unfair, judged the wrong merits, and often lacked interpreters. *The Times* received frequent letters to the editor deploring the bureaucracy and hypocrisy of the tribunals, which determined who would be set free and who would be interned. Each tribunal set its own standards for determining into what category a refugee would be placed. Monetary well-being was sometimes more important than a good character, and understanding English was often vital. Being Jewish was almost certain to gain one leniency, but being a non-Jewish German often brought up the question “Why did you leave Germany?” from a panel which did not realize that the Nazis targeted many more than just Jews.<sup>13</sup>

Judaism was not a certain way to avoid deportation or internment, as one Jewish refugee learned before the tribunal. When asked by the tribunal if the Gestapo had ever arrested him, the enemy alien replied truthfully, no; he had been ordered by the Gestapo to leave the country, but had not been arrested. His tribunal refused to classify him as a refugee, stating that he was not one, but that he did not want to be repatriated.<sup>14</sup> Often, a refugee would not know until he or she had been called before a tribunal, that his or her naturalization papers had been misplaced, incorrectly filled out, or simply denied.

Soon after the tribunals were set up, the government began to feel that the panels of judges were too lenient to refugees, and began to set stricter criteria for B or C class, and likewise for internment. In May 1940, the Aliens Advisory Committee informed 3500 class B women that they had to once more stand before their tribunal since all male Germans and Austrians between the ages of 16 and 60 in classes A and B had already been interned. Until that

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<sup>13</sup> “An Alien’s Tribunal,” *Times* (London), 28 October, 1939.

<sup>14</sup> Kochan, *Britain’s Internees*, 14.



time, few women had been interned as security threats.<sup>15</sup> During May and June wholesale internment began, in order to secure Britain against espionage.

Internment camps began to pop up all across Great Britain; they varied greatly in size and treatment of prisoners. The largest and best-documented internments occurred on the Isle of Man, the location of which, as well as the legacy of internment there caused it to be quickly reopened as an internment facility when mass numbers of refugees were arrested. The camps located on the Isle of Man were universally considered the most comfortable and best maintained of all internment camps. Port Douglas became an arrival and departure point for many refugees during internment, and later, deportation. From Douglas, enemy aliens deemed dangerous to the war effort were deported to Canada or Australia. Other camps were located at Lancashire Cotton Mill, Bertram Mills Circus, Devon Holiday Camp, Prees Heath in Shropshire and many other places both convenient and inconvenient. For governmental ease, camps were created at locations convenient for transport, but just as no one today wishes to live next to a prison, some towns then attempted to dissuade the government from holding enemy aliens nearby. The Edinburgh town council, in later 1939, urged the government to transfer internees from a camp within the city boundaries to a “more appropriate site” since “three and four prisoners escaped recently” from the camp.<sup>16</sup> Internees were still seen as dangerous by most citizens of Britain, and no one wanted escapees roaming through their towns. But while the townsfolk complained about the locations of the camps, the internees were the ones who had to suffer life within the camps.

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<sup>15</sup>“Re-Examination of Alien Women,” *Times* (London), 21 May, 1940.

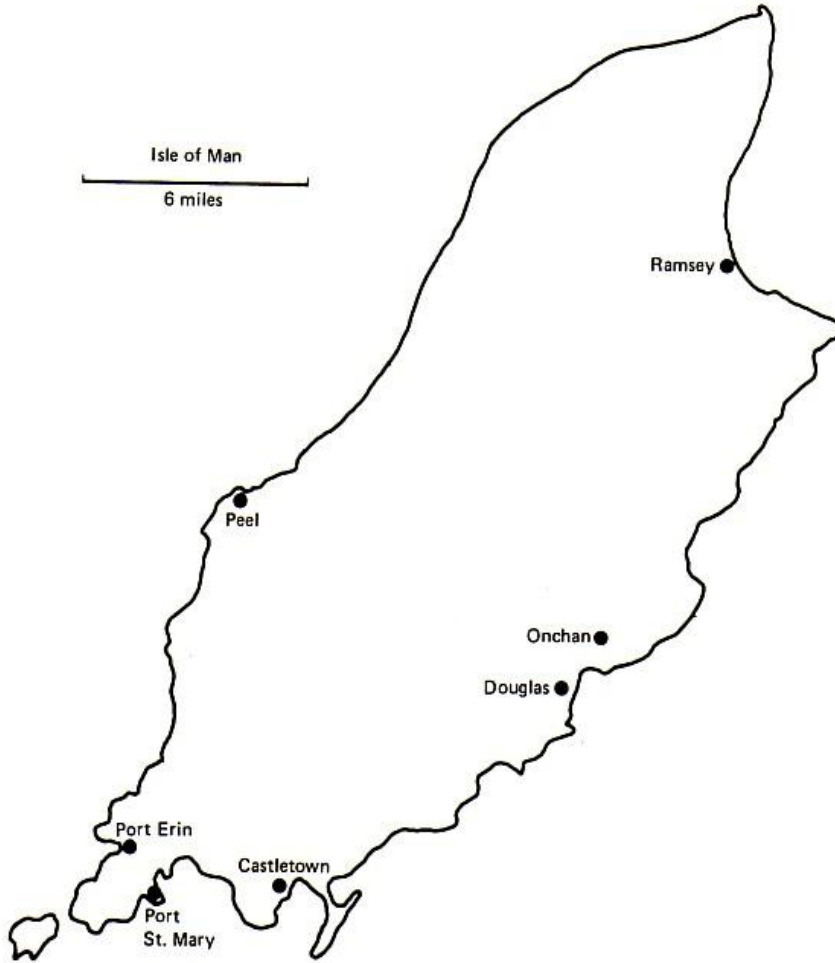
<sup>16</sup> “Removal of Internment Camp Suggested,” *Times* (London), 24 November, 1939



MAP 1 Map showing the sites of the internment-camps in Great Britain

<sup>17</sup> Both maps are taken from Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, xii-xiii.

Camps on Isle of Man.



MAP 2 Map showing the sites of the internment-camps on the Isle of Man

Conditions in camps varied widely depending largely on the camp location and who was being interned there. Fred Uhlman described his stay at the Bertram Mills Circus at Ascot, the first of several camps in which he would live:

We slept in the elephants' and lions' apartments on straw-filled mattresses; the food—for days on end—consisted of burned porridge and kippers; the first day it had been bread and tea only. There was no salt. Everything was dirty. No news or newspapers were allowed, but every prisoner got five pieces of toilet paper daily.<sup>18</sup>

Other camps, however, were luxurious, particularly the women's camp on the Isle of Man.

There, internees were allowed to wander nearly freely within the port of Douglas. Their money was confiscated and doled out weekly as an allowance, to be spent as the person wished.

Internees were housed in seaside hotels with “beautiful tiled bathrooms” and “three regular meals a day.”<sup>19</sup> Another internee complained, however, that seaside resorts were by no means an ideal place to be held captive; in January, the chalets in which internees lived were “unheatable,” being designed for use only in summer.<sup>20</sup> Whether an internee was housed in a seaside resort, or an animal stall, there was always the pervasive feeling of being a prisoner.

For most refugees, internment came as a shock. Since in general men were interned before women, families were torn apart and women left with little support. For some, incarceration in one camp reminded them of Germany, where the Nazis were busily interring the “misfortune” of the German people, the Jews. One refugee, the wife of a doctor, cried to her friend, “Our domestic happiness was the only thing that Hitler did not take from us. Now

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<sup>18</sup> Fred Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960), 226.

<sup>19</sup> Ogbe, *Crumbs*, 15-16

<sup>20</sup> Oliver Pretzel, afterward to *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, by Sebastian Haffner, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 303.

persecution continues in this country that offered us hospitality and freedom.”<sup>21</sup> Many like this woman became disillusioned with Britain as a land of freedom. Most did not see the point of internment and felt, justifiably, that it aided the Nazis more than hurt them. Fritz Frank, a German refugee eloquently outlined the feelings of many anti-Hitler aliens in England:

If the present wholesale internment of refugees were for England’s sake I would accept it in silence. But is it of any use to England; is it not rather helping the enemy by enabling him to proclaim in his propaganda that England is no longer a sanctuary of the protected? And England and the cause stand to lose by depriving the country of the services of many willing helpers whose knowledge and skill would be of great assistance, but who are now to be interned.<sup>22</sup>

Internment allowed the Nazis to spread propaganda about the treatment of Germans in Britain, and to decry that England was no more a free land than Germany was. England meanwhile, had to spread manpower even thinner to continue the war effort.

When most internments took place in 1940, the opinion outside of the camp was primarily one of relief. Anti-German feeling had spread quickly during the “phony war” as citizens failed to separate Nazis from Germans or from refugees from other nations. In at least some cases, anti-German feeling could result in anti-Semitism, as well. Signs in boarding houses read “No Germans—No Jews” and educated Germans were offered the most simple and menial jobs, despite the newly opened job offerings attached to the war effort.<sup>23</sup> While tribunals tended to be more lenient to Jewish refugees, British society buttressed negative stereotypes of Jews during the war, accusing them of profiteering and running black market scams.

After internment began, the public felt secure knowing that the “bad Germans” were locked up where they could not hurt anyone or damage the war effort. “We have a large number of German refugees in our midst, and while these remain at large it is bound to cause

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth Mulford Robbins, “Internment of Refugees,” *Times* (London), 24 July, 1940.

<sup>22</sup> Fritz Frank, *Times* (London), 16 July, 1940.

<sup>23</sup> Sellar, *We Built Up Our Lives*, 65-66.

uneasiness,” wrote one pro-internment activist, “Hitler’s subtle methods are known to be planned through internal means...Tribunals are not infallible, and it is no time to take risks of any kind.”<sup>24</sup> Even British citizens who were on close terms with German and Austrian refugees, often knowing the full details of their friend or neighbor’s trip to Britain, endorsed the idea of interning all aliens for the war effort. Fred Uhlman recalled in his memoirs a telephone conversation with his neighbor. The “dear old lady” told him excitedly, “I must tell you that we are all afraid of the Germans in our midst. You all must be interned. I don’t say you are a spy. But imagine what harm one spy in even 20,000 could do!”<sup>25</sup> Others saw internment as a better alternative to deportation, particularly for refugees who entered the country on a forged or stolen passport. Then the authorities could at least be certain that the refugees would live through the war.

Despite the clamoring for internment from many sections of society, no one sought to abuse the refugees. Knowing that some innocent people would end up in camps, the government sought to create a comfortable environment for their internees. William Paton, Chairman of the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Internees and Prisoners of War, wrote a letter describing the conditions set forth for camps in Britain:

The members of this committee represent the Christian Churches, the Jewish community, the Y.M.C.A., the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John, the Christian Council for Refugees, and the National Council of Social Service...the provision of worship and pastoral ministrations, of lectures, concerts and games, and of minor physical comforts is the responsibility of one or other of the cooperating bodies.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A. J. Stewart, “Alien Refugees,” *Times* (London), 25 April, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 224.

<sup>26</sup> William Paton, “Alien Internees and Prisoners,” *Times* (London), 12 December, 1939.

Refugees were to be kept in relative comfort, given amusement and spiritual guidance, and not to slave away as in German camps. Prisoners of war were, likewise, dealt with humanely, following the international regulations for work and leisure.

Most refugees arrived at the camp cold, hungry, and sometimes wet, though in letters to the *Times*, they often place the blame for that situation on general circumstances, not on the care given by British guards. R. Avigdor, a German internee, used almost those exact words when writing a short piece for the *Times*: “The fact that I arrived at my destination cold, wet, hungry, and feeling very miserable was no fault of the commander of the camp or his officers,” he stated, rather, “the treatment meted out to me and the other internees by the commander and his officers was beyond words of praise.”<sup>27</sup> Other internees were not as kind in the descriptions of their guards. Fred Uhlman recalled his arrest and internment as being filled with uncaring, rude and sometimes cruel treatment. Arrested just nine days before his wife gave birth to their first child, Uhlman asked the officer if he knew that Uhlman’s wife was about to have a baby. “I know,” was the officer’s reply, but the affair was out of his hands. He was the guard who received the kindest description, being polite and kind enough to allow Uhlman to pack a bag and say goodbye to his wife. Upon arrival at the Bertram Mills Circus winter-quarters, conditions were poor, and out of boredom, the guards called across the camp to each other all night long, preventing the inmates from getting any sleep. Sometime later, when Uhlman was transferred to Douglas, Isle of Man, he and the other internees were “surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets...One of the soldiers shouted, ‘Faster, faster.’ I told him that the man in front of me was seventy—and he stopped.” A large part of the rudeness, or occasional cruelty of the guards, was caused by ignorance or carelessness. Upon being reminded of the common decencies of humanity, behavior became more gentlemanly. The only camp with a truly bad name was the

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<sup>27</sup> R. Avigdor, “Internment Officers,” *Times* (London), 9 September, 1940.

“infamous” Wharf Mills Camp.<sup>28</sup> It was described as “a disused cotton-mill near Manchester...derelict and filthy, with most of the windows broken and floors littered with rubbish. The commandant stole like a magpie.”<sup>29</sup>

After the initial shock of entering the camp was past, a time of sheer boredom came, and a feeling of uselessness. Idleness was a common cause of depression and listlessness, especially in the first few months of internment when very little reliable news was allowed into the camp and correspondence was closely guarded. Internees were left with little idea how their families were getting along without them, and even less about the progress of the war. Most refugees had hoped to be of use to the war effort; men most often hoped to fight in the military, while women expected to begin war work. For men, however, the only military avenue truly open to them was the Pioneer Corps. In theory, all branches of the armed forces were supposed to be open to aliens, but in reality, only a handful of refugees were able to secure posts, but rather were, as one writer put it “herded into the Pioneer Corps with no prospect whatever of advancement.”<sup>30</sup> In the Pioneer Corps, a soldier could have any number of odd jobs, from digging ditches and building camps to handling stores of ammunition to clearing rubble and rebuilding bridges. Usually they did not actually fight, and there was little room for advancement or a military career.<sup>31</sup> Even men of German or Austrian lineage who had been raised and educated in England since childhood found it nearly impossible to join the military outside of the Pioneer Corps. Letters to the editor were almost entirely kind to the idea of aliens in the military; one description stated “German and Austrian refugees, are looked upon in every

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<sup>28</sup> Alternately Warth Mills Camp.

<sup>29</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 229.

<sup>30</sup> “The Pioneer Corps,” *Times* (London), 17 December, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John Starling, “History and Background of the Royal Pioneer Corps,” 12 April 2003 [website]; available from [http://www.royalpioneer corps.co.uk/rpc/history\\_main2.htm](http://www.royalpioneer corps.co.uk/rpc/history_main2.htm); Internet; accessed 29 November, 2004.



way as British soldiers.” Though, the writer points out, they had not the opportunities for advancement that a true British soldier would have.<sup>32</sup> Several military men considered the idea of forming a fighting Foreign Legion to allow aliens to fight.

Joining the Pioneer Corps was one way to avoid internment that many young men accepted; unfortunately there was no equivalent organization for women. Since women were interned, in general, after most men had been, women were able to perform some helpful work at the war’s start. Many refugees who had come to Britain worked as domestic servants, an occupation that always had openings at the time, but at the war’s start many of these women found themselves without jobs, their employers not wanting to risk housing a spy. By 1940, the British government realized the war was not about to end, and released a law that all foreign domestic workers must help the war effort and could not perform other work.<sup>33</sup> Many women found their ways to factories or hospitals, where they labored as seamstresses and nurses. Hilda Ogbe’s mother had trained in Germany as a milliner before she and her daughter left for England, she then worked as a domestic servant, but eventually ended up working as a seamstress at a factory making military uniforms along with her son, Hilda’s brother.<sup>34</sup> Throughout 1940, however, as internments rose, women were pulled away from their wartime work and sent to camps across Britain to sit idly. One hospital in London had employed thirty alien women as nurses, twenty-nine of which were arrested and interned one day; the Ministry of Health then ordered the hospital to remain open, an impossibility without the aid of another nearby hospital. The head of the hospital was obviously upset and disgusted by the sudden loss of most of his staff, and defended them valiantly claiming that “the visit of the police came as a

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<sup>32</sup> H.M. Carleton Greene, “The Pioneer Corps,” *Times* (London), 24 November, 1941.

<sup>33</sup> Ogbe, *Crumbs*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ogbe, *Crumbs*, 10-11.

surprise, for all the sisters and nurses, although German, were anti-Hitler.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the widespread need of doctors, nurses and scientists, non-naturalized professionals were still barred from working at their professions. Scientists were hampered in their wartime research and in the recruitment of researchers by the internment of German and Austrian scientists.<sup>36</sup> In January of 1941, alien women clamored at the newly founded International Women’s Service Groups for an organization to be formed that would allow female enemy aliens to aid the war cause.<sup>37</sup> Like military service for men, letters concerning women’s war work were almost entirely sympathetic to the plight of women who wanted to help. Several articles outlined recommendations for refugee women’s organizations to aid the war effort. Most encouraged supervision by British officers and limitation of participation to “friendly” enemy aliens, those deemed safe and loyal to Britain.

Since they were unable to help the war cause, most internees spent their time improving themselves and other internees, helping each other to gain skills that would be useful in their new country. One of their first tasks, at least amongst the majority of the refugees, was to convince the guards that most of the refugees were anti-Hitler and loyal to Great Britain. Some internees took every possible opportunity to show their support and respect for Great Britain. At the Bertram Mills Circus the guards had up to Fred Uhlman’s arrival guarded only prisoners of war, most of whom were loyal to Germany if not necessarily to Hitler. When the refugee internees gave a concert within the camp they “finished with *God Save the King* before *and* after” to differentiate themselves from “the German sailors who had been prisoners there just before our

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<sup>35</sup> “29 Alien Nurses Interned,” *Times* (London), 3 June, 1940.

<sup>36</sup> Aaron L. Goldman, “Defence Regulation 18B: Emergency Internment of Aliens and Political Dissenters in Great Britain during World War II,” *The Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 2 (May, 1973): 127.

<sup>37</sup> “Alien Women Anxious to Help Britain,” *Times* (London), 15 January, 1941.

arrival.”<sup>38</sup> As Uhlman and his fellow internees were being marched from the port of Douglas to the camp, they passed a war memorial and “every one of us took our hats off.”<sup>39</sup> Once one was comfortably settled into camp, the next thing to do was fill out forms and wait to be released.

The flight of intellectuals and freethinkers from German and Austria created a massive drain on professionals and artists within Germany. Most of these men and women ended up in the United States and Great Britain. As a result England saw an influx of writers, scientists, musicians and artists whose thinking did not agree with Nazi ideology. When so many brilliant people were confined with little to do, a high culture flourished within the camps. Concerts, theatre productions, and poetry readings were commonplace, and sometimes used as fundraisers for the war effort. Exile newspapers sprouted up in all countries to which refugees fled, and flourished within camps even though they were often forbidden. Within their pages, stories and poems protested their confinement, but more often articles critical of Hitler and Nazism filled the pages. Most exile newspapers and cultural magazines within England included articles in both English and German, celebrating the cultures of both countries and raising awareness about the conditions of exiles in other countries. *Die Zeitung*, a London-based exile newspaper, carried several stories relating to the internment of aliens while *Aufbau*, published in New York, ran articles praising Britain’s decision to separate Nazis and anti-Nazis.

Other internees, not necessarily intellectuals, but well educated all the same, spent time improving themselves and each other through lectures, classes, and forums designed to teach useful information that would aid the students in their postwar lives in Britain. Hilda Ogbe’s camp at St. Mary’s, not far from Port Erin on the Isle of Man, was a paradise when compared to the camps where Fred Uhlman was interned, and the relative freedom of movement allowed

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<sup>38</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 226.

<sup>39</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 230.

inmates to interact much more freely with each other. Boredom was a constant companion until her camp began a “service exchange” where internees gave classes to each other on various skills they knew. At age eighteen she had passed her *Abitur* just before leaving Germany, and hoped to study modern languages when she and her mother settled in England. Upon internment, to pass the time, she began teaching English and French to other inmates, as well as acting in frequent theater productions. Ogbe’s language courses became so popular that she needed a larger room to accommodate all her students. Unfortunately, many old inmates, especially, came only for the social aspect, they talked or sewed through the entire lessons, and learned little to prepare themselves for life in their new country.<sup>40</sup> Classes and lectures not only filled each internee’s day, but also gave them hope for a better, more prepared life in Britain, after the war ended.

It is certain that some true believers in Nazism were interned in Great Britain, up to 2,500 of the 12,000 internees held in Britain as of June 7, 1941, according to one contemporary source,<sup>41</sup> but unsurprisingly, none have written memoirs recording their accounts. The closest we can come are accounts of other internees, and perhaps the account of Sir Oswald Mosley, as well. Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, was arrested on May 23, 1940. Certainly not a Nazi, Mosley was an admitted Fascist whose political party had just polled one percent of the vote on the previous day’s election.<sup>42</sup> The popularity of the Fascist movement had been declining steadily since 1936, but Mosley maintained his position that Britain should not get involved in a European conflict. He promised to continue to oppose the war, but neither he nor the British Union would sabotage the war effort. Sir Oswald Mosley, with this background, was considered a danger to the country, and was arrested under *Defence Regulation 18b*, which

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<sup>40</sup> Ogbe, *Crumbs*, 15-19

<sup>41</sup> Kochan, *Britain’s Internees*, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Goldman, “Defence Regulation 18B,” 128

gave the government nearly limitless power to imprison enemies of the state and was used not to punish the guilty, but rather as a preventative measure to keep potential threats under control.<sup>43</sup>

Being one of the few native British citizens to be interned during the war, Mosley's views were understandably different from the views of the foreign occupants of the camps. He had no doubt that he was considered a British citizen, not an enemy, and so did not have to prove his loyalty in the same way a foreigner would. Mosley always held the view that he was trying to improve British life in a legal, and constitutional, manner, so that where a foreigner would have been seen as dangerous and devious, Mosley, as a British citizen, could and was seen by many as being patriotic. One Member of Parliament, Sir Thomas Cook, did accuse Mosley of being unpatriotic, calling Mosley a traitor for opposing involvement in the Second World War, but while imprisoned under Defence Regulation 18B, Mosley was able to successfully sue Cook for slander, receiving an apology and payment for damages.<sup>44</sup> According to Mosley two reasons were given for his detainment "(1) A suggestion that we are traitors who would take up arms and fight with the Germans if they landed, and (2) that our propaganda undermines the civilian morale," though he maintained that the latter, rather than the former, was the more important reason for detainment.<sup>45</sup>

Sir Oswald Mosley found his predicament humorous as opposed to worrisome, since he did not face the uncertainty that plagued refugees in the camps. He did not face deportation or confrontations with hostile Nazis; he did not have to constantly prove himself to be a loyal Englishman, because his birth and military service absolved him from such questions. Once more, how the authorities perceived one, whether one was labeled a foreigner or a native, was of the utmost importance. A British citizen interned or imprisoned without a trial went against the

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<sup>43</sup> Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), 190-193.

<sup>44</sup> Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1968), 398.

<sup>45</sup> Mosley, *My Life*, 402.

morality and ingrained sense of freedom for which many were fighting, causing Mosley to gain popular support by playing the card of an innocent citizen in a free country, who was lawfully, but immorally arrested for exerting his right to protest his government. An alien refugee, however, did not have the luxury of exerting one's rights as a citizen.

About 800 political dissenters were arrested in the third week of May 1940 and split "between Brixton Prison and the concentration camp at Ascot," the Bertram Mills Circus winter-quarters where Fred Uhlman was interned.<sup>46</sup> Mosley's use of the term "concentration camp" is, of course, ironic, since even at their worst, British internment camps never approached the horrors of the Nazi concentration and death camps. Surrounded by members of his own movement, naturalized Germans who remained loyal to Germany or Hitler, and a few other right-wing political figures, Mosley suffered little loneliness or boredom, complaining only of "the most variegated collection of bed-bugs I had ever encountered since the First War."<sup>47</sup> Mosley knew many of the prison wardens, one had even served under Mosley, so these British men suffered none of the occasional rough or cruel treatment experienced by alien refugees.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Brixton prisoners were able to order meals from outside the compound, play sports during free time in the courtyard, were provided with books and companionship, and were not required to wear uniforms as refugees were.<sup>49</sup> Sir Mosley's internment, however, lasted much longer than the average stay of a refugee. After three and a half years of confinement, Mosley was released in 1944, partially due to illness, but more so because of the campaigning of many citizens to release one of their own. As noted above, many citizens were outraged at the violation of basic civil liberties permitted by Defence Regulation 18B, particularly in August of

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<sup>46</sup> Mosley, *My Life*, 405.

<sup>47</sup> Mosley, *My Life*, 405.

<sup>48</sup> Mosley, *My Life*, 406.

<sup>49</sup> Goldman, "Defence Regulation 18B," 133.

1940 when the number of British citizens in prison without trial topped 1,600. By 1941, only 400 citizens were still in confinement and the last twenty-two detainees were finally freed on May 8, 1945, VE day when Defence Regulation 18B was revoked.<sup>50</sup> Arguments raged, until the regulation's revocation, about the morality and legality of the regulation, arguing liberty versus security in a controversy not unlike the current debates surrounding terrorism.<sup>51</sup> The issue was discussed in Parliament and newspapers, which led to more and more leniency throughout the war years.

While one account exists of an interned Fascist, no true, admitted Nazi has come forward to tell of life in the camps. All of the information available on Nazi prisoners is secondhand, from memoirs and newspaper articles. Both within and outside of the camps, aliens and their supporters saw the danger and unfairness inherent in interning all refugees. Many refugees claim to have never seen a Nazi sympathizer, but those who did often complained of the undifferentiated treatment shown to both Nazi sympathizers and anti-Nazi internees. One American with ties to England wrote an editorial letter decrying Britain's policies which went so strongly against its claims to protect freedom protesting "the present internment policy which embraces Nazis and anti-Nazis alike."<sup>52</sup> Peter F. Weiner knew and admitted that some of the freed internees were Nazis, but wrote the following concerning his favorable camp experience:

Every single "Tommy" who guarded us, and who usually did not know the difference between Class "A," "B," and "C" aliens, treated us in the same human and kind way. In one of the compounds of our camp were actual Nazis. We never had anything to do with them, greatest care was taken by all the officials that we were separated from them...these men, who never hid their Nazi sympathies, were always treated in exactly the same friendly and generous—i.e. British—way by all the officers.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cross, *Fascists in Britain*, 195.

<sup>51</sup> See Aaron Goldman, "Defence Regulation 18B" for a detailed overview of these debates.

<sup>52</sup> Robbins, "Internment of Refugees."

<sup>53</sup> Peter F. Weiner, "Internment Camps," *Times* (London), 28 September, 1940.

Most internees were not as happy about the universal treatment shown the unrepentant Nazis, though for Weiner, it seemed to support his personal resolve that despite the apparent similarities in British and Nazi treatment of undesirables, Britain was a free and civilized land.

Indignation was the frequent response to being housed with and treated the same as true Nazis. Edith Jacobus recalled the trip to Port Erin on the Isle of Man: "When we arrived on the Isle of Man, the inhabitants stood watching us refugees arrive and do you know what they did? They spat on us as nasty Germans. We were taken by train and bus together with real Nazis."<sup>54</sup> As mentioned above, internees made strong distinctions between the titles of Englishman, German and Nazi; some Jews added the title "Jewish" along with the others as a descriptor such as "Jewish German."

Most internees seemed to have no trouble telling true Nazis from refugees. Since refugees were interned from any country controlled by the Nazis, Czechs, Poles, Belgians and many others were interned besides those native to aggressor nations; internees saw the vast majority of fellow prisoners as anti-Nazi. The Nazis mentioned in memoirs and letters mostly fit into the stereotypical image of a Fascist German. Fred Uhlman described the one person in his camp who was certainly a Nazi as having "the right Nazi mentality: he was overbearing, intolerant, narrow-minded and had no sense of humour."<sup>55</sup> They were loud and open about their political views, both aspects of their character were similar to the Nazis during their rise to power, maintaining high visibility and making it seem like there were more Nazis than actually existed. Because of their clamoring, while imprisoned during the war, as well as while gaining power in pre-war Germany, they were able to achieve their agenda even though they were a minority. Within camps, Nazis were often allowed to sing militaristic German songs like "*Heut'*

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<sup>54</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 46.

<sup>55</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 240.



*fahren wir gegen Engelland*" and raise Nazis flags, while other internees continually sought to prove their loyalty to the British war effort. As in all other aspects, camps varied in the freedom allowed to Nazi sympathizers; sometimes they were separated from other inmates, sometimes they were encouraged by anti-Semitic remarks from wardens.<sup>56</sup> The only evidence of a camp having a large number of Nazi sympathizers was an occurrence in Peel, Isle of Man. Upon the capture of three escaped Fascists, the fugitives "were cheered on their arrival in a police van, and their guard and the Commandant of the camp were jeered at."<sup>57</sup> Later the internees insisted on their release to roam the camp, and rioted, attacking the wardens, when their demands were not met. Such riots were rare in the camps, usually occurring over reduction of rations or treatment of prisoners, not due to political turmoil. Peel was not a spot designated for Fascists, making such a strong outburst in favor of Fascist prisoners difficult to understand, unless the authorities were incorrect in their labeling of inmates. While most citizens and internees in Great Britain realized that Nazis were a minority in camps, that opinion was not held elsewhere. The New York based exile newspaper *Die Aufbau* carried an article commending the British government's decision to separate Nazis from anti-Nazis in the Huyton internment camp where "the Nazis had exercised a reign of terror over the anti-Nazi minority."<sup>58</sup> Even this late in the internment of aliens, the majority of internees would still have been neutral or anti-Nazi, given reports of other internees.

Personal and political confrontation was commonplace within camps that interned Jewish, Christian, and Nazi aliens in the same quarters. Oliver Pretzel recalls his father's statement's about internment in Seaton, a summer resort in south Devon. There, he said, "It was

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<sup>56</sup> Seller, *We Built Up Our Lives*, 86.

<sup>57</sup> "Riot at Internment Camp," *Times* (London), 22 September 1941.

<sup>58</sup> (New York) *Aufbau*, 14 March, 1941 [newspaper online] (Accessed 28 November, 2004); available from <http://deposit.ddb.de/online/exil/exil.htm>.

run by the army, who appointed the only real Nazis among the internees as block leaders. That was the most unpleasant thing about internment: living under the very people he had emigrated to get away from.”<sup>59</sup> Close quarters also formed alliances between groups, but also led to constant bickering. At least one Jewish refugee recounted a Communist group that caused a group of Nazis to settle down and be quiet by threatening fisticuffs.<sup>60</sup> During the voyage of a ship deporting a mixed group of Nazis and true refugees to Canada, some Nazis nailed a National Socialist flag to the wall and attempted to force the other passengers to salute it, resulting in a riot and confinement of 200 men.<sup>61</sup> In the early stages of internment, Nazis could force themselves into authority positions by offering to be block leaders. Camp commanders sometimes formed councils of prisoners within camps, often insisting that the Nazis have representation as a separate group.<sup>62</sup>

Amongst the true Nazis and aliens (particularly men) in categories B and C from their tribunals, the risk of deportation was the one last fear they had to overcome. Nazis and prisoners of war were the first to be deported to Canada or Australia from the Isle of Man, next internees in categories B and C, especially single men, were asked to volunteer, or at least, not to object, to being deported.<sup>63</sup> Some showed relief that finally, in deportation they were separated from Nazis and allowed to do work to aid the war effort, even if that work was totally unrelated to their training.<sup>64</sup> Deportation led to a drop in the number of Nazi sympathizers in male camps, but Nazi sentiment remained in some women's camps. The woman's commandant on the Isle of Man, Dame Joanna Cruikshank, refused to acknowledge any difference between Nazi

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<sup>59</sup> Pretzel, afterward to *Defying Hitler*, 303.

<sup>60</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 85.

<sup>62</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 71.

<sup>63</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 59.

<sup>64</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 94.

sympathizers and genuine refugees, leaving the way open for violence and harassment of Jews and anti-Hitler enthusiasts by Nazis.<sup>65</sup> By 1944, long after most internees had been released, Britain was still attempting to remove dangerous aliens from camps, offering to repatriate Germans. Some 600 volunteered to return to Germany, though at least two jumped ship along the way, once more highlighting the fact that most internees did not want to return to their native lands.<sup>66</sup>

War work and the uselessness of locked up refugees began to slowly shift public opinion. Aided by the press, the illogic and uselessness of internment began to become evident by late summer of 1940. Anti-internment letters arrived more frequently on editors' desks and advocacy groups, as well as the government published book-length tracts detailing the injustice of internment of aliens. *Anderson's Prisoners* was one of several "victory books" in a series published in London during the summer of 1940, all dealing with political or war related topics, often written under pseudonyms. The author of this particular book, "Judex,"<sup>67</sup> leaves no questions as to the injustice and cruelties suffered by the internees in Britain, nor does he leave any doubt as to the responsibility of Sir John Anderson, the Home Secretary under whom internment began. "Judex" outlines the groups of people who were interned, the ill, youth, scientists, members of the Pioneer Corps, racial victims and many others. Emotions run high through the entire book as the author describes suicides of refugees who could not bear the thought of another term of imprisonment, and the plight of women and children left behind after their husbands and fathers were interned. Not surprisingly in such a one-sided view, there is no mention of the handful of true and dangerous Nazis that were interned as well. All of the

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<sup>65</sup> Seller, *We Built Up Our Lives*, 90.

<sup>66</sup> "600 German Internees Going Home," *Times* (London), 2 September, 1944.

<sup>67</sup> Most of the authors of this book series preferred to use pseudonyms. "Judex" was actually Herbert Delawney Hughes.

internees mentioned were true refugees, and truly helpful members of British society. For this author, the enemy aliens were neither German, nor British, rather they were simply refugees who needed to be protected, not arrested. Despite the subjectivity of the argument, many people of the time were familiar with *Anderson's Prisoners*; it served a valuable purpose to bring more attention to the refugee issue, containing an address to send away for pamphlets to "enlighten your friends about the refugee problem," and influenced other authors, mostly by urging them to retain objectivity.<sup>68</sup>

While "Judex" was writing *Anderson's Prisoners*, another historian was busily researching internment. Francois Lafitte published a far more objective view of Britain's policies in August of 1940, under the title *The Internment of Aliens*. When looking back on his book in 1988, the incidents long in the past, Lafitte states "I find astonishingly little that I would wish to rewrite."<sup>69</sup> Like *Anderson's Prisoners*, Lafitte's book deals with most aspects of internment, seeking to answer questions about who was interned, and why. Instead of forming the British government into monsters preying upon helpless refugees, *The Internment of Aliens* paints the government as well meaning, if slightly misled, men who felt that they needed to protect their country in a time of war. The book addresses the facts of internment and deportation, seeking to inform rather than to emotionalize.

Though "Judex" and Lafitte disagree on style and purpose, they both agree on many aspects of internment. Both felt that the vast majority of detainees were innocent and anti-Nazi. While they disagreed somewhat on the fairness of tribunals and the conditions in camps, Lafitte, of course, being much kinder to the authorities, both agreed that the government ordered the arrests of the refugees too suddenly, giving in to public fear without considering the immediate

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<sup>68</sup> Judex [pseud.], *Anderson's Prisoners* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1940), 124.

<sup>69</sup> Francois Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London: Libris, 1988), ix.

effect their policies would have on detainees. Round ups of refugees occurred at all hours of the day and night, and families were given little time to pack, take care of personal affairs, and say goodbyes before being separated for an unknown period of time. It was not until 1941 that couples were permitted to live together in camps, since internment separated men and women. Lafitte and “Judex” comment on the use of internment by foreign countries in an attempt to oppose the British war effort.

The irony of interning Jews and anti-Nazi aliens within Britain was not lost on many during the Second World War. No refugee was unaware of the concentration camps sprouting throughout German-controlled areas of central Europe. It is impossible that most did not make the connection between the interning of Jews and anti-Nazis in the National Socialist state and the interning of those same individuals in Great Britain. Nor were the similarities lost upon Germany. Hitler is quoted in *Anderson's Prisoners* as gloating over the internment of aliens saying, “The enemies of Germany are now the enemies of Britain too. The British have detained in concentration camps the very people we found it necessary to detain.”<sup>70</sup> Lafitte comments that although “Nazi news bulletins have treated internment of refugees in Britain ... with little comment, though with a certain amount of condescending sarcasm,” they were “pleased to learn that many of their bitterest enemies are now locked up in Britain.”<sup>71</sup> German news and propaganda did not take as much advantage of the situation as many in Great Britain expected, but they threw enough observations at Great Britain to cause Lord Lytton, chairman of the Advisory Council on Aliens in 1941, to reply to German accusations that German citizens in internment camps were being denied adequate food.<sup>72</sup> Many internees understood the significance of being interned in the land to which they had traveled for protection. Hilda Ogbe

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Judex, *Anderson's Prisoners*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Lafitte, *The Internment*, 155.

<sup>72</sup> “Internees Well Fed,” *Times* (London), 17 February, 1941.

remembers she and her mother's fear as they were transported to their camp on the Isle of Man. "Any fears of concentration camp barracks," she remembered, "were soon dispelled" upon arrival at their island resort hotel.<sup>73</sup>

No one seems to have made the connection between England's system of internment and the similar policies evident in the United States, where Japanese and Japanese-Americans were interned in camps. But such a connection would never have been important or considered, since the United States was not yet truly involved in the war on the continent. By the time the United States began interning aliens in early 1942, most of Britain's internees had been deported or released.

In the end, the anti-alien sentiment in Britain was just a passing scare. By mid 1940, with the end of the "phony war" the aid of aliens was needed even more to keep wartime businesses running, and most aliens were able to prove their loyalty to their new land. When the tide of war began to shift away from German might, particularly with the United States' entry into the fighting, so did public opinion concerning the refugees within the British Isles. Perhaps the final factor in turning public opinion to favor refugees was the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, a former luxury liner used during the war to deport Nazis and refugees to Canada. On July 2, 1940, the ship was struck by a German torpedo, killing 146 Germans and 453 Italians.<sup>74</sup> Throughout the fall and winter of 1940, nearly all internees were either released or deported. Arguments arose again, this time surrounding the criteria for release. Intellectuals like Fred Uhlman argued that internees were released based on monetary incentives, not loyalty or innocence from crimes. Release "depended on one question," Uhlman wrote, "Were you or were you not 'important for

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<sup>73</sup> Ogbe, *Crumbs*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Kochan, *Britain's Internees*, 84.

the war effort’?”<sup>75</sup> He went on to complain that “fat business tycoons who had escaped with their capital but had never lifted a finger against Hitler, and would have licked his boots if he had allowed them to” were released, while it took months to release “useless” individuals like professors and intellectuals, even if they had actively opposed Hitler.<sup>76</sup> Once more, for many internees, their adopted government let them down, judging them on the wrong criteria.

Most wanted to resume their lives from before internment, to help defeat the Nazis, and to rebuild their lives once more. Many who were released early wrote into newspapers, encouraging the release of others, or asking for the chance to let internees aid the war effort. They offered advice on how to improve the internment system, but little strong criticism. None were known to want to return to Germany, and loyalty to the British war effort remained strong, at least amongst those who affixed their opinions to paper. Having been interned remained influential in the lives of many during and after the war. Internees were officially labeled “prisoners of war” and “enemy aliens,” both titles carried an emotional and social stigma. Many of the internees about whom much information is known emigrated from Britain after the war’s end.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps, in the end, they felt that once more they had been abused by their government, and wanted to try to find a sense of freedom and acceptance, leaving their past pain behind and forging a new identity.

Through the first half of the Second World War, refugees to Great Britain from Nazi controlled areas had many identities. They had the official label given to them by their local tribunal, the names and titles of the press and public, and, naturally, their own images of who they were. Each of these labels had a lasting effect on the treatment of refugees and how they dealt with that treatment. A label from a tribunal, which met with a refugee for only a few

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<sup>75</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 227.

<sup>76</sup> Uhlman, *Making of an Englishman*, 228.

<sup>77</sup> See the appendix for more about the lives of some of the internees mentioned repeatedly in this work.

minutes in some instances, could follow a refugee for years, leading to difficulty receiving and maintaining a job, internment and shunning by former friends and neighbors, while press and public fear led to widespread harassment and reinforcement of destructive stereotypes. Anti-Semitism and anti-German feelings ran rampant through Britain caused by fear and distrust, which fed on each other during the uncertainty of war.

Opinions regarding refugees varied greatly throughout Britain, and changed over time depending on the success of the war effort and the necessity of labor, as well as the influence of the press. Most British citizens viewed refugees as being citizens of their respective countries, if not necessarily believers in their native country's government. Within camps, in general, all refugees were treated the same, having to wait months to be separated from Nazis, and treated like criminals and traitors regardless of their situation before the war. Refugees from Germany were Germans, not Nazis, though often that refugee viewed himself as an Englishman. Many refugees had fled from Germany in the early 1930s; after having lived in England for nearly a decade, learning a new language and adapting to a new way of life, refugees felt they had earned a new life and a fair chance to prove their loyalty and aid their adopted country.

Despite the frequent disillusionment caused by internment, internees remained steadfast in their desire to help defeat Nazi Germany. They remained loyal and willing to help Great Britain, even when they saw strong parallels between the treatment of Jews and anti-Nazi supporters in Germany and England. Yet after the Second World War was won, many refugees continued to feel the stigma of their internment; the labels and stereotypes remained despite the aid provided by refugees in the defeat of Nazism. The lack of acceptance in their new country, the one to which they had fled for freedom, was too disappointing for many refugees, who continued their travels to other countries, looking for a true home and acceptance.



In the end, internment of wartime refugees has remained a dark smudge on the history of Great Britain. Many British historians look back on the incident with shame, and even at the time, many realized the internment resulted from uncontrolled and illogical fear. The case of interned refugees can teach a valuable lesson about viewing and labeling others. As one man warned Great Britain during the war, “We are being reminded that we are fighting this war against Hitler only, not against the German people.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Anne Fremantle, “An Alien’s Tribunal,” *Times* (London), 28 October, 1939.

## Appendix Personalities and Figures of the Camps

Below are short biographies of important figures relating the above essay. Education and background are vital to understanding the experiences related by the internees. These biographies were written using information found in the recommended book at the end of each biographical sketch.



Sebastian Haffner (1908-1999) grew up within interwar Germany, remembering the rise of the Nazis and the effect of propaganda and militarism on those around him. He was born Raimund Pretzel in Berlin, studied law and for a time followed the path encouraged by the Nazis, honing his body through exercise and receiving tests and letters from the Nazi authorities. He wrote his Ph.D. in Paris, returned to Berlin where he fell in love with a Jewish woman, whom he could not marry. By then he was working as a journalist, and received permission in 1938 to write a series of articles about England, using this assignment as a chance to flee Germany. Haffner was interned in England from January 1940 until August of the same year. After his release he worked with colleagues for better conditions for Germans interned in Britain. Throughout the following two decades Haffner worked as a journalist, then turned in the 1960s to history, authoring books about German history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For more information on Sebastian Haffner, see *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, published posthumously by Haffner's family.



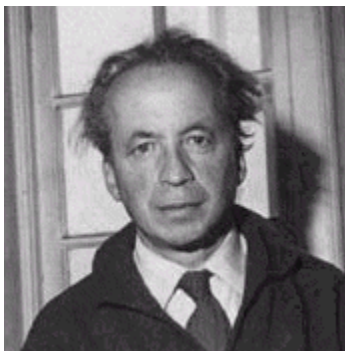
Sir Oswald Mosley (1896-1980) was born and raised in Great Britain. After attending school at Winchester and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst where he excelled at boxing and fencing, Mosley then served in World War I with the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers, following his family's strong precedent of military service. He went on to become the leader of one of the most influential Fascist organizations in England, the British Union of

Fascists. The organization reached its peak of popularity in 1936, adopting black shirts and leading parades and public speeches throughout London. At the outbreak of World War II, Mosley campaigned for peace and against British involvement until his arrest and internment from May of 1940 until winter 1944. For more information on Sir Oswald Mosley, see *My Life*, his autobiography.



Hilda Ogbe was born Hilda Gerson on July 31, 1921, making her eighteen when she and her mother fled to Britain from their home in Hamburg. She had successfully passed her *Abitur*, the German test that allows a student to continue his or her education beyond high school. Her specialty was modern

languages, which served her well in her new country and during internment in 1940. After the war she married a Nigerian lawyer, Thomas Ogbe and moved to Nigeria. For more information, see Hilda Ogbe's autobiography, *The Crumbs off the Wive's Table*.



Fred Uhlman (1901-1985) was born in Stuttgart, Germany in an unhappy home. His university studies occurred at Freiburg, Munich, and lastly Tübingen. He intended to study dentistry, eventually settling for anatomy. Soon he began to study art history against his father's will. As the Nazis came to power in 1933, Uhlman moved

to Paris where he became a well-known artist, then moved to Spain, and finally to London with his wife. Uhlman was interned in several camps between late fall of 1939 and December 30, 1940. After the War, he and his wife traveled widely and Uhlman continued to paint. Many of his works reside in famous galleries throughout Great Britain. See *The Making of an Englishman* for more information on Fred Uhlman.