



## **Britain and Germany: from ally to enemy**

**Professor Kathleen Burk**

**4 May 2005**

At the battle of Waterloo, the British armies under Lord Wellington were saved by the timely arrival of the Prussian forces under General Gebhard von Blücher. The two countries had been allies on and off for sixty years, since the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. During the eighteenth century as well, many British tourists had visited other parts of Germany besides Prussia, including Weimar, the home of Goethe, the author of Faust. In short, the German states and statelets were perceived as friendly to Great Britain, rather than hostile. In 1840, Queen Victoria married Prince Albert, younger son of the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg - Gotha. This was, indeed, neither the first nor the last of such Anglo-German weddings. Queen Victoria's own mother, the Princess Victoire, who had married the Duke of Kent, George III's fourth son, was also from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. In 1858, Victoria and Albert's daughter, Princess Victoria, the Princess Royal, married Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia. The Princess Victoria became Empress of Germany in 1888, although because her husband died shortly after the coronation, she was Empress for only ninety-nine days. Their son, Kaiser Wilhelm II, was Queen Victoria's grandson, the nephew of Edward VII and the cousin of King George V. Yet, in August 1914, the British Expeditionary force, in the Battle of the Marne, fought desperately to prevent the Germany Army from reaching the Channel ports. How did this happen? I am not arguing that the role of monarchs in the nineteenth century was such that their marriages could determine the foreign policies of states, but I will say that such marriages did not happen if the relationship between the two states was hostile. Let us take these royal family relationships as symbolic. How, then, and when and why did Anglo-German relations deteriorate to such an extent that royal cousins led their countries to war with each other? These are questions which I want to address this evening.

To lay the foundation for the changes which took place later in the century, it is necessary to emphasise recognise the existing friendly relationship between the two countries for most of the nineteenth century. (Footnote: the Kingdom of Prussia was the largest and most powerful component of the unified German Empire. I will hereafter refer to Germany in this lecture.) First of all, until late in the century, there were virtually no points at which they came into conflict. Germany was a land empire without much of a navy, whilst Great Britain was a seaborne empire without much of an army. Germany had no overseas colonies and therefore concentrated on European politics, whilst Great Britain had a continually expanding empire and relatively little interest in European politics. Secondly, they were important trading partners: in 1860, for example, one-third of Prussian imports came from Great Britain, and Britain continued to supply Germany with raw material exports from the empire as well as manufactured goods, such as cloth, from England itself. Thirdly, they were both Protestant powers, still a point of some significance. And fourthly, there were cultural links: the popularity of Shakespeare was such that the Germans referred to him as unserShakespeare, and they also read Byron and Sir Walter Scott avidly; for their part, the British very much liked Goethe, especially his Romantic novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and, to a lesser extent, the poet and playwright Schiller. As for music, the flow, as it happens, was in one direction only, from Germany to Great Britain - Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Wagner; the Victorians had a great respect and liking for German music. Great Britain, conversely, was referred to as 'das Land ohne Musik', the country without music. German universities were, without doubt, the best in the world, and British historians had very great respect for German scholarship, which was in contrast with the more amateurish productions of the British; according to Sir John Seeley, a distinguished Cambridge historian, 'As a rule good books are in German'. My point is that the perception of Germany by the British

was primarily as a land of song and literature and scholarship: apprehension about her military power only came at the end of the nineteenth century.

This is a painting of the proclamation of the German Empire, which took place in 1871 in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles (which is why the French insisted that the Germans sign the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 in the same room). The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 had led to the complete defeat of France. The Chancellor of the Kingdom of Prussia, Otto von Bismarck, took the opportunity to proclaim the unity of all of the German states, including the Kingdom of Bavaria, into the German Reich, with the King of Prussia, Wilhelm I, as Emperor. Bismarck was the Chancellor of Germany from its foundation to 1890, when he was dropped by Kaiser Wilhelm II. He was the outstanding European statesman from 1860 to 1890, if we define 'outstanding' as the most powerful. He was a past master at manipulating the European balance of power. The British would certainly have agreed with Bismarck's comment in 1880 that 'All politics reduces itself to this formula: try to be one of three, as long as the world is governed by the unstable equilibrium of five great powers.' Take a look at this (not very good) map of Europe in 1871. Germany had taken Alsace and most of Lorraine from France as the spoils of war: the result was that the most pressing foreign problem for Bismarck was French irredentism, the desire to go to war to recapture the 'lost provinces'. It was therefore absolutely vital that France not conclude an alliance with another Great Power, because that might encourage her to go to war. The most fearful possibility was an alliance with the Russian Empire, which would threaten Germany with the worst possibility of all, a two-front war. Therefore, Bismarck carried out a several-pronged policy. First of all, he encouraged France to look outwards and go questing for further colonies. This would have two results: firstly, France's attention would be diverted from Alsace-Lorraine; and secondly, she might well come into conflict with the Russian or the British Empire, which would prevent her coming to any agreement with either for support in Europe. Secondly, in 1879, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire concluded the secret Dual Alliance, by which each would come to the aid of the other if attacked by Russia. The Dual Alliance - which the various foreign offices knew about, of course - remained as the cornerstone of the European alliance systems until the end of the First World War. Austria was keen to have this alliance with Germany because both she and Russia were fishing in the troubled waters of the Balkans, parts of which remained within the decaying Ottoman Empire, but which looked temptingly easy to pluck. However, Germany did not want Russia to take fright at the German alliance with Austria and perhaps turn to France; to forestall this, Bismarck negotiated in 1881 the secret Dreikaiserbund, the Three Emperors' League, a formalisation of a vague agreement between Germany, Austro-Hungary and Russia dating from 1873. This new alliance provided for prior consultation about changes in the Ottoman Empire, and promised support if any of the three were at war with a fourth (except with the Ottomans). And fourthly, in 1882, Italy joined the Dual Alliance, making it the Triple Alliance. Now, Bismarck had not only deprived France of the possible support of any land power in Europe, but he had now also placed her under the threat of a two-front war. This was his version of balance: practically any war which took place in Europe would drag in Germany, and as far as he was concerned, Germany had nothing to gain by war. So: try to make it difficult and dangerous for any other Power to fight.

And what about British interest in the balance of power in Europe? For one thing, there did not seem to be any direct threat to Great Britain. France, the country which had repeatedly threatened her over the previous two centuries, was yet again a defeated power, and a power for which Great Britain had little sympathy. She did not want France to lose any more territory, but she was unlikely to go to war to help France grab back the lost provinces. Besides, she and France were rivals in Africa, where both were carving out more colonies for themselves. She had no liking for Russia, with whom she was in perpetual conflict over Persia, India and Afghanistan - the so-called 'Great Game'. Indeed, she saw Russia as her main enemy. Therefore, Germany had little fear that she might join its possible enemies. Beyond this, Germany itself did not seem to threaten the European balance, Bismarck having made it clear that Germany had no desire for any more territory. He was also uninterested in Germany's acquiring any colonies, which lessened even more the possibility of Anglo-German conflict. In short, whilst Bismarck remained in power, the two countries remained at peace.

The change came with the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1888, followed ninety-nine days later by that of his son, Frederick III. Frederick's son, Wilhelm II, then became Kaiser. At first, there seemed to be no reason to suspect a change in Anglo-German relations: not only were there few points of conflict, but Wilhelm was

proud of being half-English and keen for a close relationship between the two countries. Yet, new forces were at work in Germany, forces which insisted that the power of Germany was such that she should have ein Weltpolitik or world policy, that she should possess and exercise Weltmacht, or world power. Wilhelm fully supported these forces, but he was erratic and a poseur. Chancellor Bismarck tried to restrain him, but the young Kaiser had no wish to be guided by the same man who had advised his grandfather. The two clashed repeatedly until in 1890, Wilhelm dismissed him. This Punch cartoon, one of the most famous of the era, is entitled 'Dropping the Pilot', and shows Bismarck leaving the ship, with the Kaiser watching him depart. Other chancelleries reacted to the dismissal with some dismay: they may have disliked him intensely, but he was a conservative who himself posed no threat to the peace of Europe. Wilhelm II was a loose cannon. He disliked Bismarck's alliance system, seeing it as contradictory: how could Germany promise to support both Austro-Hungary and Russia, when they were likely to come into conflict? He therefore refused to renew the German treaty with Russia - he had made his choice of allies. As an overriding principle, Wilhelm saw it as his duty to make Germany a world power, ideally by threat and force, the manly way.

For our purposes, this centred on colonies. To be a world power, many Germans believed, you had to own colonies, and this particular conviction had been so great even during Bismarck's time that for domestic political reasons he had had to give some way, even though he thought that the desire for colonies was unwise. The belief had grown that if Germany wanted to gain colonies, she had better bestir herself: Great Britain, France and Russia had amongst them snapped up almost all available territory, with the exception of the continent of Africa. From the mid-1870s, there ensued the so-called 'scramble for Africa', in which all of the major powers, and some of the minor, took part: in 1860, 90% of Africans lived under African rulers; by 1900 only Libya, Liberia and Abyssinia remained free of European rule, and Turkey was to cede Libya to Italy in 1912. Germany herself did not do badly: German East Africa or Tanganyika, German South-West Africa, now Namibia, the Cameroons, and Togo. You might also look at the map to see why Bismarck was convinced that if France's attention could be directed outward from Europe, she would come into conflict with Great Britain: Britain was following the north-south route from the Cape to Cairo, trying to link the two, ideally by railways; France, on the other hand, was trying to expand her territories along a west-east route, from Dakar to Djibouti, if you like. They will clash in 1898 at Fashoda, where both are claiming the headwaters of the Nile; British naval and military power compel France to withdraw.

At this point, I should say a word about British national interests. I have said that Great Britain had no interest in the Continent, and in one sense it was true: she had no designs on European territory, unlike Austro-Hungary, Italy, France and Russia. But she did have an overwhelming interest in there not being one dominant power on the Continent. AJP Taylor referred to the Balance of Power as working with calculation, as seeming 'to be the political equivalent of the laws of economics, both self-operating.' For Great Britain, if one country appeared to be growing too powerful, she would almost automatically support the second strongest power in order to balance the strongest. When France was the Power which threatened to overpower the others, Great Britain allied against her. By the same token, by August 1914 the country to be blocked was Germany.

One might say, then, that Great Britain had a negative interest in Europe. Her positive interest, as it were, was her empire. To maintain and expand it, she needed above all else a navy which could command the seas. There were several reasons for this. First of all, she needed to maintain secure lines of communication to her empire, an empire which had grown largely because of this naval power. She depended on the Royal Navy for the projection of her power and to prevent that of others. Secondly, she was a country which lived by trade, and this trade depended on secure trade routes. And thirdly, and of overarching importance, the Royal Navy protected the home islands: the defence of the realm is the overwhelming responsibility of any government of any country, and the duty of the Royal Navy was to prevent an invasion. The Earl of Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, put it more colourfully in 1901, 'our stakes are out of all proportion to those of any other Power. To us defeat in a maritime war would mean a disaster of almost unparalleled magnitude in history. It might mean the destruction of our mercantile marine, the stoppage of our manufactures, scarcity of food, invasion, and destruction of Empire. No other country runs the same risks in a war with us.'

Colonies and, in particular, navies were to be the reasons for the severe deterioration in the Anglo-German relationship. From the mid-1870s and increasingly into the early twentieth century, the public support in Germany to carve out colonies of her own only grew. She needed colonies as a validation of her position as a world power - and who stood in her way? Great Britain. She had already taken most of the best territory, although China was still up for grabs, and Germany in due course grabbed some of China. But the threat remained that the Royal Navy could prevent German expansion overseas. There were other arguments for German naval expansion: one was the eminently respectable argument that the rapid growth of her overseas commerce and merchant marine entitled her to greater naval protection than that provided by the meagre fleet of the mid-1890s; but there was also the belief that more ships would be a manifestation of her general power and influence in the world - a belief shared fervently by the Kaiser.

Increasingly, for those who wanted Germany to break through the borders of Europe, the answer was to build a navy to surpass Great Britain's. One of the most influential voices here was that of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz. He wrote a memorandum in 1894 which won him the support of the Kaiser, and in 1897 the position of Minister of Marine, from which he was able to implement his plan. His memorandum argued that a fleet was essential for Germany's position as a colonial power and as a bargaining counter with Great Britain in international affairs; the German Navy need not be the strongest in the world, but it should be sufficiently large for no greater naval Power - and here read Great Britain - to risk the losses that would result from an attack on it. With the agreement of the Kaiser and other members of the government, he began to lay plans for a great High Seas Fleet that would challenge Great Britain's.

British suspicions were aroused almost immediately, and by 1902 the British Admiralty was considering counter-measures. The answer was technology. This is a picture of HMS Dreadnought, the ship which gave its name to a class of battleship. Her 'all-big-gun' main battery of ten 12-inch guns, steam turbine powerplant and 21-knot maximum speed so thoroughly eclipsed earlier types that subsequent battleships were commonly known as 'dreadnoughts' and the previous ones disparaged as 'pre-dreadnoughts'. In short, the Dreadnought, able as it was to steam faster, shoot further and shoot harder than any other ship, immediately rendered all those other ships obsolete, including those of the Royal Navy itself. Fortunately, equally remarkable was the speed of her construction: laid down in October 1905, she was launched in February 1906, after only four months on the ways. She was commissioned for trials a year after her keel was laid, and was completed in 1906. Her building, trials and early service were closely watched by the world's naval authorities, including the US Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence, the source of this photograph. All other naval countries now needed to build dreadnoughts, and the race was on, a race which Great Britain won. If one looks at the naval estimates of the two powers from 1900 to 1914 - admittedly a sloppy way of doing it, since the estimates covered all types of ships as well as everything else naval - Germany spent roughly £50 million whilst Great Britain spent £117 million. (The proportions were reversed for army estimates - £170 million spent by Germany versus roughly £80 million by Great Britain.) Between 1909 and 1912, Great Britain built eighteen dreadnoughts to Germany's nine.

Cost was a problem, but even more was the atmosphere of Anglophobia and Germanophobia in which the ships were being built, and which influenced all aspects of the relationship. By the turn of the century, Germany had begun to replace Russia as the primary enemy in the minds of many Britons, although others continued to perceive Germany as Great Britain's only friend on the Continent, and to accept the commercial rivalry as normal. However, it is undeniable that any increase in German naval power could only be at the expense of Great Britain's. To meet it, over the following several years Great Britain carried out a diplomatic revolution, which - since her friend Germany was apparently becoming more and more hostile - looked to settle outstanding disputes with enemies and thereby prevent their uniting against her. The Boer War from 1899 to 1902 had brought home to Great Britain the realisation that she possessed few friends or possible allies amongst the Great Powers and potential Great Powers. So: in order to settle outstanding imperial disputes with the United States, France and Russia, to gain naval help in the Far East, and to be able to concentrate resources against the perceived growing German threat, Great Britain negotiated a series of agreements which changed enemies into neutrals, if not friends - that would be too much to hope for quite so quickly. I should hasten to add that the agreement with Russia did not take place until 1907, and the earlier agreements were also meant to strengthen her hand against Russia.



This is a picture of the Marquis of Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary from 1895 to 1902. The dominant idea of the Cabinet was to be able to bring home a good proportion of the fleet to protect the Channel and the British Isles. The two-power standard, which required that the Royal Navy be larger than the next two largest navies combined, had now to be focused on Germany itself: the British Home Fleet facing the German approaches had to be twice the size of the German High Seas Fleet. First of all, the fleet patrolling the Caribbean was withdrawn. The Americans believed that they had forced the British to recognise that it was the duty of the United States to patrol her own backyard; as far as the British were concerned, they would never be fighting the Americans, and thus they had incorporated the American navy into their own defence strategy. Secondly, in 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was signed, a significant peace-time departure for Great Britain. This is a set of pictures of the Emperor and Empress of Japan, of Marshall Ito, and of the banquet at Mansion House celebrating the signing of the Treaty. The Treaty arose out of the Russian challenge to British influence in China, and was welcomed by Germany, who hoped that it would increase tension between Great Britain and Russia. In due course, as friction with Germany increased, Great Britain brought most of the Far East Fleet to patrol the Mediterranean, leaving Japan to patrol the China Seas - and incidentally to colonise and then to annex Korea.

In 1903, Edward VII visited France, and this amiable man was such a success in Paris that newspapers wrote of an 'entente cordiale' between the two Powers. This paved the way for an agreement the following year. Fundamentally, this agreement settled a number of colonial problems, big and small. In North Africa, France recognised Great Britain's predominant position in Egypt, whilst Great Britain recognised France's predominant position in Morocco. They also settled some outstanding problems which had arisen in West Africa, as the two countries had tried to leapfrog each other to claim territory. France resigned fishing rights she had held off Newfoundland since the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and there was an agreement over rights in Siam.

Salisbury had retired in 1902, and the Marquis of Lansdowne had become the Foreign Secretary; it fell to him to deal with the 1905 Moroccan crisis. Germany was angry when she learned about the Anglo-French Agreement. Although it was not an alliance, Germany now feared that it would be much more difficult to prevent Great Britain from supporting France against Germany if need be. But it was Morocco that really stuck in her craw. Morocco was located in a highly strategic position, overlooking the Straits of Gibraltar. Its domestic state was one of chaos - for example, two Americans had been kidnapped by rebels. Germany had no real interest in Morocco, but she was a signatory of the 1880 Treaty of Madrid, which required that each signatory had to be consulted before any of them took action there. In February 1905, France had violated this treaty by demanding control of the Sultan's army and police force without consulting Germany. This gave Germany the opportunity to humiliate France and possibly to weaken the entente cordiale with Great Britain. The Kaiser visited Tangier in March and, in a public speech, effectively promised German support for Morocco should the French become aggressive. Germany sought a multilateral conference at which France could be called to account by the other Powers. The British lent their support to France. Tensions reached a peak in mid-June, when the French cancelled all military leave, and the Kaiser offered a defensive alliance to the Sultan. The crisis continued to the eve of the conference at Algeciras, with Germany calling up reserve units on 30 December, and France moving troops to the German border. At the eight-nation conference - which delighted the Spanish delegate, since he owned the hotel where the other delegates were staying - the Germans discovered that they had the support only of Austria, and accepted a face-saving compromise, whereby France agreed to yield control of the Moroccan police, but otherwise retained effective control of Moroccan political and financial affairs. This crisis did a great deal to cement Anglo-French relations whilst further poisoning German relations with Great Britain, including amongst the populations of both countries.

This is a picture of Sir Edward Grey, who became Foreign Secretary in 1906, and remained in this position until the end of 1916. Tensions between the British and Russian Empires had continued to rise, encouraged when possible by Germany, who feared that Russia might gain the support of Great Britain against Germany. Nevertheless, even during the Algeciras conference, Grey had argued that the moment was ill-chosen for resisting Germany and that they should wait until agreement with Russia was reached: as he wrote in February 1906, after becoming Foreign Secretary, 'An entente between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.' However,

there were considerable points of conflict which would have to be resolved. Here is a map showing the expansion of the Russian Empire in Asia. The thick black line shows the border of Russia in 1845; whilst the dotted light lines show the steps of this advancement with the relevant dates. Notice that Afghanistan is excluded. What this map unfortunately does not show is the advance of the trans-Siberian railway, and its branching off towards Persia. The march of Russia across Asia had been more or less in tandem with the building of the railway, so that by the turn of the century she was in Manchuria. She also competed ferociously with Great Britain for influence in Persia, and had earlier demanded a port there.

What were the British concerns? First and foremost was the security of British control of India. What this map unfortunately does not show is the common border between Persia and India further south. In this map of the Middle East in the nineteenth century, you can see just why the British feared Russian pressure on countries bordering India. Persia was a concern, but so was Afghanistan, where Britain had fought three unsuccessful wars to bring Afghanistan under her control - and the Russians had been equally unsuccessful. There were also lesser problems with Tibet, where both countries were trying to extend their influence as a route into China.

Russia was considerably weaker than she had been at the turn of the century: she had lost a war with Japan in 1904-1905, and in particular, Japan had destroyed most of the Russian fleet. The Russians wanted to have a neutral zone in front of their Caucasus frontier, and in return for this, they were prepared to divide control of Persia with the British. They did not want to take sides between Germany and Great Britain; rather, they wanted to be on good terms with both; they hoped that this agreement would secure British good will. In the end, the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 had three main components: first and foremost, Persia was divided between the two, with the Russian zone at the top, a neutral zone in the middle, and the British zone at the bottom. The obvious reason for this was that this zone marched along the Indian border, but another reason which was emerging was that the area contained oil. This was important to the British because the decision had been taken by the Committee for Imperial Defence and then the Cabinet in 1906 that henceforth, all newly-built ships for the Royal Navy would be oil-fired, not coal-fired. Control of Persian oil had become a national interest. The two other components were, firstly, that Russia renounced direct contact with Afghanistan, so that India had security on the North-West frontier and the Khyber Pass would no longer threaten to be a conduit for the Russians; and secondly, Tibet was made a neutral buffer-state. The agreement was not an alliance, however, and the Russians found it difficult to moderate their ambitions for long; in particular they were tempted to cheat in Persia. But on the whole, the Agreement made life easier for the British.

On this map of Morocco, please note the position of Agadir on the lower part of the map. Disorders in Morocco were to lead to an Anglo-German crisis of intense danger, when it seemed not unthinkable that the two countries would come into military conflict. These disorders in the spring of 1911 led to military intervention by both France and Spain - note that there is also a Spanish Morocco. When French forces entered Fez in late May - which was beyond their rights as specified in the agreement reached at the 1906 Algeciras conference - another crisis erupted between France and Germany. It is highly probable that Germany hoped to break the Triple Entente; it is also probable that she hoped to obtain part of Morocco itself, and at the very least to obtain substantial compensation elsewhere in Africa for agreeing to French control of Morocco. In June 1911 the Germans dispatched the gunboat Panther to Agadir in a show of strength, and this ratcheted up the conflict to crisis levels.

While German-French discussions centred on possible French concessions to Germany in the Congo, the possibility of war was heightened by an inflammatory speech given in Mansion House on 21 July 1911 by David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the request of Foreign Secretary Grey. In this speech, he emphasised the desirability of settling international disputes by peaceful means; but: 'I conceive', he said, and 'that nothing would justify a disturbance of international good will except questions of the greatest national moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a

humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.' This threat of war from Great Britain, the pressure from Russia to moderate her demands, and the willingness of France to compromise, together convinced an isolated Germany that she herself had to compromise. In 1912 she recognised the French right to a protectorate over Morocco, and in 1912 Morocco lost her independence. In return, France ceded to Germany a chunk of land in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. The immediate crisis was over, but relations between Germany and Great Britain were extremely hostile, and amongst the German population as well as the government Great Britain was viewed with intense anger and bitterness. In Great Britain the suspicion of German hairdressers and waiters increased, and the numbers of books starring a hostile Germany vastly increased. Think, for example, of Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*, of Baden-Powell's book warning of German spies and how to recognise them - they wore their trousers differently from Englishmen, illustrated with pictures comparing the two styles - or - on a different level - of P.G. Wodehouse's *How Clarence Saved England*.

The story now becomes much more familiar. On a map of Europe in 1914 the positions of the Powers is manifestly obvious. On the one side is the Triple Alliance: Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy. Italy, however, would slide out of her commitment and join the other side in 1915. On the other side is the Triple Entente, the early foundation of which was the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 and which was not turned into an alliance until after the outbreak of war. By 1907 and the signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, Germany was feeling encircled, and it is not difficult to see why. By means of the colours, you can see how other countries joined one side or the other: Serbia, Rumania, and Greece with the Entente, Bulgaria and Turkey with the Alliance. The reasons were various, but largely fell into the category of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. The green countries are those which maintained their neutrality.

The war destroyed four empires: the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman. The Europe which emerged from the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 was vastly different from the one of 1914. There are a number of Succession States: an Austria, a Hungary which had lost roughly two-thirds of its pre-war territory, a Czechoslovakia created from the Austro-Hungarian province of Bohemia, a Poland for the first time since the eighteenth century, a Yugoslavia compiled from various other Austro-Hungarian provinces and territories, including Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Turkey, the residual legatee of the Ottoman Empire, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - and a Soviet Union. But what was also created was a vacuum in Central Europe; a France terrified of a resurgent Germany; a Great Britain which supported an economically viable Germany because she needed her as a trading partner and as a barrier to the new Soviet Union; and a Soviet Union which combined a focus on internal development with a determination to safeguard herself from yet another invasion from the West. The stage was set for an unsettled interwar period.

Great Britain, weakened and lacking strong allies, filled with guilt about the Versailles Treaty, which was soon perceived by many Britons as unfair to Germany, burdened with a Labour Party which was pacifist, and desperately under-armed for the three-front war - against Germany in Europe, Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Far East - which the military services increasingly feared, had, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain believed, no option but to appease the dictators. In September 1938, Chamberlain flew to Munich for a meeting with Hitler, the French prime minister Daladier, and the Italian prime minister, Mussolini; no Czech delegate had been invited. Here, they agreed to Hitler's demand for the cession of the Sudetenland, which included the transfer to German control of one-third of the Czech population, and the loss of her only defensible border. In exchange the Powers guaranteed the integrity of the rump Czechoslovakia. Here is one of the most famous photographs of the twentieth century, showing Chamberlain landing at London, waving a copy of the Munich Agreement, and proclaiming 'peace in our time'. It was, of course, at the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, 'a faraway country of which we know nothing', and the only democracy in East Central Europe. But for Chamberlain, the decision had been easy, because he had bought time for Great Britain to make her preparations for war - and besides, it might actually work and prevent a war.

But of course, it did not, and as Germany made her second bid for the mastery of Europe, Great Britain was her opponent - indeed, for a period, her only opponent. But the entry of the United States into the war

signalled eventual German defeat, although it must be said that the Soviet Union was probably more responsible for that particular outcome. All agreed that Germany must be totally defeated - and know it and be forced to admit it, neither of which had happened in the First World War. This picture of Germany in 1945 shows the result: a Germany divided into occupation zones, and subjected to a de-nazification process which was admittedly more successful in the Soviet zone than in the other three. What it does not show is the ultimate result: a prosperous, democratic Germany, in time an ally of Great Britain, rather than an enemy. It was also a Germany which took part in the unification of Europe, as she had wanted to do for the whole of the century - but this time peacefully, not by means of war. And it is to this process of European integration that I will turn in my final lecture later this month.

© Professor Kathleen Burk, 2005