“Essential Workers”: British Foreign Labour Recruitment, 1945-1951

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto

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‘Essential Workers’: British Foreign Labour Recruitment, 1945-1951

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with the Attlee Labour government’s foreign labour recruitment policy. Sources are mainly official, bureaucratic records of the implementation of policy. Print media is also surveyed for popular and public conceptions of foreign workers. The main issues that arise from this recruitment are threefold: the conception of British national identity in the aftermath of the second World War; the British relationship to Europe and to the Empire/Commonwealth in the context of the Cold War; and the economic strategy of the government for postwar reconstruction.

The context in which policy is examined is the immediate postwar period, when a Labour government took office facing the task of both reconstructing a dishevelled economy and setting up a comprehensive welfare state mandated during the war. Both challenges were hampered by severe labour shortages resulting from the siphoning off of workers by the military and by government sponsored emigration, as well as by an increased demand for production, particularly in several “essential” industries such as textiles (for export), coalmining and agriculture.

In dealing with these exigencies the government had also
to consider the stability of postwar Europe in the face of an emergent Cold War, and the presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees for whom they were responsible. Moreover the loosening bonds of Empire, and the amorphous nature of the Commonwealth were prime considerations in the formation of policy.

The decision to recruit foreign workers to redress labour shortages was taken in the spring of 1947. Prior to that time, Italian, German and east European prisoners of war were put to work by the agriculture and service departments. Their presence as captive labour in the U.K. to 1948 is detailed in the opening chapter, as is the government sponsored settlement of several thousand ex-prisoners. Issues of national identity and citizenship arise here.

The main body of foreign workers were Polish servicemen and east European Displaced Persons; together they formed over two thirds of recruited foreign labour in this period. Building on the recent work of Keith Sword, Robert Miles and Diana Kay, the second chapter examines these two groups in terms of the official and public perceptions of their assimilability into the British nation. Their assimilation is contrasted in the following chapter with the small scale recruitment of colonial citizens of colour in these years. The imagined racial component of Britishness is elaborated here.

Chapter four deals with gender issues and focuses on the specific recruitment of female foreign workers. Chapter five looks at issues around the private recruitment of foreign workers, and raises the economic as well as national
implications of government policy. Chapter six looks more closely at the foreign policy issues surrounding recruitment, with a particular emphasis on the recruitment of workers from Italy.

The findings of the thesis are:

a) While British nationality was defined formally by the 1948 Nationality Act, Britishness as an identity was defined by a number of assumptions that were no less strong for being informally held. The informal definition of Britishness comprised both racial (physical) and socio-cultural assumptions. Assimilability was judged first and foremost by skin colour, but secondarily by perceptions of the propensity of various nationalities to be good citizens of the welfare state.

b) While the recruitment of foreign workers was in large part the government's response to an imbalance in the marketplace, the Marxist paradigm of foreign labour as a reserve army of workers brought in to prop up capitalist economies in crisis does not fit entirely well in the British case. Long term settlement of most foreign recruits raises more complex issues.

c) Aside from the domestic implications of settling foreign workers in Britain, there were important foreign policy implications in the conduct of foreign labour recruitment, particularly in Europe. The British desire to stabilize the European refugee problem, to contribute to European co-operation (without sacrificing British exceptionalism) and to
help states such as Italy maintain a western orientation, were important factors in the development and implementation of foreign labour recruitment policy.
Introduction: The Recruitment of Foreign Labour

From June 1945 to October 1951 the British government recruited over 400,000 foreign men and women to work in British industry. Most of these foreign workers were invited to settle permanently in the U.K. The magnitude of this number alone, in an economy with a labour force of 20 million, justifies a close study of this recruitment. The political context in which this recruitment took place -- a Labour government struggling to reconstruct the economy and society in the image of democratic socialism -- makes it all the more pregnant an area of study.

The official conception and handling of foreign labour recruitment revealed several elements in the thought and policy of the postwar Labour governments. Firstly, the role foreign labour played in reconstructing the British economy says much about Labour's postwar economic strategy. Secondly, foreign labour recruitment policy reflects official conceptions of citizenship and national identity in the postwar period. Finally, the issue of foreign labour was intertwined in this period with aspects of Britain's postwar foreign relations.

The economic motivation for recruiting foreign labour was the most compelling one in the immediate postwar period, and the conditions that made it necessary have been well rehearsed.

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1 The figure for the working population of the U.K. is taken from G.D.N. Worswick and P.H. Ady, The British Economy, 1945-1950, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p.228. The table compiled by these authors from the Ministry of Labour Gazette and Economic Surveys gives the employed industrial population in 1950 as 20,760,000; the total working population for the same year (including armed services, and national and local government services) is 23,225,000. The number of unemployed in 1950 stood at 328,000, a figure which was just about the same throughout the period 1945-51, with the exception of a brief period during the winter of 1947. Most of this unemployment was transitional, and of a very short duration.
by Cairncross, Pelling, Morgan, and others.² It will suffice here to note that the Labour governments faced continuous balance of payments problems that necessitated a concerted export drive and an attempt to limit imports as far as possible. Labour shortages posed the greatest obstacle to achieving these goals.¹ In January 1946 the Cabinet was presented with a paper that estimated a 1.3 million person shortfall in the labour force in the coming year.⁴ These shortages were most acute in industries that the government defined as essential, such as those that either contributed to the export drive -- textiles, for example -- or that obviated the need to import materials -- such as agriculture and coal mining.

In getting back on its feet, the British economy would rely on those traditional industries that, as Peter Hennessy has noted, had been running at full capacity without extensive refurbishment since the beginning of the war.⁵ Working conditions in these industries were therefore generally unpleasant, and there was difficulty attracting British workers


⁴ Henry Pelling, The Labour Governments, 1945-1951, (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.66-7. The paper from the Lord President, Herbert Morrison, was presented to Cabinet as an "Economic Survey for 1946", and recommended quickening the pace of demobilization as a partial remedy. Cabinet accepted the recommendations with the result that the estimate of shortages was reduced to 600,000.

⁵ Peter Hennessy, Never Again, op.cit., Chapter 5.
to them. While recruiting foreign workers was not immediately accepted as the solution, it was apparent that some such injection of labour would be required if the program outlined in the Beveridge Report was to be fulfilled. Diana Kay and Robert Miles have written that "the possibility of recruiting foreign labour (or at least labour from outside Britain) was implicit in the commitment to full employment", since the potential to expand the economy rested on filling shortages in the labour supply.\(^6\) The commitment to full employment implied government intervention in the economy, and although a number of factors limited the government's scope of action, the recruitment of foreign labour was one viable means of intervention. Still, until the spring of 1947 the recruitment of foreign labour on a large scale was considered too tendentious to be undertaken.\(^7\)

But even prior to this date there was a considerable pool of foreign labour in the U.K. which could be tapped. At the termination of hostilities on the continent there were about 150,000 Italian prisoners of war (POW) being employed by several government departments in the U.K.\(^8\) The following chapter in this dissertation, dealing with POW labour, will elaborate on the political difficulties of maintaining such a high number of prisoners in employment. The government was obliged, for a variety of reasons, to repatriate prisoners more


\(^7\) The decision to recruit foreign labour was taken by the Cabinet on 14 February 1946: see Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.33. The Cabinet Foreign Labour Committee first met on 14 March 1946.

\(^8\) PRO LAB 8/91: Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Employment of Italian ex-POWs on Contract of Service, 10 January 1946. Of the figure of 150,000 given for this date, 66,000 were employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, 45,000 by the three service departments, 16,000 by the Ministry of War Transport, 14,000 by the Ministry of Supply, 6,000 by the Ministry of Food, 4,500 by the Ministry of Works.
hurriedly than they might have wanted. The repatriation of Italian POW was begun immediately after the war. However these POW were replaced in the first instance with some 200,000 German prisoners, most of whom were employed in Britain to the end of 1948. A relatively small number, around 15,400, remained as civilians in the U.K. after this date. Thus at the high point in mid-1947, there were 182,000 German and 1400 Italian ex-POW employed on various types of civilian work in the U.K. In addition to this number there were a further 8,000 Ukrainian POW who were brought to the U.K. in the summer of 1947, and put to work mainly in agriculture. Moreover, some 300 German scientists and technicians were brought to the U.K. to work in British industry and research establishments, and these too were technically POW, although their terms of employment were far more favourable than were the terms given regular prisoners.

The use of POW labour was of course only a temporary remedy for the labour shortages of the immediate postwar period. But this very quality was perhaps its greatest selling

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9 PRO LAB 8/1679: Internal memo, Keith to Rossetti, 27 November 1950.

10 PRO LAB 3/95: Ministry of Agriculture paper to Cabinet Labour Committee, meeting dated 25 October 1947. German prisoners were divided into three categories: blacks, who were ardent Nazis and mainly officers, did not work and were kept in closed camps; whites, who were anti-Nazis with a skill or profession, and were made a priority for repatriation; and greys, mainly enlisted men, who comprised the vast majority of prisoners. The figure of 182,000 refers only to those POW being employed. Of these: 146,000 were employed by various County Agricultural Executive Committees, 17,500 by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, 15,500 were billeted on farms in England and Wales, and a further 3,000 on farms in Scotland. Henry Faulk, Group Captives: The Re-education of German Prisoners of War in Britain, 1945-1948, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), p.9, puts the total number of German prisoners that passed through the U.K. after the war at 400,000, but not all of these would have been in the country at the same time.

11 These will be discussed in the next chapter in greater detail.
point. Prisoners could be made to help with reconstruction, and then repatriated when work became scarce. It was generally believed (particularly in trade union circles) that labour shortages would be a temporary phenomenon, and that a return to higher levels of unemployment was inevitable. In his Full Employment in a Free Society (1944), Beveridge had advanced a target figure of 3% unemployment as one for which British governments should aim, but this figure was "widely derided in official circles at the time." A figure of 8% unemployed was one which even Beveridge agreed was a realistic definition of full employment. Memories of inter-war unemployment still shadowed the landscape of economic thinking.

Such pessimism made POW labour seem ideal. But it worked against the notion of settling foreigners permanently in Britain. The biggest group of foreigners to be settled in the U.K. in these years were Polish servicemen, many of whom had fought under British operational command during the war. Churchill had promised to help re-settle these men and their dependents within "the Empire", and the Attlee government was bound by this pledge of honour. There were some 248,000 such Polish troops scattered across Britain, the Middle East, Italy and north west Europe in the late summer of 1945. The question of their repatriation was a source of discomfort for the British Foreign Office in the first year after the war. Many

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12 Hennessy, op.cit., p.378: "On the trade union side, the benefits of a handful of full employment years had yet to soften tough attitudes ... after decades of recession and unemployment."


Polish servicemen did not want to return to a Poland falling under Soviet domination, and the British government was reluctant to force them. But maintaining these Polish troops in Europe and Italy was expensive and politically untenable. In April 1946 a Cabinet Polish Forces Committee was formed to oversee the dispersal of Polish troops, and one month later the British government began to bring members of the Polish 2nd Corps to Britain as part of a non-combatant formation within the British Army called the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC). In total about 165,000 Polish soldiers were brought to the U.K. under the PRC scheme. They joined 25,778 soldiers of the 1st Polish Corps who had been stationed in the U.K. In addition to this number as many as 35,000 dependents of these soldiers may also have been brought to Britain. Of the approximate total of 220,000 Polish soldiers and dependents thus brought to Britain, a large number re-emigrated after a short period. The 1951 census showed 162,376 Polish born persons resident in Britain. This figure too can only be an estimate because the boundaries of Poland used in the census were not made clear, and because this number would have included approximately 15,000 Displaced

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16 Ibid., pp.233-9. In a paper distributed by Lord Keynes in February 1946 it was noted that Polish troops overseas were costing 2.5 million pounds per month to maintain. Moreover, the Italian government wished to be rid of Polish troops before its general election in May 1946, and the Yugoslav government warned that the presence of Poles on their border was regarded as provocative. The Soviets were of course also pressing for repatriation as was the Warsaw government.

17 Ibid., p.249.

18 Ibid., p.229.

19 Ibid., pp. 334-6. The exact figure is difficult to ascertain because of interdepartmental discrepancies, and because it is uncertain how many dependents who were eligible to come to Britain actually did come. The figure of 35,000 represents the total number of Polish civilians awaiting transport to the U.K. in 1946.
Persons of Polish origin. Keith Sword estimates that 115,000 Polish servicemen were settled in the U.K. through the PRC. Although these servicemen were settled as part of a war-time agreement, the emphasis placed on integrating them into the workforce through the mechanism of the PRC made them appear very much like part of an official recruitment scheme.

As the above figures make clear, not all Polish born residents of the U.K. in 1951 were ex-servicemen. In the spring of 1947 the Cabinet resolved to recruit Displaced Persons from camps in the British zone of Germany. This recruitment followed the success of a pilot scheme undertaken in the fall of 1946, in which over 3000 female Displaced Persons of Baltic origin were recruited to work in British tuberculosis sanatoria. This experimental scheme was codenamed "Balt Cygnet". The recruitment that followed went by the codename "Westward Ho", and took place between May 1947 and December 1949. The combined recruitment of Displaced Persons in the end yielded some 84,000 foreign workers, most of whom were settled in the U.K. permanently. All of these Displaced Persons -- or European Volunteer Workers (EVWs) as they were euphemized -- came from parts of eastern Europe to which they could not or would not return. They were refugees, although their settlement in the U.K. hinged upon their ability to perform useful labour in one of the essential industries, rather than on strictly compassionate grounds.

Polish servicemen and EVWs together accounted for some 230,000 officially recruited foreign workers in this period.


21 Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op.cit., pp.234-6.

22 The decision was taken at a meeting of the Foreign Labour Committee on 12 February 1947: see Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.53.

23 Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.1.
all of whom were, subject to a probationary period, given the option to settle permanently in the U.K. The integration of this body of foreign workers comprises the subject of the second chapter in this thesis.

There were in addition a number of other official, semi-official and private schemes which together accounted for as many as 190,000 foreign workers coming to the U.K. in these years. These workers, unlike the Polish soldiers and EVWs, were not meant to settle in the U.K., although in many instances it was thought that a lifetime of work could be offered recruits if they proved suitable. Chapters four and five of this thesis will look at aspects of this recruitment, focussing primarily on gender, skill and national identity issues. Most of the official and semi-official recruitment of this sort took place in Italy, although some was undertaken in Germany, Austria and Belgium. The total from official schemes outside the Westward Ho orbit was about 15,000.  

Private recruitment drew largely from the same sources, and in the case of domestic workers, from France as well. Most privately recruited workers were women, a reflection of the gender imbalance of labour shortages in the postwar period. Although some of this recruitment focussed on workers whose skills were in short supply in the U.K., the majority of recruits were unskilled or were recruited to fill unskilled positions. For example, between 1946 and 1951, 173,037 Ministry of Labour employment permits were issued to foreign workers. Of this number 51.7% were issued in respect of female domestic

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24 See Kay and Miles, op. cit., pp.38-9. Of this estimate of 15,000, 2,341 were Austrian women recruited under a scheme called Blue Danube, 9,713 were German women in a scheme called Action North Sea, and 2,000 or so were Italian women recruited for textiles. A further thousand Italian men were recruited for the coal mines in 1951, and 600 Belgian women were recruited in early 1946.
workers. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how many of those who were issued permits actually came to the U.K., the cost and complexity of obtaining a permit probably meant that a majority of permits were used.

In addition to this recruitment of European workers, there was one experimental scheme undertaken in this period which merits special attention. It brought together several postwar migration trends. In the summer of 1949 one hundred workers from the British island colony of St. Helena were brought to Britain to work in agriculture. This recruitment, although run like a foreign labour scheme, was unique in that recruits were Black British citizens. The scheme thus combined elements of foreign labour recruitment with elements of the migration of Black colonial and Commonwealth citizens to the U.K. in the 1950's. Although the numbers were small, the St. Helena scheme is of interest for what it revealed about official attitudes toward race and citizenship in the immediate postwar period. This recruitment will be examined in chapter three.

Taken together, then, this volume of foreign labour recruitment, official and unofficial, rounds out to about 420,000 workers. This number might have been doubled had the government chosen to recruit more freely than it did. All through this period the government had actually to fight pressure from some European countries -- most notably Italy -- to increase the number of foreign workers offered contracts in the U.K. Accommodation shortages handcuffed the government's ability to comply, but so too did counter pressure from trade unions, and apprehension about the absorptive capacity of British society. In fact the organized recruitment of labour by the government represented a control mechanism which ran very much against the desire of some European countries to open up borders to the free movement of labour within the context of a European customs union. Although both the Marshall Plan and

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25 Ibid., p.37.
NATO were contrived with British assistance for the sake of western European unity, the postwar government maintained the traditional reluctance to integrate too closely with Europe on economic issues such as free movement of labour. The final chapter will look in greater detail at the foreign relations considerations that animated foreign labour recruitment policy.

The availability of foreign labour reserves in the immediate postwar period certainly helped some of the rebuilding economies of western Europe to cope with the crises of reconstruction while staying within the bounds of dominant economic principles. In Britain, as Peter Hennessy, Jim Tomlinson, and Lewis Johnman among others have suggested, the Labour government was constrained in its reconstruction efforts not only by shortages of material and labour, but also by the strictures of tradition and a capitalist economy. In essence, the imperative to follow traditional economic practice, including adherence to free collective bargaining and a

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26 For more on the reluctance of Ernest Bevin and the Foreign Office to integrate too closely with the pan-European movement, see J.W. Young, Britain, France and the Unity of Europe, 1945-1951, (Leicester, 1984). See also, Keith Robbins, History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain, (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), Chapter 4. The latter deals with the importance of insularity to the development of the British world view and perceptions of self.

27 As we shall see, in those countries such as Italy where there was high unemployment after the war, labour surplus was a destabilizing factor that threatened capitalism.

prominent role for the private sector, restricted the government's ability to direct the economy in as close a fashion as it might have wished. The allocation of labour was no exception. Although powers of direction were greater in the immediate postwar period than they had been prior to the war, the government was bound to cultivate, and rely upon, the cooperation of both organized labour and of employers.

One aspect of this co-operation was government assistance in solving the problem of a shortage of workers in key industries. Castles and Kosack have noted that, as a rule, employers facing labour shortages need either to replace labour with technology, or to slow down the rate of investment and growth. Speeding rather than slowing production was the order of the day in the late 1940's, and although the fix of technology was widely heralded, there was no time to wait for its implementation. (Indeed, its implementation depended upon increased production). Moreover, as Hennessy has noted, there was little dynamic action behind the rhetorical commitment to modernization. The rapid injection of foreign labour into the British economy in the immediate postwar period allowed for the expansion of production without the waiting time necessary to implement technological innovation.

Nowhere was this process more apparent than in agriculture, where foreign workers were introduced in greatest numbers. While farm workers were needed to make good the


30 Hennessy, op. cit., pp.376-7: He contrasts the Modernization Councils of the postwar French economy with the "marginal" Cabinet Economic Policy Committee headed by Edwin Plowden, whose deliberations had little effect on civil service inertia. Trade union and employers' resistance to government intervention also played a role.

11 See Kay and Miles, op. cit., p.68: They provide a chart which gives the first placings in employment of all foreign
immediate demands of the postwar period, it was envisioned that in the foreseeable future British agricultural methods would be modernized and the labour needs of the countryside would be greatly diminished. Throughout these years Tribune, for example, ran full page advertisements for Massey Ferguson which stressed the need for mechanization and modernization of agriculture to meet the needs of the world's growing population. The ads claimed that the "Ferguson system" of complete mechanization allowed an increased yield from the same amount of land, and with much reduced labour costs. Here, supposedly, lay the future.

Foreign labour was in this instance seen as a stop gap in an industry that would, in the normal course of events, be overhauled by modern methods and mechanization. The sorts of work for which foreign labour was needed were primarily the rough and unpleasant jobs that technology would make redundant. In the meantime, the amenability of foreign labour to government direction and control was both useful and necessary. Control was useful in that when the inevitable "downsizing" (to use a term of more recent vintage) took place, foreigners could be the first dismissed. It was necessary in that it was largely

workers brought to the U.K. by February 1949. Over 29,000 workers were first placed in agriculture, nearly three times the number that were first placed in domestic work or in coal mining, the next largest categories.

32 In October 1948, for example, Chancellor of the Exchequer Stafford Cripps, in a radio address, stressed that mechanization was the future of agriculture, and thus not much labour recruitment was required. In an internal Ministry of Labour memo written by Harold Wiles, the senior civil servant with respect to manpower issues, this statement was confirmed. Wiles noted that there was no need to refute the Minister's statement, as some within the department had suggested, on the grounds that it would jeopardize the drive to recruit agricultural labour: "Our experience has been that the Agricultural Department have perpetually overstated their labour demands, so much so, that it is rather difficult to take their estimates too seriously." See: PRO LAB 12/490: Wiles to Hornsby, 1 October 1948.
assumed that the minute controls were lifted, foreign workers would move into higher paying jobs in less isolated, urban areas.

In essence then, the government had two options with respect to industrial strategy. The first was to address the poor working conditions in key industries in order to make them more attractive and reduce wastage of labour. The second option was to recruit workers on a temporary basis to meet immediate demands. The government pursued this second option, as the following remark of a Minister in the Labour government to the Wiles Committee on Manpower in Coalmining in November 1950 shows: "I always found in the war, in these things, much time and words were spent on wastage. But in the end it was very little affected by anything done. The practical leg is recruitment -- where the Government can influence what happens if they attack on all lines at once." 13

Diana Kay and Robert Miles have also argued that the EVW scheme was a stop gap measure meant to deal with a temporary crisis without upsetting the general contours of the established economic system. 14 EVWs, they claim, were recruited to fill positions in unreformed essential industries at a time when the mechanism of the market was unable to provide sufficient indigenous labour to run these industries on a for-profit basis. The availability of surplus labour obviated the need to reform economic structures that might otherwise have proven inadequate to the task of reconstruction. This interpretive framework would certainly match the general Marxist paradigm of labour migration as a way for capitalist

13 PRO LAB 13/833: Minutes of Wiles Committee meeting, 21 November 1950. The Minister is not identified but a likely guess would be Morrison, who was by then the Foreign Secretary. The words sound like Bevin's, but he would have been out of the government by this time.

14 See Kay and Miles, op.cit., especially Chapter 8: "Capitalism, Migration and Exclusion".
states to meet inherent cyclical contradictions and crises in their economies without altering the dominant system.

However this paradigmatic role of foreign labour in western capitalist economies does not fit entirely consistently with the British experience. The Marxist paradigm is most often drawn from schemes that European states such as West Germany undertook in the 1960's and 70's, whereby foreign workers were subject to repatriation when levels of unemployment climbed. In the U.K., foreign labour recruitment of this "Gastarbeiter" kind was only ever flirted with. The majority of foreign workers recruited by the government were meant to settle in Britain permanently. They were not temporary boosters of the army of surplus labour in Britain, to be dispensed with as the economic cycle turned. Even in the case of temporary contracts, the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office were never really comfortable with the notion of deporting foreign workers during times of unemployment. As shall be seen in chapter five on semi-official and private recruitment, the official position was generally that if a job was offered to a foreign worker, it should be in a position with good prospects for a long term engagement. Moreover, as Kay and Miles themselves point out, the number of foreign workers in Britain, although substantial, constituted a fraction of the number needed to redress the imbalance of the labour market in these years. Furthermore, many foreign workers were recruited to industries that were under state control, such as coalmining. In this instance foreign labour was used to prop up a socialist economic structure. Notwithstanding these important provisos, the recruitment of foreign workers was, by the government's own admission, primarily undertaken as an economic initiative, and

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36 Kay and Miles, op.cit., pp.185-6.
in this sense the Marxist paradigm fits.

Marxists of course were not the only ones to analyse the role of migrant labour in postwar capitalist economies. Others have noted not only the economic but the social consequences of labour migration. Kindleberger, writing in the late 1960's, posited a liberal view of foreign labour migration that went as follows: in the full employment conditions prevailing throughout most of the western world in the immediate postwar period, indigenous workers gravitated to better paying, higher status jobs, while the recruitment of foreign labour filled the vacancies at the bottom of the economy. In this sense the availability of reserves of foreign labour allowed indigenous workers to climb socially and economically, while at the same time lowering the general level of wages. In the iron foundries, for example, new materials and techniques were redrawing the hierarchy of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Foreign workers, as shall be seen in the chapter on semi-official recruitment, were mainly slotted in at the bottom of the revised hierarchy, and jobs at the lowest end of the production process were defined as beneath the level of indigenous workers. In this way the British worker was cushioned from the worst blows of restructuring, and was usually maintained at least one rung above the lowest level.

Kindleberger's interpretation was not that distant from the position taken by Marxists such as Castles and Kosack several years later. They argued that foreign labour constituted a "reserve army of labour", which together with the phenomenon of a "labour aristocracy" acted as "mechanisms of domination in the current phases of organized monopoly

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capitalism." Essentially this line of argument upheld the notion that the "reserve army of labour" both divided the working class vertically, and tilted the balance of the marketplace in favour of employers. Thus not only did foreign labour have a salutary (to capitalism) economic effect, it also sowed a social divisiveness and stratification which ultimately served the capitalist system as well.

Not surprisingly, this interpretation of the effect of migrant labour on the position of the working class was challenged by others, who sought to redeem migrant workers from the ignominious role in which they had been cast. In an article published in 1983, Constance Lever-Tracy pointed out that foreign workers only ever constituted a fraction of the labour force in western societies. Moreover, most migrants were part of the working class, and so themselves were the subjects of exploitation, and not "wage manipulators". Lever-Tracy tried to put migrant workers into the context of a global working class which formed a pool of exploitable labour that was essentially interconnected. John Goldthorpe however, writing one year later, argued in favour of a dual labour market theory, with foreign labour occupying the secondary position characterized by volatility and insecurity. This seemed to bring the argument back to the position taken by the Marxists in the early 70's, that foreign labour divided the working class and subverted its position as a result. As will be seen in the following chapters, there is much validity to this notion of a dual labour market, particularly as foreign workers were restricted by Ministry of Labour conditions in this period from taking any but prescribed work.

The permanent nature of many of the foreign workers in

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Britain in this period throws a complication into this social analysis as much as it does into the economic one. Kay and Miles themselves point out that migrations have traditionally been viewed as being either politically or economically motivated. This dichotomy, they argue, is a false one. They contend that migrations should be viewed in light of the balance of the articulation of the two motivations. For example, in the case of EVWs, the motivation of the British government was at once political and economic. On the one hand, the government was interested in solving the problem of the refugees for the sake of stabilizing Europe and, it must be said, for humanitarian reasons as well. On the other hand, the government saw Displaced Persons as a useful source of labour at a time of labour shortage in Britain. In this sense the scheme to recruit them was economically motivated as well. The main question, according to Kay and Miles, is which of these motivations was the more important. The answer they give is that the economic aspects of the scheme were the more significant, a point which is hard to dispute given the clearly stated motivation of the government.

From the point of view of the migrants, the balance of articulation between economic and political motivations is also a relevant framework. Certainly Displaced Persons, and the Poles who were settled in Britain at the same time, were politically motivated migrants for the most part, refugees in need of a place to resettle. But they were also many of them looking for a place where they could work and establish some security for themselves and their families. In that sense they were economically motivated as well. Indeed economic and political motivations are very difficult to untangle discretely.

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in an era in which ideology is centred on competing economic systems. And indeed many of the east European immigrants to the U.K. in this period would have found their economic position greatly diminished under Soviet rule, which would have added a personal as well as ideological reason to flee Communism.

Thus the balance of articulation framework laid out by Kay and Miles is a useful one for postwar migration and labour schemes. It allows for the weighing of factors involved in postwar migrations without forcing the strict categorization of either political or economic motivation. While not adhering to a false dichotomy, we can acknowledge and explore the difference between various postwar recruitment schemes. In the recruitment schemes of temporary workers, for example, settlement was not the primary goal. These temporary workers present different interpretive and analytical questions than do the politically motivated, refugee migrants who were meant to be assimilated into British society. Thus the temporary recruitment schemes need to be analysed in economic or political terms, as in chapters five and six, whereas permanent settlement schemes raise social questions to a greater degree, as in chapters three and four.

The term assimilation needs to be defined because postwar government policy revolved around a certain understanding of it. E.J.B. Rose has defined assimilation as follows: "This term implies that the group has adapted itself so completely to the host society and has been so completely accepted that it has merged into the whole and lost its separate identity." For foreign workers who were meant to eventually settle in the U.K., assimilation meant accepting the British "way of life", which, as we shall see, was by no means easily definable. It

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also meant being accepted by British society. This sort of assimilation was the primary goal of the British government for those foreign workers who were meant to settle permanently in the U.K. It was hoped that this process would take a relatively short period of time.

As Rose has noted, assimilation "almost always involves or is preceded by inter-marriage." Part of the reason for recruiting European settlers, as we shall see in the chapter on Poles and EVWs, was a desire to augment the population with the appropriate "racial stock." Thus the intent of the government to assimilate recruited European settlers involved a notion of perceived racial compatibility, as well as a perception that Europeans would have a proclivity to accept the social mores and traditions which comprised the ideal conception of British citizenship. The passage in the \textit{Royal Commission on Population Report} dealing with immigration noted: "Immigration on a large scale into a fully established society like ours could only be welcomed without reserve if the immigrants were of good human stock and were not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged in it."\footnote{Rose et al., op.cit., p.24.}

Rose has further noted that integration is often used as a synonym for assimilation. He preferred to define integration as "a process whereby a minority group, while retaining its own culture and religion, adapts itself to and is accepted as a permanent member of the majority society in all the external aspects of association."\footnote{\textit{Royal Commission on Population Report}, Cmd. 7695 (London: HMSO, 1949), Chapter 12, Section 329, p. 124.} It is possible that integration can be a stage in the process of assimilation, or it can be an end in itself. Rose uses the term "pluralism" as a synonym for the

\footnote{Ibid., p.23.}
integration process. It may take several generations to achieve this process of integration, and in the meantime the immigrant adapts as much as necessary and possible in order to survive. The stage before integration is thus one of adaptation. In this latter process the adaptation is mutual between host society and immigrant, and acceptance on either side may be helped along or retarded by external processes, such as for example the actions of the state.

In a broad sense then, it can be posited that immigration involves a process which begins with adaptation, and may move on to integration and, possibly, full assimilation. There are many factors which affect the flow of this process, and indeed the flow may be arrested at any of the stages. In recruiting foreign labour, officials not only had set notions of how far along this process they wished recruits to progress, but also of how far along recruits could progress. For example, notions of racial compatibility played a large part in official assessments of assimilability, as we shall see in the chapter on recruited St. Helenian workers. But even in the case of foreign workers who were deemed to be of the correct racial stock, there were obstacles to integration and/or assimilation.

One important obstacle involved the redefinition of British citizenship in the aftermath of the war. Citizenship in this context is defined as full membership in a society in which rights and responsibilities between the individual and the state are prescribed. In the postwar period the nature of citizenship rights and responsibilities in the U.K. was undergoing a change, and the position of foreign workers was affected by this change. As citizenship came to entail a more formally contractual relationship between state and citizen, the exclusion of migrant workers from full citizenship became more obvious in an official sense.\textsuperscript{46} This exclusion in turn fed

into popular conceptions of who belonged to the nation and who did not.

The notion that British citizenship in the postwar period was based on the principle of entitlement, and of a social contract between the state and the populace has been put by David Morgan and Mary Evans in their book on citizenship and ideology in the second World War. The "social citizenship" of the postwar period, they argue, united disparate regions and classes. All held equal rights under the welfare state: "There was no suggestion that citizenship had to be earned, or that there was an obligation to participate."47 They attribute this conception of citizenship to the egalitarian attitudes promoted by the exigencies of the war effort. Service in the armed forces, or on the home front, had earned participants the rights of citizenship in the postwar welfare state. Such service had also obliged the state to deliver enhanced rights and privileges to its citizens.

In this sense the notion that the rights derived from citizenship were universally conferred on every British subject in the U.K. is qualified by the fact that there was seen to be an initiation process upon which citizenship rested. At the same time that universality was made the watchword of postwar British citizenship, British nationality was carefully defined in order to limit the bounds of that universality. This qualification of Morgan and Evans's definition of social citizenship is important. For much of the populace of the U.K. there was no sense of obligation to the state, or rather there

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was the sense that that obligation had been paid in full, in advance. But for others the sense of obligation was very definitely felt. Rose has pointed out, with respect to EVWs, that there was "reluctance, felt perhaps most strongly in the Trade Union movement, to accept that the newcomers might legitimately be included in the circle of those to whom benefits conferred within the new Welfare State (especially those of full employment) could be conceded."

John Rex has likewise noted that any attempt to understand the working class response to immigration in the postwar period must be seen in the context of a collectively bargained for welfare state which was the deal struck by the working class with its opposite number. In other words it was the threat that immigrants posed to that deal, and not the threat posed to working class control of the labour process, which most informed resentment towards foreign workers and immigrants.

This notion of having to earn social citizenship was reinforced by pronouncements made by the government itself. In November 1948, for example, in response to a question regarding the permanence of EVWs in the U.K., the Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, replied that the EVWs were to be permanently settled. "These people come here," Isaacs said, "working their passage to British citizenship." Here the language implied that recent migrants had still to earn their citizenship, and were in a sense on probation until they did so. The follow up question drove home the point by asking how many members of the Polish Resettlement Corps were unemployed, with the implication that they were not "paying their passage." Isaacs' reply, that that was quite another matter, implied that the commitment to

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48 E.J.B. Rose et al., op.cit., p.20.


the Poles was held in quite a different light. In a sense they too were seen to have paid their dues in advance by having fought in the war on the allied side. Thus despite the theory of a welfare state based on universal equality, varying shades of hierarchy with respect to citizenship and nationality status impinged upon reality.

Ironically, the presence of direct controls over the labour force in the immediate aftermath of the war facilitated the integration of migrant and foreign workers. "Ring fences" around coal and agriculture, and the Control of Engagement Order of October 1947 are examples of direct labour controls that continued well into the postwar period. The presence of such controls on British workers made controls over foreign labour legally and morally tenable. At the same time restrictions on foreign workers helped to blunt possible domestic resentment of foreigners. In short, formal controls sketched out a rigid but fairly certain path to citizenship. In a sense official recruitment schemes showed that direct and concerted government planning, to the extent that it was applied, made for stable conditions for immigration. The bureaucratic web that encompassed foreign labour recruits could be worked to steer them down the road to citizenship. It could also, conversely, be worked to discourage them from settling, or claiming any rights that they might have.

After July 1948, with the advent of the National Health Service (NHS) acting as the symbolic onset of the welfare state, direct government controls began to be peeled back. Now bureaucrats had to worry about defending the welfare state from

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51 This was certainly the evaluation of the EVW and PRC schemes that held sway throughout the 1970's and 1980's, as for example Tom Rees, "Immigration policies in the United Kingdom" in Charles Husband, (ed.) "Race in Britain: Continuity and Change," (London: Hutchinson, 1982), which paints a rather rosy picture of the success of the EVW scheme and the efforts made to integrate the newcomers. Kay and Miles, op.cit., have since led a revisionist school of thought on this matter.
the perceived predations of the sharp and the lazy, and not incidentally, of foreigners. The trick for a government bound by the discourse of the postwar social citizenship, was to work around the commitments to universalism in order to maintain differential status. They had also to worry about the unwillingness of migrants and foreign workers to indefinitely do the unpleasant "essential" work for which they had been recruited. Given full employment and tremendous inflationary pressure, the prospect of disputes and frictions arising from the uncontrolled movement of foreign workers in the market was dire. Housing was scarce. Food was scarce. The lack of consumer products limited the government's ability to manipulate labour distribution through wage policy, even if it was free to pursue such a policy (it was not). In short, the removal of controls and the conditions of the market militated against the government's ability to manipulate the population -- both foreign and British -- in ways they might have felt necessary for economic reconstruction.

But there was more than just the rhetoric of universalism and entitlement, and the realities of the market place, constraining Labour's economic and industrial policy. J.D Tomlinson has pointed out that Labour was also bound by long held commitments to British constitutionalism, collective bargaining and consultation principles, and the Morrisonian form of national ownership. These commitments precluded an ability to modernize and direct the economy in the way that some officials and planners might have hoped. In the Cabinet debate over a proposal to establish a national wage policy in the summer of 1946, for example, objectors on the Labour right argued that such a policy would politicize wage negotiations and would "undermine the whole basis of wage determination by

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consent, at present secured via the trade unions' ability to negotiate freely." Part of the reasoning behind the proposal for a nationally concerted wage policy was that wage differentials could be set to attract labour to the industries where it was most needed. In fact the proposal was presented in this instance by the Minister for Fuel and Power, who was desperately trying to recruit for the coal mining industry. Given the constraints that Tomlinson outlined it is not surprising that this proposal was rejected, although as a result of this debate the National Joint Advisory Council (NJAC), a tripartite body representing employers, unions and the government, was revived as a consultative instrument on such issues. This whole episode illustrated the difficulties faced by the government in directing and controlling labour.

It can be argued that foreign labour offered an exception to such constraints. Here was a body of manpower which the government could readily direct. In fact the commitment to consultation and union co-operation reinforced the impetus to maintain tight controls on foreign labour and preferential treatment for British workers. Only when assurances were given that foreign labour would be directed and controlled -- forced to join the relevant union, bound to Ministry of Labour control, first to be laid off in the event of unemployment -- did the trade union movement give its approval to foreign labour recruitment. And yet, as we shall see, a variety of international and domestic factors limited the ability of the

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53 Jim Tomlinson, "The Labour government and the trade unions, 1945-51" in Tiratsoo (ed.), The Attlee Years (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), p.93. Tomlinson reports the Cabinet debate of 2 August 1946. The proposal for a wages policy was Shinwell's; Isaacs at the Ministry of Labour, and Morrison, the Lord President, were among those who objected to the proposal.

government to control the deployment of foreign workers indefinitely.

The government had in these circumstances to use the mystification of the welfare state to its advantage. If the state was bound to grant certain freedoms and privileges to workers and citizens alike, the onus was on workers to seek out their rights. It is apparent that the welfare state has presented the greatest boon to those sections of the population that have mastered the intricacies of negotiating its forms and procedures. It could be assumed that foreign workers with a limited fluency in English, and in a strange environment, might be less likely to be aware of their legal position within the state. They would thus seem to be more susceptible to the sort of misdirection that is practised through official obfuscation. This was not necessarily so, as Kay and Miles, among others, have shown with respect to EVWs. They have noted that networks of information circulated among EVWs, and helped to clarify rights and privileges quite quickly.55 Civil servants were very aware of the rapidity with which ethnic grapevines operated, and planned accordingly. Moreover, because foreign workers were immediately implicated in the bureaucracy of the U.K. -- through work permits and identity cards, not to mention being "publicly housed" in hostels -- they came in many cases to be more adept at navigating it than their British counterparts. Nevertheless, the government in these years came increasingly to rely on legalisms and subterfuge, as well as direct controls, to manipulate the position of foreign workers in Britain.

It was in this context that an emerging dichotomy between formal and informal definitions of national identity became important. Although this dichotomy affected European foreign workers in the U.K., its broadening was the direct result of the evolving relationship between Britain and its Empire and

55 Kay and Miles, op. cit., pp. 103-4.
Commonwealth in this period. The formal consequences of this evolution were manifest in the 1948 British Nationality Act. At a meeting of the Cabinet committee on British Nationality on 7 August 1946, the decision was taken to "create some form of citizenship which would be the gateway through which the status of British subject would be conferred upon the inhabitants of the United Kingdom." The concern was to maintain the universality of the British subject designation in the face of changes to the nationality and citizenship laws of certain of the Commonwealth countries, most particularly Canada, whose new nationality legislation would go into effect on 1 January 1947. From the Colonial Office point of view a separately defined United Kingdom citizenship was undesirable in that it threatened to disrupt colonial relations. But given the decision taken at the 7 August meeting, they too had to go along with the redefinition. The Colonial Office therefore advised that a combined Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies be adopted, in order that there remain some consistency in the common code of British subjecthood that had obtained throughout the Empire.

The 1948 British Nationality Act was a piece of legislation which prompted remarkably little debate at the time of its passage. Whereas British nationality had hitherto been legally defined in terms of subjecthood, with the implicit notion of loyalty to the monarch, it was made by the Act to rely on one's citizenship status. Nationality, the Act stated, was "derived

56 PRO CAB 130/13: GEN. 1451st meeting, 7 August 1946.

57 See PRO CAB 130/13: GEN.145/3, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Colonies, 12 August 1946.


through possession of citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies or of another Commonwealth country." The Nationality Act laid out a common citizenship for the entity described as the United Kingdom and Colonies. Robin Cohen has described the citizenship conferred by the Act as "passively received legal categorization," as opposed to a citizenship that entailed an established sense of community. More recently Jose Harris has buttressed this point by noting that the theoretical basis of the welfare state posited a contractual relationship between state and citizen. This legalistic conception of citizenship divided the notion of Britishness into two parts: the one statutory, and the other based on a rather inchoate notion of ethno-national identity. Thus as Cohen notes, bureaucrats were given greater power to define who belonged to the official community of citizenship, and in so doing acted as guardians of the "frontiers of identity." At the same time, those frontiers were made "fuzzy" by the dissonance between official and unofficial communities.

I will return to the matter of this dissonance shortly. However it should first be emphasized that at the time of the 1948 Nationality Act few people grasped the implications of replacing subjecthood with citizenship. The government argued that the Act was a way of assuring members of the Commonwealth that their tie with the mother country would be preserved regardless of the citizenship policies adopted by their own governments. Conservative critics railed against the liberality and inclusiveness of the new definition. Only a very few

Nationality Act finally extended this trend to the point that place of birth no longer imparted an absolute claim to citizenship. That is, the 1981 Act stated that people born in Britain of non-British parents were not British citizens automatically.

60 Ibid., p.6.

61 Jose Harris, in Marquand and Seldon (eds.), op.cit., p.135.
lamented the passing of the foundation status of British subject, correctly foreseeing that controls on migration, and differential status, could more easily be imposed on the basis of individual citizenship.\textsuperscript{62}

The very need for the Act bespoke the fact that the Empire and Commonwealth were evolving into a more fluid and informal network. Britain's relationship with Europe had also changed, had become closer and more involved than it had been in the inter-war period. European population movements that had been set in motion by the war had to be sorted out in the context of Britain's changing postwar global role. The instability of Europe, as much as postwar economic circumstances, impelled Britain's recruitment and refugee policy. Commitments to pan-European bodies such as the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) -- founded in the spring of 1948 -- and to international bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), were the basis of much of the recruitment undertaken by the government. In fact these commitments pushed the government further in the direction of recruitment than they might have wanted to go.\textsuperscript{63} However, this new balance in the orientation of Britain's foreign relations did not alter the fundamental primacy of the commitment to the overseas Empire and Commonwealth.

\textsuperscript{62} See Ann Dummett and Andrew Nicol, Subjects, Citizens, Aliens and Others, op.cit. They make the point that the 1948 Nationality Act blurred the line between subject and citizen, allowing the interchangeability of the two terms in deference to the republican sentiments of various parts of the Commonwealth. For years afterwards people in the U.K. continued to refer to themselves as British subjects, until immigration controls introduced in 1962 made distinctions more manifest.

\textsuperscript{63} See, for example, Edward Pilkington, Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots (London: Tauris, 1988), p.37: Pilkington notes the United Nations General Assembly's censure of the British government, in the summer of 1948, for letting too few immigrants from Europe in to the U.K. This is one example of international pressure put to bear on the government to take in more European immigrants and refugees.
The redefinition of British identity and citizenship, the desire to shore up the Empire and Commonwealth, and the exigencies of British involvement in Europe were all interconnected. At the same time that hundreds of thousands of European migrants and refugees were being brought to Britain, the British government was encouraging and facilitating considerable emigration from Britain to the white dominions of the Commonwealth. Kathleen Paul commented on this policy in a 1995 article on the 1948 Nationality Act and the Assisted Passages scheme. Paul argued that Labour's imperial strategy after the war lay in developing strong bonds of racial and ethnic identification among residents of the British Empire and Commonwealth as a means of cementing political and economic ties which threatened to come quite loose in the postwar period. While the 1948 Act formalized an imperial citizenship, it also heightened the role of an informal code which defined national identity in terms of notions of race and ethnicity. The informal code compromised the principle of equality embodied in the formal code: "formal nationality policy was at odds with an informal national identity." The motivation behind the Act, according to Paul, was self-interest, specifically a desire to keep the Dominions in a close and favourable position with respect to the imperial metropolis. In a bid to maintain the goodwill of the Commonwealth, the Act redefined British citizenship in secular and inclusive terms. Britishness was made transferrable, mobile, "purely statutory" wrote Mervyn Jones in 1956, and resting upon "a concordance of


legislative action by member states of the British Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{66} In the concurrent policy of encouraging emigration from the U.K. to the Dominions this notion of mobility was made manifest. British emigrants would take with them "British ways", seeding the Dominions with British culture as well as with British "human stock." Thus Britishness was biologically as well as constitutionally and culturally defined.

As emigrants left the U.K., they were to be replaced by immigrants of the appropriate "human stock" from Europe. In this process British emigrants would reinforce the British character of the Dominions, while European immigrants would eventually be transformed into Britons: assimilated. But in order to be considered assimilable, the immigrants had to be fair skinned. The alarmed official reaction to the migration of a small number of Black colonial citizens to the U.K. in these years shows how important this component was in the official mind. The descriptions of the European immigrants as of good "racial stock", their blood revivifying the nation, further expressed this attitude.\textsuperscript{67} Certainly notions of race took on a greater significance in official considerations of immigration than did factors such as cultural affinity and common language. Many Polish servicemen and EVWs, for example, were Catholics of peasant stock who had never experienced life in a western democracy. Yet this was not thought to be too great an obstacle to their integration or, eventually, assimilation.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{66} See Dummett and Nicol, op.cit., p.137.

\textsuperscript{67} In a speech in the House of Commons on 27 February 1945 Churchill said: "...we should think it an honour to have such faithful and valiant warriors dwelling among us as if they were men of our own blood." (See: Sword, et.al., op. cit., p.232). Although this was not exactly the same thing as saying that they were of the same blood, it quite clearly implied compatibility.

\textsuperscript{68} Jews were another question, and here the Jewish conflation of religion and race tended to work to their disadvantage. But Jews always form a special case in British life, and not least in this period, with the likes of Mr. Bevin
traditions and language could be developed. Skin colour, on the other hand, was an immutable condition.

The bureaucratic or secular definition of citizenship embodied in the Act thus appeared to reaffirm the notion of imperial unity and of a constitutional definition of Britishness, while migration and foreign labour recruitment policy facilitated the re-population of large parts of the nation -- and specifically of the working class -- with appropriate "racial stock." Paul argues that the informal construction of Britishness provided a counter to the levelling implications of the re-defined citizenship. This counter was important in the context of the desire to wield control by a government that was bound to fulfill the contract set out by the postwar welfare state.

The informal conception or code of Britishness, as opposed to the statutory definition of British citizenship, was one way in which the state could circumvent the commitment to universality which the welfare state imposed upon it. The uses of this informal conception of British national identification were most evident in the recruitment and use of foreign labour in agriculture. In the inter-war period the patriotic ideal was constructed around a vision of rural, aristocratic old England. Paul Rich has described Baldwin's contribution to this rustic myth-making as one which emphasized the stout yeoman as the epitome of English individualism and character. This version

and Mr. Attlee at the head of the government. Ian Mickardo speaks of both men's anti-semitism as though he had direct experience of it; see Ian Mickardo, Ian Mickardo Backbencher, (London, 1988), p.4. Bevin's Palestine imbroglio would not have helped to reverse Mickardo's judgement in this area. Ironically it was Bevin who had been lambasted as an anti-semit by the Zionists for saying that "the Jews are not a race but a religion."

of national identity, claims Rich, reached its apotheosis during World War II, with the slogan "all England as one parish" expressing the communal efforts of the war in traditional terms. In the aftermath of the war the advent of the welfare state under a Labour government "merely confused the existing hierarchy without in any radical way reversing its order."70 While "progressives" of both right and left wings were emerging as backbenchers and young party activists, the older political elites in both major parties and, especially important, in the civil service, continued to carry policy. Their conception of British national identity was rooted in the romantic rural idyll, an important aspect of which was racial and cultural homogeneity. Robert Hewison has called this postwar trope "Deep England."71 The concern with coloured migration in the period of the 1940's and 1950's reflected the ascendancy of this conception of national identity, argues Rich. Race and culture were conflated in the argument that immigrants of colour could not be assimilated into the British nation because they "did not share the same cultural values as the surrounding society."72 Black migrants did not fit the rustic definition of Britishness espoused by traditional elites.

The "cultural values" that were spoken of by some senior civil servants clearly alluded to an acceptance of social deference, of an established hierarchy. In a sense it is possible to poke a hole in this objection to colonial migration by arguing that Black colonial migrants were more likely to

70 Ibid., p.45: Rich quotes Peregrine Worsthorne here.

71 Robert Hewison, Culture and Consensus: England, art and politics since 1940, (London: Methuen, 1995), Chapter 2. Hewison notes the perpetuation of this pastoral myth of Englishness in the Labour government's rhetoric and policies, such as the establishment of the National Land Fund, presented as making the heritage and essence of Englishness, as embodied in ancient landmarks, available to all.

72 Rich, op.cit., p.47.
adhere to traditional British cultural practices -- deference to
a squirearchy chief among them -- than were 'white' immigrants
from without the empire. Obviously skin colour was considered a
more important element than cultural affinity in the integration
process. And yet it is also possible to argue that the sorts of
foreign workers that were recruited for settlement by the
postwar Labour government did suit, and were intended to suit,
the rural conception of Englishness defined by elites. A sturdy,
conservative peasantry, provided it was of a like "racial
stock", was ideal material upon which to graft this traditional
English identity. The process only required a change of soil and
a little bit of water; as roots took hold the foliage would soon
blend in with the native flora. The majority of EVWs and Polish
servicemen were meant to be slotted into British life in this
fashion, to fill in, as it were, those patches left bare by the
departure of indigenous yeomen and workers who were, at the same
time, being sent abroad to spread British culture and genes to
all parts of the Commonwealth.

This reading of cultural assimilability is reinforced by
the fact that the most difficult foreigners to absorb into this
pastoral nationalism were EVWs and Poles of a more educated or
genteel social background. The number of PRC "recalcitrants"
that the Ministry of Labour had difficulty placing in
satisfactory employment (the satisfaction of the government)
were on the whole of the officer class.73 Poles and EVWs were to
be assimilated, but they were to go in at the bottom, among the

73 PRO LAB 12/537: figures in this file dated 24 August 1948
show that of those PRC members due for imminent discharge, 1172
were officers and 892 were other ranks. Among the younger members
-- born after 1908 -- the figures were about even: 495 officers
to 538 other ranks. But among the older members -- born before
1907 -- there were nearly twice as many officers as other ranks
not placed in employment. This difficulty was anticipated by the
Ministry of Labour prior to the setting up of the PRC scheme. In
an internal memo in LAB 13/192, dated 19 March 1946, there is
discussion of what to do with officers who decline to volunteer
for the PRC.
working classes. As such the humble and hard working were at a premium. They were the human material upon which essential industries and under developed or declining regions would be rebuilt.

In a sense the recruitment of foreign workers illustrated the decline in reality of the aristocratic, pastoral idyll. The "quiet beauty" of the English countryside may have been thought by some the "best material expression [of] such freedom and content as have flourished in this country", but to many Englishmen the countryside was remote and boring and, given memories of inter-war depression, economically tenuous. As British men and women left the countryside for the cities or for emigration abroad, a somewhat urgent attempt was made to re-stock the deserted areas with workers and settlers of an appropriate type. British culture was meant to infuse itself naturally, through a steeping process that would work with a minimum of government intervention. It was important to the process only that the would be assimilates be dispersed enough that impermeable pockets not form out of a continuation of their native cultural practices in the U.K.

The other side of the assimilation process, as has been noted above, is the acceptance of the immigrants by the host society. Trepidation over the response of British society to foreign workers carried much weight in official considerations. In this context the profound effects of the war in shaping the ideological outlook of the period must be acknowledged. "All England as one parish"; "Fair shares for all"; these were slogans hatched in the circumstances of war, and they affected the laying out of the postwar welfare state. But the war also had an effect on the conception of British national identity. As Anthony Smith has written, most states in practice combine

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elements of ethnic based and civic based nationalism. The former stresses myths of common descent, common language, religion and symbols. The latter stresses the politico-territorial entity of the state, and membership is determined statutorily. Here, in somewhat different form, is the same phenomenon that Kathleen Paul calls "formal" and "informal" definitions of Britishness. The balance of articulation of these two conceptions of the nation vary according to circumstance. In general wars have the effect of tipping the balance in the direction of what Walker Connor has called the "ethno national bond". War time propaganda inscribed images of patriotism, uniting the populace as Britons in defence of their ancestral land and their ancient social traditions and culture. As Morgan and Evans argue, the sense of unity that the war engendered helped bring about the notion of entitlement that underlay the welfare state. But the ethno nationalism that resulted from the war may also have acted to exclude certain members of the society from participation in the full life of the nation. Panikos Panayi has written of the monolithic state that emerges from war: "The bureaucratically obedient, monolithic unit forges together disparate political units under the crisis of war, but the new monolith cannot accept individuals who do not possess the birthright required for this new unit, for its binding forces are race and nation." Postwar ethno nationalism would clearly play a


significant role in the integration of foreign workers. Moreover the state's attempt to integrate these migrants reflected official articulations of national identity.

The British government's recruitment of foreign labour in the immediate postwar years can thus be seen to involve a number of interrelated questions and issues. In the context of economic reconstruction, the setting up of a comprehensive welfare state, and the reorientation of foreign relations, the introduction of a fairly large body of foreign workers highlighted postwar notions of economic policy, national identity and Britain's place in Europe and the world. These themes will be explored in the following chapters.

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Chapter One: Prisoners of War

As the war ended there were hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war (POW) in the U.K., many of whom were engaged in some sort of productive labour.¹ The 1929 Geneva Convention stated that POWs of non-commissioned rank could be made to work subject to certain stipulations, and the British government had made use of prisoners to redress domestic labour shortages.² The government was resolved to continue using such labour. However there were a number of factors which had to be taken into consideration if prisoners were to be kept working in Britain until they were repatriated. International considerations intruded into the use of POW labour. So too did domestic issues and policies. The logistics of maintaining a large number of unfree workers at work in a free -- if very regulated -- economy were formidable. Moreover, in determining policy towards the various classes of POW in the U.K. throughout its tenure in office, the government was affected not only by logistical and foreign relations details, but by perceptions of national and social identity.

In July 1945 the Cabinet had resolved the desirability of

¹ In March 1945 there were 154,082 Italian and 66,500 German prisoners of war being employed in Britain. See: Bob Moore, "Turning Liabilities in Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War" in Journal of Contemporary Studies, v.32(January, 1997), p.118.

² Ibid., p.121: The Geneva Convention of 1929 was an untried document at the time of the Second World War, and certain of its stipulations were subject to interpretation. For example, the Convention stated that prisoners could not be removed from the theatre in which they were captured. British authorities got around this condition by arguing that prisoners were being moved away from dangerous areas for their own safety. This was easier to argue in the initial stages of the war, when British policy was to transport POWs to Canada. Regarding compulsory work for POWs, the Convention stated that prisoners should not be made to work longer hours than were required of civilian workers.
retaining some 30,000 Italian prisoners of war "on a wage earning basis in agriculture." At this time there were roughly 200,000 Italian prisoners of war in the U.K., of whom about 65,000 worked in agriculture. These prisoners were paid roughly 10 and a half shillings per week, slightly lower than the lowest sum paid in the British Army. Roughly 18,000 of this number were billeted on farms; the rest lived in camps and were employed as gang labour by County Agricultural Executive Committees (CAECs). The proposal to retain them seemed initially to hinge upon the need for their labour in retrieving the harvests of 1945 and 1946. However, the various departments involved in the decision differed on the advisability of retaining the Italian prisoners, each for its own reasons.

The Ministries of Agriculture and of Labour, for obvious reasons, and the War Office, which employed some 45,000 Italian prisoners in the three Service Departments, were in favour of

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1 PRO HO 213/1130: Cabinet meeting 14th(45), cited in note dated 19 July 1945.

4 PRO LAB 8/91: Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Employment of Italian ex-POW on Contracts of Service, dated 10 January 1946.

5 The minimum agricultural wage was roughly 80s./week, although this did not include room and board. Civilianized POW would have to be paid this rate. See PRO MAF 47/150: Memo to Executive Officers of CAECs in England and Wales re: charges for POW, dated 2 August 1947.

6 Ibid. The County Agricultural Executive Committees (CAECs) were a remnant of the war time organization of agriculture. They will be discussed at greater length in the chapter on St. Helenian agricultural workers. Suffice it to note here that these were structures that organized and deployed gang labour for the benefit of maximizing production in the national interest. CAECs allocated workers to farmers and to agricultural projects. Workers were often housed in communal hostels or camps, and moved around where needed. They were paid by the Committee, who in turn collected a set sum from farmers. This system continued for several years after the war had ended.
retaining them. To the end of the war Italian prisoners had, according to research done by Bob Moore, been found an excellent source of docile labour. The Home Office, on the other hand, seemed to harbour a poor opinion of Italian prisoners, and a fear of the social consequences of their presence in the English countryside. Despite letters from farmers requesting permission to retain billeted Italians, the Home Office voiced the opinion that no one "except a few of their girlfriends, would view favourably a suggestion that any of them should be allowed to stay here." They also warned of the potential resentment of British servicemen if Italian prisoners were civilianized before them.

Italian POW marrying British women obviously exercised the ire of the Home Office. Several cases of Italian POW either marrying or intending to marry British women were brought to the attention of the ministry in August and September 1945, and it was feared that when the proposal to repatriate Italian POW was made public there would follow a "crop" of such marriages, which were thought to have "undesirable social and personal consequences." The difficulty, from the Home Office point of view, was that there was little that could legally be done to prevent them. A Home Office proposal to have the Registrar General's department refuse to issue certificates for such marriages was shot down on legal grounds. But it was noted that while the Registrar General could not legally refuse the

7 PRO LAB 8/91: Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Employment of Italian ex-POW on Contracts of Service, 10 January 1946.

8 Bob Moore, op.cit., p.137.

9 PRO HO 213/1130: Note by Prestige, (H.O.), 18 May 1945.


11 Ibid., internal memo by Lyons (Home Office), dated 6 September 1945.
certificate, he could withhold it for a period of one day, ostensibly to check on the marital status of the participants. During this delay the W/O could be informed, and then take action to prevent the marriage by removing the POW "from the scene of his temptation." 12

While the Home Office fretted about the chastity of British women, the Foreign Office worried about the timetable for repatriating prisoners of war. In the case of Italian POWs, their status had changed during the course of the war, and though the Allies had managed to retain their services even after an armistice agreement had been reached with Italy in September 1943, it was by no means certain that repatriation could be delayed much longer. 13 Moreover the Foreign Office was anxious not to give the Soviet Union an excuse for sending any of their prisoners to work in Siberia, and were therefore eager to repatriate Italians as soon as possible. 14 The Foreign Office was also aware of the impact that detaining Italian prisoners in the U.K. might have on the fluid Italian political situation. For this reason it was important that if Italian prisoners were retained, their status should be altered to that of...

12 Ibid. Significantly, only marriages in Catholic or nonconformist churches had to be registered with the Registrar General. Marriages in the Church of England did not require such a notification procedure, but it was assumed that Italians would not marry in an Anglican Church.

13 After the armistice agreement the Italian government had agreed verbally -- though not officially -- that its prisoners could continue to be used for a broad range of work in the U.K. Italian prisoners were asked to volunteer as "co-operators" in the spring of 1944, and were given better pay and a broader range of work to do as a result. By October 1944, 100,000 of 140,000 Italian POW had volunteered and were employed as such. The remainder stayed in camps and continued to be employed as they had been. See: Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, "Britain, the Allied Negotiations on Italian Co-belligerency and the Prisoner of War Question, 1943-5" in International History Review, XVIII(1996):28-47.

of civilians. In November 1945, for example, the War Office was informed that France was offering Italian prisoners work as free men. "The French offer", ran a note from the Foreign Office, "rather puts us on our mettle. It will be embarrassing for us to detain Italians here as prisoners of war if they can apparently get jobs as free workers in France." The purpose of modifying the status of Italian prisoners in the U.K., it was further noted, would be "to strengthen the prestige of the Italian Government in its political difficulties....It is only to a lesser degree related to the manpower needs of User Departments."

The political difficulties of the Italian government involved the challenge of the left-wing coalition of Communists and Socialists to the centre-right Christian Democrats, led by de Gasperi, who became prime minister in December of 1945. Throughout these years the vicissitudes of Italian politics were of keen interest to the British Foreign Office, which did all that it could to bolster the de Gasperi government. The prisoners of war episode was one example of that imperative. In the event, it was decided that owing to shortages of accommodation, only those Italians privately billeted would be offered civilian contracts. The number of prisoners that took up the offer, made in the spring of 1946, was not great; only about 1,400 billeted Italians remained in the U.K.

In the summer of 1946 the question of allowing repatriated Italian ex-POW to return to the U.K. to marry British women with whom they were engaged was raised by the Ministry of Labour. The Home Office again refused to grant permission for this on the remarkable grounds that such Italian men were

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15 PRO LAB 8/91: Notes dated 20 and 29 November 1945.

16 Ibid., P.L.C.(46)2nd meeting, dated 10 January 1946.

"enemy POW.'" In so far as a peace treaty had yet to be signed with Italy, the Home Office's assertion was technically correct. However, the government's reluctance to allow such Italian men back to the U.K., though they were being sponsored by individual farmers, was the source of ongoing criticism. In January 1947 the Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, was pressed in the House of Commons to reconsider the position banning repatriated Italian ex-POW. In early March Isaacs was again urged to reconsider the official position on Italian ex-POW wishing to marry British women. In both instances the Minister replied that the settling of Poles was to be given priority, but given the shortage of agricultural workers in general, this excuse did not carry far. In a House of Commons debate later in March, the Minister of Agriculture announced the government's intention to relent on this question and make it easy for Italian ex-POW to return to the U.K. if they agreed to remain in agriculture. In the event, the number of private permits issued to foreign agricultural workers from May 1946 to August 1948 was 1693, of which 1456 were issued to Italian ex-POW who had been repatriated to Italy.

The paucity of these numbers did not faze the Ministry of Agriculture or of Labour overly much, despite the immediate need for workers in agriculture. By the late fall of 1945 the government had determined to use German POW to replace Italian prisoners in agricultural work. There were already some 50,000

18 PRO MAF 186/17: C.D.Carew Robinson (Home Office) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 17 August 1946.


20 Hansard, 3 and 4 March 1947, v.434, cols. 59 and 60.


22 PRO MAF 186/17: Crookenden (Ministry of Labour) to J.A.K. Christie (Ministry of Agriculture), dated 22 September 1948.
German POW working in agriculture side by side with the Italian prisoners by the summer of 1945. The number of German prisoners in Britain was to be further supplemented in the following months. A telegram from the War Office to SHAEF in May 1945 ordered the 21st Army Group to select 250,000 German POW to be brought to the U.K. to fill labour requirements. By the end of December 1945 there were some 60,000 Italian POW in British agriculture, and some 90,000 German POW. By the end of the following summer it was anticipated that there might be as many as 200,000 German POW and no Italians. The Ministry of Agriculture noted with respect to these figures that the sense they got from farmers was that the Germans were more productive workers, particularly when the use of POW as gang labour was compared.

The use of German POW in British agriculture was not entirely accepted as a desirable policy. The National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) quite naturally opposed the policy as harmful to their position. In a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture in March 1946, the General Secretary of the NUAW stated that his union felt that "the use of such labour undermines the whole position of the British agricultural worker." The position of the NUAW in this letter was quite


24 PRO FO 371/49959: Telegram #97528, dated 30 May 1945. Instructions stipulated that half of this number should be experienced in agriculture, the other half in building, and none should be "ardent Nazis."


26 Ibid., letter from John Lewis to A.G. Crookman, dated 28 January 1946.

27 Ibid.: A.C. Dann (NUAW) to Bartlett (Ministry of Agriculture), 5 March 1946.
rigidly opposed to any use of POW in agriculture. However, failing an absolute ban on the use of such labour, the NUAW was concerned that POW not undercut British workers by receiving less than the minimum agricultural wage. This was an issue that was debated in the spring and early summer of 1946.

On one side the trade unions pressed the government for a minimum wage for POW. Reports from several CAECs in the early spring of 1946 showed that POW were not receiving the minimum wage agreed for British workers, despite a Ministry of Agriculture directive issued in February that all agricultural workers be paid "the rate for the job" as of January 1946. On the other side, farmers were contending that POW workers did not merit the going rate for agricultural work. The inexperience of many POW, their lack of incentive for the work, and the difficulty of getting them to the site in time for a full day of work were reasons cited by the National Farmers Union (NFU), and by individual farmers, for paying a reduced wage. It was implied that if farmers were forced to pay the minimum wage they might employ POW on piece work only, and thus further reduce productivity.

The Ministry of Agriculture noted that many farmers had expressed a preference for German POW, citing their higher productivity. The decision to repatriate Italian POW seemed to have affected their performance as workers, according to a Ministry of Agriculture memo of January 1946: "The prospect of

28 PRO MAF 47/150: A number of representations from NUAW district organizations were received on this question in February 1946. See also memo from Finance Officer, Essex CAEC to Labour Supply Branch, Ministry of Agriculture, dated 27 February 1946.

29 PRO MAF 47/150: For example, see letter from A.B. Johnson (a farmer) to Williams (Minister of Agriculture) dated 26 February 1946, and General Secretary, NFU, to Haynes (Ministry of Agriculture), dated 27 February 1946. One farmer wrote the Minister of Agriculture, in a letter dated 22 March 1946: "...lately from among five, I had a Bank manager, a shopman, and a student sent to do farm work. Do you honestly consider such men capable of earning 1s./5.5 d. per hour?"
repatriation has made the Italians feel unsettled in their minds and this has induced an indifference towards their work. These influences have led to a decrease in the value of their labour services. It was thus felt that once the Italian POW had been replaced by Germans, farmers might be more willing to pay the minimum wage.

The productivity of POW, and their wage rates, were not the only factors weighing upon their acceptance in agricultural work. A letter to the Prime Minister in the summer of 1946 noted an increasing agitation on the part of some NUAW branches against German POW: "They [the Germans] are commencing to become arrogant and lazy" the writer noted. He went on: "Also our Left wing with the pacifists and the Quakers are starting to complain of the employment of slave labour (German). See Jennie Lee in this weeks Tribune." The author of this letter advocated replacing German POW with Polish ex-servicemen, many of whom, it was noted, were of "peasant" backgrounds. The Ministry of Labour and the Home Office, charged with the responsibility of settling large numbers of Polish ex-servicemen in the U.K., were also anxious to replace German POW labour with Poles wherever possible. In the spring of 1947 the commencement of the EVW scheme added further numbers of workers who, it was thought, should be given priority over POW in agricultural placement.

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30 PRO MAF 47/150: H. Carr Williams (Ministry of Agriculture) to Cookman (Labour and Supply Branch), dated 29 January 1946.

31 PRO MAF 47/150: Summary of issue by A.B. Bartlett, dated 5 February 1946.

32 PRO PREM 8/403: Letter from George Dallas to Clement Attlee, dated 8 July 1946. Dallas was advocating the replacement of Germans with Polish ex-servicemen at a time when their absorption in other industries was being obstructed by trade union opposition.

33 PRO LAB 8/95: Internal memo, Rouse to Bevan, dated 11 June 1947.
The Ministry of Agriculture, on the other hand, felt that POW labour fit their requirements nicely. Here was a temporary labour force that could be accommodated at a standard lower than would be acceptable for British workers, or foreign settlers in the U.K. The POW could be subject to the sort of discipline and direction that was difficult to justify for other workers. In addition, it seemed that individual farmers were quite happy with the level of work they were getting from the German POW in particular -- comments such as those in the letter to the Prime Minister notwithstanding -- and were reluctant to have them replaced by Poles or EVWs.\textsuperscript{34}

The question of replacing German POW with recruited displaced persons (EVWs) came up in the spring of 1947. During the foreign manpower debates in the House of Commons in March of 1947 the government was pressed to confirm or deny allegations that German POW were going to be offered the chance to stay in their agricultural jobs for an additional year. The Opposition implied that it was an outrage to seem to be giving preference to Germans over other nationalities.\textsuperscript{35} Although the government tried weakly to refute these rumours, one M.P. made the point that the relationship between a farmer and his hired help was a personal one, and that it would not be easy to convince farmers who were pleased with their POW workers to replace them with strange new workers, particularly if they were foreign.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite the government's efforts in these debates to play down the rumour of allowing German POW to remain in the U.K. for a longer period, a scheme to do exactly that was being discussed at this time. Ministry of Labour figures showed that

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Report by Yates of memo by Minister of Agriculture covering L.C.(47)2, dated 25 October 1947.

\textsuperscript{35} Hansard, 13 March 1947, vol. 434, cols. 1493-94: Questions were put to Ness Edwards by Messrs. Keeling and Astor from the Opposition.

\textsuperscript{36} Hansard, 19 March 1947, vol. 435, cols. 443-4.
in the spring of 1947 there were about 146,000 German POW allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture for England and Wales. Of this number close to 16,000 were billeted on farms, with the remainder in hostel accommodation. The Ministry of Labour, mindful of the labour requirements in agriculture, proposed that those German POW who could be billeted on farms be allowed to remain in the U.K. on service contracts of one year. Unlike the civilianisation of Italian POW, these German POW would still be subject to eventual repatriation at government expense. In addition to the billeting requirement, POW would only be able to volunteer once they became due for repatriation, would have to register under the Aliens Order with Police, and would only be considered where no suitable alternative labour was available. Initial contracts would only last until the end of 1947, and no repatriated POW would be allowed to return to the U.K. to volunteer for the scheme.

This proposal was discussed by the various departments involved in the following months. The Home Office was amenable to the scheme provided the details could be worked out interdepartmentally. The Ministry of Agriculture was very keen for the proposal. However some trepidation was expressed over the possibility that the billeting of German POW would make it "more difficult to assimilate the D.P.s when they arrive." The question of security vetting also arose. German POW were divided into three categories by the British

\[37\] PRO LAB 8/95: Scheme for Employment in Agriculture on Contract of Service of Germans Billeted on Farms, 12 March 1947. A further 17,500 were allocated to the Department of Agriculture for Scotland.

\[38\] Ibid.

\[39\] PRO LAB 8/95: Chuter Ede to Isaacs, note dated 29 March 1947.

\[40\] PRO LAB 8/95: R.S. Granford (Control Office for Germany and Austria) to M.A. Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 21 March 1947.
government: "whites" were deemed ideologically safe (i.e. not Nazis), and were prioritized for repatriation because they were needed in Germany. "Blacks" were staunch Nazis -- many of the officer class fell within this group -- and were neither eligible for the scheme nor for immediate repatriation. The vast majority of POW were classified as "greys". Among this latter group, it was noted, there would be some who the British government would not want, and they would have to be sifted out.\textsuperscript{41}

The NUAW opposed the proposal to offer POW extended civilian contracts for the same reasons that it opposed the employment of Poles in agriculture. In a letter to the Ministry of Labour in April 1947 the Union stressed that it could not abide by a scheme that threatened to displace British workers: "I am afraid that until we are given a guarantee that British workers will not be walking about in the villages unemployed with the foreign labour employed upon civilian contracts, [we cannot agree to this proposal].\textsuperscript{42} In response to this concern the Ministry of Labour gave assurances that in cases where British workers were seen to be displaced, some sort of arrangement could be arrived at. Privately the Ministry was agreed that such a displacement was highly unlikely in the prevailing circumstances.\textsuperscript{43} A paragraph in the draft of the scheme subsequently read: "In the unlikely event" that a British worker was unemployed in the district where Germans were being billeted, arrangements would be made with the Ministry of Agriculture to "investigate the case to ascertain whether withdrawal of a German worker may be necessary."\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} PRO LAB 8/95: Dann (NUAW) to Isaacs, 15 April 1947.

\textsuperscript{43} PRO LAB 8/95: Minutes of meeting with Ministry of Agriculture representatives, dated 25 April 1947.

\textsuperscript{44} PRO LAB 8/95: Draft of scheme, paragraph 8, dated 21 May 1947.
addition to this proviso, the NUAW was assured that these civilian contracts would only be temporary.

The temporary nature of the POW workers was one of the selling points of the scheme. In an industry that had objected to large numbers of foreign workers being thrust upon it, the POW had the advantage of being a stop gap, allowing the industry to get over "the build up period" required to get British labour into the industry. The Ministry of Agriculture argued that German POW should be kept on in even greater numbers than the proposed scheme contemplated. A Ministry of Agriculture paper in October recommended that in addition to billettees, contracts should be offered for CAEC work. The advantage of this was that such workers would not be permanent settlers, and that existing camps could be used "without any very large measure of adaptation." The standards expected by EVWs would be higher than those for POW.

Such a policy was not deemed tenable to the Ministry of Labour, and the offer of extended civilian contracts was restricted to German POW billettees. The Ministry of Agriculture, arguing again on the basis of the personal nature of the farmer-employee relationship, suggested that farmers should be able to replace repatriated German POW with German volunteers to the scheme. Despite such arguments the Ministry of Labour confirmed a commitment to give priority to settling EVWs before allowing German POW to remain in civilian contracts. Farmers who had German billettees that did not wish to stay past the date of their repatriation could not "ask for a new, strange German", and would instead have to accept an EVW

45 PRO LAB 8/95: See letter from Johns (Ministry of Agriculture) to Glen (Ministry of Labour), dated 27 August 1947.

or Pole as a replacement.  

Nonetheless, the contribution of German POW volunteers was considered significant, and efforts were made to sell the scheme to potential recruits. Although estimates of the number of POW that could be expected to volunteer varied, it was hoped that as many as 10,000 would in the end take advantage of the government's offer. However, the initial response to the scheme was disappointing. As of 30 June, only 1634 POW had volunteered for the scheme.

Homesickness was thought to be the reason for the lukewarm response to the government's offer. It was suggested that if the scheme was extended to 1948, and if the men were allowed to return home for a short holiday, more volunteers might come forward. In addition, if the POW were given the option of bringing their immediate families to join them in the U.K., the scheme might be more successful. These were options which the Ministry of Labour left open for consideration when the continuation of the scheme was discussed at the end of 1947.

One incentive that had already been put into place was the payment of POW in sterling. This policy was put into effect in mid July 1947. Prior to this date POW were paid in kind not in cash, and attempts to provide incentives for work took the form of increased rations, cigarettes and other privileges. A Ministry of Agriculture report on the effects of the new policy, written one month after its inception, pronounced it a success in improving the "work, output and morale" of POW.

47 PRO LAB 8/95: Internal memo, Buxton to Bevan, dated 29 July 1947.


49 PRO LAB 8/95: Clifton-Browne (M.P.) to Chuter Ede, dated 16 August 1947, and Duncan (Ministry of Agriculture for Scotland), to M.A. Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 9 August 1947.

50 PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(47)28, dated 1 October 1947: First Report by Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on incentives
German prisoners clearly valued the money, and worked hard to get it. The only difficulties that had arisen were occasional acrimony between POW and Englishmen in shops and pubs and public transit, and the case of some POW taking illicit work in their off hours (now that they were allowed to have British money, there was less chance of their being caught out on this score). However these difficulties were played down in relation to the benefits of the policy, and it was noted that, particularly in the more remote areas, the POW had become part of the community.

The success of this initiative and the integration of German POW into some rural communities led to demands to allow more of them to remain in Britain as civilians. Pressed in the House of Commons in late October about whether or not German POW would be permitted to become civilianized in greater numbers in 1948, the Minister of Agriculture, Tom Williams, replied that the scheme to offer civilian contracts to POW would be extended through 1948, and that POW working in CAECs would be included as well. In a circular sent out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in November, the details of the extended scheme were outlined. Volunteers would be offered one year contracts to the end of 1948. Eligibility was open to all irrespective of their repatriation dates. Volunteers who were not in billets could be housed in hostels and employed in CAECs, and were subject to being transferred from one Committee to another as required.

These terms were meant to modify and gradually replace the billet scheme, which had come under fire in certain circles in the Ministry of Labour. It was agreed that billets, which

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for POW. The report covered the period ending August 1947.


52 PRO LAB 8/96: See Circular MPB. 162172, sent to WAECs in England and Wales in November 1947.
represented more permanent positions within the industry, should be given to classes of labour that were meant to be settled permanently. The POW were to be housed in existing hostels, and CAECs and Labour Advisory Officers were directed to carry out a survey of available accommodation. The survey, however, should be mindful of the government's priorities in terms of classes of labour to be settled. "It is important not to let the working of this scheme interfere with the programme for Poles, EVWs, and British labour and accommodation already earmarked for housing these classes of worker should be excluded from this survey."\(^{53}\) It was noted that much existing hostel accommodation would "not be up to civilian standards", but might be perfectly suitable for civilianized POW.

In the meantime another step in the fuller integration of German prisoners into civilian life had been taken. On 8 July 1947 it was announced in the House of Commons that no obstacle would be placed in the way of German POW in the U.K. wishing to marry British women.\(^{54}\) This announcement had obvious repercussions for the exercise of continued labour control over POW. The general policy in regard to marriages of foreigners with British women was that where marriages had taken place before September 1939, or after July 1946, husbands of British women were allowed freely to enter the U.K. and were not held to labour restrictions.\(^{55}\) This policy had been intended to apply to allied and neutral nationals. The situation for POW was more complex. There were at this time four classes of POW in the U.K.: those that had been repatriated and subsequently returned, those that were not being employed on civilian contracts, Darwin Panel scientists (of which more will be said shortly), and civilianized POW. The question that now arose was


\(^{54}\) See PRO LAB 8/101.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., Draft memo to FLC, Paice (Home Office to Bevan (Ministry of Labour)), dated 28 November 1947.
whether it would be possible to treat one class of POW differently from the rest.

In a memo to the Foreign Labour Committee (FLC) in November 1947, the Home Office proposed that the first three classes of POW and ex-POW should be freed from restrictions, but that civilianized POW be held to their contracts. In this way marriages of convenience would be discouraged. The Ministry of Labour objected to such differentiation, arguing for the continuation of labour restrictions across the board. The double standard that would arise from the Home Office policy, they posited, would have a negative impact on the scheme to enlist POW on civilian contracts in agriculture. German POW in the U.K. would be reluctant to postpone their repatriation and volunteer for civilian contracts if by doing so they would put themselves in a disadvantageous position. Moreover, those POW that had enlisted would in effect be penalized for volunteering for essential work. This would have a deleterious effect on the morale of civilianized POW.

The Ministry of Agriculture was also unsure about the Home Office proposal. In a January 1948 memo to the Home Office it was noted: "...we know that friendship for British girls is one of the more important motives for volunteering for the agricultural scheme, and this suggests that the loss of labour that would result would not be insubstantial." The Home Office acknowledged the effects that such a policy might have, but suggested that these could be mitigated to a great extent:

A decision in favour of the proposal will affect employment in agricultural in two ways. German husbands with qualifications for other work will seek to leave agriculture as soon as they can and German POW husbands

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56 PRO LAB 8/101: Draft memo to FLC, Paice (Home Office) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 28 November 1947.

57 PRO LAB 8/101: A.B. Bartlett (Ministry of Agriculture) to Paice (Home Office), 21 January 1948.
or prospective husbands who might otherwise have volunteered for employment in agriculture will not do so. The latter point could possibly be met by deferring any announcement of the decision for about 2 months, when the majority of the 1948 contracts will have been completed.\footnote{PRO LAB 8/101: Draft memo to FLC, dated 28 November 1947.}

In addition to delaying the announcement, the Home Office also noted that the Control of Engagement Order then in effect would also safeguard the labour situation to some extent.

In January 1948 the Ministry of Labour petitioned the Foreign Office for its opinion. In addition to the above stated arguments the Ministry suggested that there might be hostility on the part of British workers to such a policy "based less on employment grounds than on grounds of nationality."\footnote{PRO LAB 8/101: Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to Dean (Foreign Office), dated 28 January 1948.} The Foreign Office, however, agreed with the Home Office proposals to free returning ex-POW from restrictions. In a reply to the Ministry of Labour it was noted: "...our hope is that coming here they will in due course become good citizens, and the fewer difficulties and grievances they start off with the better for this purpose."\footnote{PRO LAB 8/101: Dean (Foreign Office) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 9 February 1948.} Given this position the Ministry of Labour saw little choice but to acquiesce. Ministry of Labour Circular 8/71, issued on 31 May 1948, tied all POW under civilian contract to agricultural work until the end of 1948.\footnote{PRO LAB 8/101: M.L. Circular 8/71, dated 31 May 1948.}

Just prior to the issuance of this circular, the Ministry of Agriculture had informed CAECs that German POW married to women of British stock should be allowed to move in with them, although no cottage suitable for British workers should be handed over to such couples. This last proviso had been made a
condition for accepting the scheme by the agricultural unions. Germans who desired transfers to be in the county where a wife lived should be accommodated where possible. And in cases where such German POW were under threat of deportation for bad behaviour, "every effort [should be made] to remove any genuine cause of grievance which may have led to the German's work or conduct becoming unsatisfactory." These instructions could be seen as somewhat of a consolation to civilianized POW married to British women, granted to counteract the negative effects on morale caused by the anomalies of the Home Office policy.

In the meantime the Foreign Labour Committee was discussing the political as well as economic implications of retaining German POW in large numbers in the U.K. The status of POW on civilian contracts was not the same as that of free workers. Such POW were still technically prisoners, pending their official discharge from the Wehrmacht. They would eventually have to be repatriated to Germany. An agreement reached at the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow in May 1946 had specified that all POW must be repatriated by the end of 1948, and the British Foreign Office treated this deadline very earnestly. In addition to putting pressure on the Soviets and the French to keep to the same schedule, the government was also mindful of pressure from domestic opponents of POW labour. In an October 1948 meeting of the Cabinet Labour Committee, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Labour issued a joint memo calling for an increase in the rate of repatriation from 15,000 to 20,000 per month from the end of November, and for a public announcement of this to be made before the next Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in November. The memo noted that the morale of POW in the U.K. and of the German population would be buoyed by such an

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62 PRO LAB 8/96: Note from Ministry of Agriculture to Local Officers of CAECs, dated 23 April 1948.

increase, and that British prestige would be enhanced. It was further noted:

...the argument that these prisoners of war were helping in a small way to compensate for the serious economic and especially manpower difficulties in which this country has become involved through German action is carrying less and less weight. On the contrary a new and disturbing feature of public criticism which, until recently was directed solely against the retention of prisoners of war and not against their treatment, is that His Majesty's Government are now frequently being accused of using prisoner of war labour as slave labour, and in general of neglecting the human side of the problem involved. Clearly the only effective reply to such charges is to increase the rate of repatriation as much as possible.  

Figures in the memo showed that of 191,000 German POW in the U.K. as of mid September 1947, 142,000 were employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, and a further 26,000 were employed by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. Thus the vast majority of POW were employed in agriculture and the withdrawal of their labour would be most acutely felt in that industry. While the Ministry of Labour held out no hope of replacing all of the POW in agriculture with British labour, it was noted that the Ministry "anticipates no particular difficulty in replacing prisoners of war with Poles and EVWs." Male EVWs "of excellent quality" could be recruited from the continent. The only difficulty anticipated was that accommodation for EVWs and Poles would have to be provided "on a rather higher standard than that provided for prisoners of war."

The decision to accelerate repatriation was taken at the Foreign Office meeting of 20 October, some ten days after the presentation of the above memo to the Cabinet Labour

Committee. A joint memo by the Ministries of Labour and of Agriculture to the Cabinet Labour Committee in December 1947 noted that in light of this decision it was expected that all POW would be gone by the summer of 1948. This withdrawal of labour would likely cause a seasonal labour shortage which would affect the acreage planted and therefore overall production. Other expedients were suggested in the memo -- the use of school children, volunteers, machinery -- but in the end shortages of between 40 and 50,000 were estimated for the peak of harvest season. The paper recommended that sources of foreign labour -- including Italian and German ex-POW, and EVWs -- be used on a temporary basis, and sent home when the season ended. The Home Office subsequently commented that returning workers recruited on a temporary basis would be problematic. EVWs could only be sent back to Europe with difficulty if at all, and German and Italian ex-POW might have to be deported if they didn't want to go voluntarily. These concerns led to a meeting between the Home Office, and the Ministries of Labour and of Agriculture in late December 1947, in which it was agreed that recruitment of temporary labour from the continent was not a feasible policy given the logistical problems involved. The speeding up of EVW recruitment was subsequently discussed. The difficulties faced in this regard were twofold. Firstly there was the problem of accommodation, which was in short supply. A plan to house incoming EVW in tents until more permanent accommodation could be supplied was rejected because of the season for which they would be needed (i.e. the fall). Secondly, there was the problem of absorbing the EVWs into other industries once the seasonal work in agriculture was

66 Ibid.
It thus became clear that POW working on civilian contracts constituted a vital source of agricultural labour that was not easily replaced. In January 1948 the Ministry of Agriculture advised its Labour Allocation Officers (LAOs) that the number of POW that would be offered civilian contracts in 1948 had been raised from 10 to 16,000, with the increase coming mainly from billeted POW "since it is not practical nor desirable deliberately to divert Germans from farm billets to Committee gangs." It was noted that as of December 1947 there were 6,189 actual or potential billetees in the U.K., thus leaving 9,811 gang labour positions available to volunteers. In the early months of 1948 the Ministry of Labour was acknowledging that "the needs of the agricultural programme for an expansion of the Agricultural Labour Force are so great that we should be glad of any additions of this kind [i.e. POW]." However both the Foreign Office concerns with meeting the 1948 deadline for repatriating all POW, and the Ministry of Labour concern to put the settlement of EVWs and Poles ahead of the scheme to retain POW, stood as obstacles to be overcome.

Seasonal and regional labour fluctuations in agriculture meant that the issue of displacing prioritized classes of workers was by no means straightforward. A Ministry of Agriculture memo in January 1948 claimed that unemployment in the industry had risen in the last months of 1947, and stressed that applications for POW civilianisation "should not be accepted without careful investigation." In some instances CAECs were given permission to loan out POW to local,

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70 PRO LAB 8/96: Note to all LAOs dated 29 January 1948.

71 PRO LAB 8/102: Isaacs (Ministry of Labour) to Mayhew (Foreign Office), 2 February 1948.

72 PRO LAB 8/96: Griffin (Ministry of Agriculture), 15 January 1948.
agriculturally related industries such as blacksmithing. In these cases the proviso that no British labour be available was to be strictly adhered to, and when such labour became available the POW would be replaced.\textsuperscript{73} In other cases, such as in the East and West Ridings region in the spring of 1948, there were reported difficulties finding work for British labourers while some 840 German POW had been allocated to the local CAEC.\textsuperscript{74}

Retaining POW on civilian contracts through the end of 1948 and beyond also raised obvious problems for the Foreign Office. At the October 1947 meeting at which it had been decided to speed repatriation, a Foreign Office proposal to grant German POW on civilian contracts holidays so that they could return to Germany to be discharged from the Wehrmacht was discussed. The main point of discussion was whether or not such a course of action was necessary both as an inducement to POW to volunteer, and in light of the Council of Foreign Ministers agreement.\textsuperscript{75}

The Foreign Office proposal called for holidays to be taken no later than the end of 1948, and for returning ex-POW to be given the same settlement rights and status as EVWs.\textsuperscript{76} The Ministry of Labour was more than willing to consider adding civilian ex-POW to its pool of potential labour, but insisted that they should only be retained as individuals, and not as gang labour. While it was one thing to employ prisoners as gang labour, it was another to have them as settlers employed on the same basis. The Ministry of Labour argued that CAEC gang labour

\textsuperscript{73} PRO LAB 8/96: Memo by Christie (Ministry of Labour) re: policy, dated 20 April 1948.

\textsuperscript{74} PRO LAB 8/96: C.G.L Griffin (Ministry of Agriculture) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), 13 May 1948.

\textsuperscript{75} PRO LAB 8/96: Minutes of meeting at Foreign Office, dated 20 October 1947.

\textsuperscript{76} PRO LAB 8/102: Mayhew (Foreign Office), to Isaacs (Ministry of Labour), 23 January 1948.
encouraged "the casualisation of agricultural employment" and its continuation "would arouse the most intense opposition" of agricultural unions.\(^77\) The Home Office raised questions about selection criteria -- would compassion enter into these (i.e. if a POW came from the Russian zone of Germany would he be given preference), or would selection be based strictly on labour considerations? -- continuing controls and labour restrictions, and the policy towards dependents.\(^78\) On the whole, it seemed that all three of these departments and the Ministry of Agriculture were favourably disposed to the scheme, and needed only to iron out the details. It was agreed that the danger that this scheme might jeopardize the settlement of EVW and Poles was not great, given that the numbers involved would be quite low in relation to the demand for agricultural labour.\(^79\)

The Ministry of Labour's concern for the response of the agricultural unions to the continuation of gang labour was perhaps the most persistent detail to be ironed out. Given the large percentage of CAEC gangs that foreign workers comprised, the casualisation of agricultural work resulting from the CAEC system and from the introduction of foreign labour were perceived to be intertwined, as a letter to the Ministry of Labour in July 1948 expressed:

I imagine that the recent hostility of the Agricultural Workers Union to foreign labour may have been responsible for this decision [to stop recruiting EVWs], and if this is so, I feel that the system of employing EVWs as gang labour instead of settling them as permanent workers is largely responsible for this attitude. As a result, the natural resentment against

\(^{77}\) PRO LAB 8/102: Isaacs (Ministry of Labour) to Mayhew (Foreign Office), dated 2 February 1948.

\(^{78}\) PRO LAB 8/102: Chuter Ede to Isaacs, 2 June 1948.

\(^{79}\) PRO LAB 8/102: Williams (Ministry of Agriculture), to Lord Packenham (Foreign Office), 9 March 1948.
gang labour with its resultant casualisation of former permanent British workers has been diverted into an attack on foreign labour, which may have an adverse effect on the employment of EVWs elsewhere.\textsuperscript{80}

Given this situation, the retention of ex-POW as gang labour past the end of 1948 was not likely to be accepted, nor was it seen as a desirable policy.

At the same time the repatriation of German POW employed by CAECs could be used as a means of showing that the government was preparing to wind down the system. In July 1948 a meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture proposed that the number of workers employed by CAEC gangs be reduced from the current level of 60,000, to 50,000 in 1949, and that this reduction be achieved in large part by repatriating approximately 8,000 German POW employed by CAECs.\textsuperscript{81} The Ministry of Agriculture would have wanted to keep all of the 20,000 or so German POW that remained in the U.K. in mid-1948 because they were experienced and had proven to be a quite useful source of labour, but they were also aware of the need to make "a gesture in the direction not only of reducing the number of foreign workers but also of reducing the numbers in Committee employment."\textsuperscript{82} It was therefore decided by the interdepartmental committee formed to work out details of the scheme that only those POW in definite employ as of 15 September would be eligible for the scheme. This did not mean

\textsuperscript{80} PRO LAB 8/102: Boothby (Foreign Office) to A.F. Rouse (Ministry of Labour), dated 23 July 1948.

\textsuperscript{81} PRO LAB 8/102: Memo detailing meeting at Ministry of Agriculture, dated 21 July 1948.

\textsuperscript{82} PRO LAB 8/102: Report by Macmullen (Ministry of Agriculture), dated 4 August 1948. Also, see LAB 8/1674 for statistics on disposition of German POW working in agriculture. As of August 1948 there were: 19,540 employed in England and Wales, 4189 in Scotland. Of this total of 23,729, 13,265 were billeted on farms -- 11,214 in England and Wales -- and 9175 were in CAECs -- 7,326 in England and Wales.
that POW employed by CAECs were not eligible for the scheme, only that they had to be actively engaged in work and were not being used as a reserve pool of labour.\textsuperscript{83}

The timing of the repatriation holiday scheme was also an important consideration, considering the demand for labour during the harvest season. In June, the Ministry of Agriculture pressed the Foreign Office to reconsider the deadline for repatriation. The proposal that was discussed would have the repatriation holidays begin in mid October, a date which would seriously impede the gathering of the potato and beet harvest. The Ministry of Agriculture suggested that the beginning date be postponed until mid November and that the repatriation be carried over into January 1949, or sped up in order to still meet the deadline.\textsuperscript{84} The Foreign Office agreed that this proposal would not be a problem to implement either way. Moreover, it was suggested that an early announcement of the plan to repatriate all German POW in CAEC employ would give farmers a chance to take on Committee POW in advance of the 15 September deadline. In this way farmers might also be able to replace billetees who wished to return to Germany with CAEC-employed POW.\textsuperscript{85} Thus an early announcement of the scheme would, it was agreed, mitigate some of the danger of losing labour at a critical time.

The policy of allowing the replacement of POW billetees with other POW seemed to fly against the earlier stipulation that EVWs and Poles be given priority in such placements. However at this stage the Ministry of Labour seemed to be balancing the objections likely to be raised by farmers against those that might be raised by advocates of British workers and

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84} PRO LAB 8/102: Vanderpeer (Ministry of Agriculture) to Strang (Foreign Office), 22 June 1948.

\textsuperscript{85} PRO LAB 8/102: Strang (Foreign Office) to Vanderpeer, 9 August 1948.
EVWs. The NUAW, for example, was not entirely pleased with the notion that German ex-POW would be allowed to stay in billeted positions that might possibly be given to British workers. A series of letters from them to the Ministry of Labour seeking clarification of the procedure for removing such ex-POW in the event that there was an unemployed British worker in the area were exchanged in the late summer of 1948. The Ministry had to reiterate the position that in extreme cases there was a procedure in place that could achieve this.86

In September 1948 the interdepartmental committee agreed on the terms for the holiday repatriation scheme. German POW who did not wish to go back to Germany to be discharged from the Wehrmacht could be discharged in the U.K. POW who were employed in bomb disposal work by the War Office were included in the scheme at the last minute. POW who had been freed from control and not employed in agriculture or bomb disposal were not eligible for the scheme.87

In early November the Ministry of Labour raised two particular questions with the Home Office regarding the scheme.88 The first was what to do with regard to some of the POW who could rightly be considered Volksdeutsche. A small number of POW were officially Czechs, Hungarians or Poles. If these men were going to be treated exceptionally, then some method would have to be agreed to check their bona fides. The second concern had to do with the landing conditions of returning bomb disposal workers. There were approximately 500 POW employed by the War Office on such work by the fall of

86 PRO LAB 8/102: Dann (NUAW) to Macmullen (Ministry of Labour), 30 August 1948; Reply dated 16 September 1948.


88 PRO HO 213/1133: Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to Hughes (Home Office), dated 12 November 1948.
1948, and while it had been agreed to allow them to volunteer for the holiday repatriation scheme, the Ministry of Labour felt that there was little chance of finding them subsequent employment once their War Office work ended. The Ministry of Labour thus wanted the Home Office to vary their landing conditions from those given to ex-POW returning to the U.K. for agricultural work. The latter were to be tied to conditions specifying that they could only take subsequent work with the permission of the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry called for bomb disposal workers to be forbidden to take any subsequent work at all.

A meeting was called in mid November by the Ministry of Labour to discuss these questions. With regard to the 100 or so POW of Polish origin, it was agreed that they would be employed as Poles by CAECs, but would have their Police Registration Certificates (PCRs) stamped "Former POW" in order to differentiate them from other Polish workers. It was thought that there might be about 1000 POW of Czech or Hungarian origin, although the exact number was difficult to pin down because these men were not segregated from the general POW population. The Foreign Office suggested that these men be allowed to stay in the U.K. on compassionate grounds, even though they might not qualify for the scheme (i.e. were not in civilian employ by 15 September). The Home Office agreed that such POW might be allowed to stay on compassionate grounds, but noted that identification and separation of these men was impossible at this stage. In the event it was decided that the Foreign and Home Offices would deal with exceptional cases of this sort as they arose. The general policy would be to deal with these Volksdeutsche as ordinary prisoners.

With respect to the bomb disposal workers, the Ministry of

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89 PRO HO 213/1133: Meeting chaired by Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 16 November 1948.

90 Ibid.
Labour noted that the trade unions had only agreed to the inclusion of these POW in the scheme if they were repatriated when their work was done. There would likely only be work for them in CAECs in agriculture -- the only industry that had hitherto agreed to the employment of German men -- and such employment was in the process of being wound down. Therefore the Ministry pressed for a clause in their landing conditions that would call for them to "leave the U.K. not later than such date as may be specified by the Secretary of State." This proviso was agreed by the Cabinet Manpower Committee.91

Subsequent instructions sent out to Regional Offices of the Ministry of Labour directed that civilianized ex-POW should not be allowed to take employment outside of agriculture without the authorization of Headquarters. Ministry of Labour circular 8/75, issued on 31 December 1948, noted that ex-POW "may not take employment other than in agriculture and, unless he has reasonable grounds for wanting to make a change, he should if possible be dissuaded from leaving his present employment." Furthermore, changing from one agricultural job to another should only be considered where "no British or experienced Polish agricultural worker or EVW is immediately available."92 Landing conditions for returning bomb disposal workers also tied them to the job for which they had contracted, but did not include a clause specifying conditions for taking subsequent work. In other words, subsequent work was ruled out, and these men were not to be offered the option of settling in the U.K.

For those POW who were to be given the chance to settle in Britain, the issue of bringing dependents with them had to be worked out. In October 1948 the policy regarding dependents of German ex-POW was debated. The Home Office had taken the line

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91 PRO HO 213/1133: Hughes (Home Office) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), 22 November 1948.

that a civilianized ex-POW should automatically be granted permission to bring his wife and children under the age of 21 to the U.K. provided he had a letter from the CAEC verifying employment for 1949. The Ministry of Labour however was inclined to be more circumspect. In public pronouncements the Ministry had said only that civilianized ex-POW could apply to bring over their dependents, but that no guarantee of permission could be given. The reason for this circumspection was that the Ministry of Labour did not want to prejudice Operation Repatriation (as it came to be called) by offering this inducement in the middle of the scheme, when POW who had opted to return to Germany would not have the chance to reconsider. They enjoined the Home Office to demur in a similar fashion with respect to enquiries until February 1949, when the repatriation scheme would be completed: "...one test enquiry answered on the lines proposed would amount in practice to a public announcement, so fast does news of this sort spread in a class closely knit by common interest.

The Ministry of Agriculture also objected to an early announcement of the policy on the same grounds. Germans who had opted to return to Germany to rejoin their families had been replaced. If they now decided they wished to stay, their jobs might not be available. Moreover, the agricultural unions' condition that no tied cottage be given to German POW precluded "the only feasible method of providing them with decent habitation." In short, it seemed that both the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture did not want to

93 PRO HO 213/719: K.B. Paice (Home Office) to M. Jeffers, (Passport Control Department), 14 October 1948.

94 PRO HO 213/719: Keith (Ministry of Labour) to Speake (Home Office), dated 22 October 1948.

95 Ibid.

encourage the volunteering of POW with families.

The Home Office agreed to postpone any announcement of the policy, and in January 1949 a conference of the interested departments met to iron out the final details.\(^7\) At this conference it was decided that only wives, and children under the age of 16, would initially be granted visas, and that where in exceptional circumstances children over the age of 16 were allowed to enter the U.K., they would be tied to Ministry of Labour employment restrictions. A guarantee of accommodation was also to be made a prerequisite, and in deference to this the Ministry of Labour would seek to remove the trade union restriction against tied cottages for German ex-POW. The policy would be announced in the House of Commons by way of a planted question, and no admission of dependents would be allowed until after March 1949.\(^8\)

In early February the tied cottage restriction on German ex-POW was lifted.\(^9\) In March the policy to allow dependents of German ex-POW to be brought to the U.K. was announced. Home Office Circular #47/1949 specified the landing conditions to be imposed on such dependents, including the proviso that wives of ex-POW were required to register with Police and keep to Ministry of Labour employment restrictions.\(^10\) Dependents had to produce an invitation from the ex-POW in the U.K., including a letter from his employer and a guarantee of accommodation from whomever was providing it.

As the following table shows, the number of German POW


\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) PRO HO 213/719: Ferguson (Ministry of Labour) to Weiler (Home Office), dated 8 February 1949.

\(^10\) PRO HO 213/719: H.O. Circ. #47/1949.
civilianized under the holiday repatriation scheme was about the number that the government had estimated. In total some 15,700 ex-POW either returned from the official holiday or chose to be discharged in the U.K.

**Operation Repatriation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>England and Wales</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>War Office</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repatriated</td>
<td>6,244</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent on Leave</td>
<td>6,365</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned from Leave</td>
<td>5,880</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained without Leave</td>
<td>6,630</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although in one sense these numbers were not great, they did "make a great difference to the look of our graph of alien residents", as one Home Office official put it.\(^{102}\) This graph had, by the end of 1948, been expanded to include not only Italian and German ex-POW, but another group of prisoners as well.

In March 1947 a top secret telegram from the Foreign Office was received by the Home Office and the Ministry of Labour.\(^{103}\) The telegram asked about the possibility of bringing a number of Ukrainians in Italy to the U.K. as POW. The Foreign Office and the War Office felt that these Ukrainians should be got out of Italy as soon as possible because of the possibility that they might be forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. Again there was concern for the position of the Italian government, and the Foreign Office stated that everything

\(^{101}\) PRO LAB 8/101: Figures dated 16 March 1949.

\(^{102}\) PRO HO 213/1133: Paice (Home Office) to Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 10 March 1948.

\(^{103}\) PRO LAB 8/98: Telegram #504, dated 3 March 1947.
possible should be done "to prevent problem being left to the
Italians." The War Office had suggested that these Ukrainians
would make perfect substitutes for repatriated German POW in
agriculture as most of them came from rural backgrounds.104

The Ministry of Labour response was that employment could
not be guaranteed the Ukrainians, and that if it was deemed
necessary to bring them over, some other reason should be given
than "as a source of manpower."105 The Ministry also wanted to
know how many Ukrainians there were, and whether or not it
would be possible to integrate them with Poles and/or German
POW. The reply to the Ministry of Labour queries was that there
were between 8 and 9,000 men, and that problems mixing with
Poles and Germans were not anticipated: "All three groups have
a common ideological bond of anti-Sovietism which is likely to
override national differences." This note went on to say that
the Cabinet had decided to bring the Ukrainians to the U.K. "in
view of possible political consequences of their being left in
Italy, and not solely because of their value as manpower."106

A report on the progress of these Ukrainian POW in the
U.K. was given at a meeting of interested departments --
including the War Office, Ministries of Agriculture and of
Labour, and Home Office -- in July 1947.107 Screening
procedures, the report assured, had revealed that none of the
8,570 Ukrainians could be classed as war criminals, although
there were "some general accusations of brutality." The men who
had so far been brought to the U.K. were proving to be good
workers, and there had been no disciplinary problems to this
date. It was however noted that: "Their ideas and standards of

104 Ibid.

105 PRO LAB 8/98: Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to Foreign

106 PRO LAB 8/89: Edmonds (Foreign Office) to Bevan
(Ministry of Labour), dated 2 April 1947.

107 PRO LAB 8/89: Minutes of meeting, dated 10 July 1947.
living were very primitive and they were mainly dependent on the services of German prisoners of war for cooking and for general administrative duties."

Subsequent reports were not entirely favourable. In an October meeting at the Foreign Office it was noted that there were a number of men among the Ukrainians who had proven "a thorough nuisance." In November the Ministry of Agriculture noted that "there have been one or two disorderly incidents", and that while they were in favour of recruiting Ukrainian POW for civilian work along the lines offered to German POW, it would be "necessary to discriminate among them" and was not advisable to allow "the whole body" of them the right of residence. In February 1948 the Ministry of Agriculture noted that of 5,000 Ukrainians in agriculture in England and Wales, 3,500 were "regarded as up to standard" for agricultural work. The rest would have to be somehow dispersed. The Ministry noted that perhaps these men might be found work outside of agriculture: "...politically it is an advantage to us to be able to assure the agricultural community that it is not alone in taking the burden of accommodating enemy aliens."

The question of the dispensation of these men, and of maintaining discipline over troublemakers within their ranks, was also raised in the context of the repatriation of German POW. In the fall of 1947, as we have seen above, it was anticipated that all German POW would be repatriated by the summer of 1948. The Home Office noted in November 1947 that when the Germans had gone, "disciplinary difficulties and possibly ... political repercussions" might arise if the

108 PRO LAB 8/89: Minutes of meeting at Foreign Office, dated 1 October 1947.


110 PRO LAB 8/89: Christie (Ministry of Agriculture) to Roy (Home Office, Aliens Department), dated 10 February 1948.
Ukrainians remained.\textsuperscript{111}

In March 1948 it was decided that Ukrainian POW would be offered the chance to volunteer for civilian work along the lines of German POW. The same landing conditions that were given the latter were to apply to Ukrainians. But whereas civilianized German POW were restricted to agricultural work, Ukrainian POW were to be more broadly dispersed. In this sense the Ukrainians would be treated more as EVWs than as POW. The Ministry of Agriculture agreed to continue employing 4,800 of the 7,200 Ukrainian POW in agriculture. The remainder were rejected as "low mentality, poor standard, agitators."\textsuperscript{112} A selection committee involving the Ministries of Labour and of Agriculture, and the War Office, would be established in order to place those deemed unsatisfactory for agricultural work in other employment. Selections were to be made according to "normal EVW standards", and medical examinations would be administered in the same fashion as for EVWs.

It was agreed that unsuitable Ukrainians should be sent back to the British zone of Germany, just as unsuitable EVWs could be returned. The definition of unsuitability included: those who refused to sign a labour contract similar to the one offered EVWs, unsatisfactory behaviour cases in the first twelve months of residence in the U.K., and those who were sick. Regarding this last group it was noted: "Home Office does not favour the retention of the sick and wounded or other useless mouths."\textsuperscript{113} Once rejected Ukrainians were sent back to Germany and discharged from the Wehrmacht, they would not be considered eligible for future recruitment as displaced persons.

\textsuperscript{111} PRO LAB 8/89: Chandler (Home Office) to T. Brimelow (Foreign Office), dated 27 November 1947.

\textsuperscript{112} PRO LAB 8/98: Meeting at Home Office, dated 3 March 1948.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
The plan to civilianize Ukrainian POW in this fashion was projected to take two months once the approval of the Foreign Office for sending unsatisfactory Ukrainians back to Germany had been obtained. Three months after the aforementioned meeting, this approval had still not been granted, and the scheme was bogging down over this question. The Military Governor in Germany, it was noted in an internal memo at the Ministry of Labour, was not willing to take rejects from the scheme.\textsuperscript{114} In June 1948 it was noted that discussion was under way with the Canadian government regarding the possibility of their taking superfluous Ukrainians. To this date 4,200 Ukrainians had been absorbed into agriculture on civilian contracts. Pending approval of the scheme to place them elsewhere, agriculture was the only industry open to Ukrainian POW.\textsuperscript{115}

In July the Ministry of Labour agreed that individual employment permits would be granted to Ukrainian POW on the same basis as for EVWs. The Foreign Office had still not decided about returnability, but the Ministry decided that Ukrainian POW not suitable for agriculture needed to be settled as there were reports that they were getting "restive."\textsuperscript{116} However, a note appended to the memo in which this policy was outlined stated that the Ministry didn't want to give "overmuch publicity to permit procedure possibilities at this stage for fear of prejudicing the main scheme. Many of the men are likely to volunteer under the main scheme not because they want to go into agriculture but because they do not realize that any other

\textsuperscript{114} PRO LAB 8/89: Internal memo by Bevan, dated 10 June 1948.

\textsuperscript{115} PRO LAB 8/89: Minutes of meeting at Ministry of Labour, dated 30 June 1948.

\textsuperscript{116} PRO LAB 8/89: Internal memo be German to Bevan, dated 21 July 1948.
possibility of employment is open to them."

The decision to keep the possibility of other work quiet in order to encourage Ukrainian POW to volunteer for agricultural work shows both the need for labour in that industry, and the desire to keep these POW lumped in with civilianized German POW as far as possible. Where necessary, Ukrainian POW could be civilianized as EVWs, but this was viewed as very much a last choice. Still, given the numbers that were deemed unsuitable for agricultural work, retention in other types of work was viewed as preferable to large scale return to Germany, or indeed to the Ukraine. This last option was considered untenable politically, particularly as domestic opinion in the summer of 1948 seemed sympathetic to the reluctance of Ukrainians to return to a Soviet Ukraine.

On the other hand the Foreign Office was concerned about the political repercussions of civilianising Ukrainian POW war criminals. Many of these men had belonged to a Wehrmacht unit dubbed by the Germans the "Waffen SS." Could any of them, it was wondered, be subject to the war crime trials then being staged at Nuremberg? Despite the aforementioned screening procedures, the Foreign Office was not entirely sure of the situation. An internal memo in June 1948 noted that this concern could be dispensed with once the Nuremberg trials wound up in July of that year. The civilianisation of officers, it was noted, should be delayed until the end of July "so that we shield ourselves from any criticism which might arise by

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{117} PRO LAB 8/89: Note by Rouse, dated 26 July 1948.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{118} PRO FO 371/72078: Note signed by Hector McNeil, Parliamentary Secretary, dated 18 June 1948. In reply to objections in the press (see Manchester Guardian and Time and Tide clippings in this file) to the return of some 60 Ukrainian POW to Germany, McNeil had to reiterate that these Ukrainians were enemy prisoners, that they had proved troublesome in the U.K., that they were unable to work, and that British sympathies should be with allied refugees more so than with those who had fought on the other side.
explaining that 'Old Lace' trials had virtually ended." \(^{119}\)

Italian, German and Ukrainian POW were all more or less treated together in terms of the work that they were given and the conditions that applied to them. As has been seen there were variations in the assessment of these POW, and in the political and social conditions that applied to their deployment and retention as workers in the U.K. There were also in this period a smaller number of POW who were brought to the U.K. and who were treated in a quite distinct way from the aforementioned classes of prisoners. These prisoners were German scientists, and their treatment reflected some interesting aspects of government policy and thought in this period.

In November 1945 the Lord President's Committee approved a proposal to employ key German scientists in the U.K. \(^{120}\) The scheme was put under the administration of an inter-departmental panel headed by the fittingly named Sir Charles Darwin, and so came to be called the Darwin Panel Scheme. Originally the scheme called for the importation of 200 German scientists "whom it is desired to deny to the Russians." Denying the Russians was the main intent of the scheme, since it was considered that many of the scientists were "unlikely to be employed by industry here." \(^{121}\) The Darwin Panel Germans would be maintained by the government on military and sensitive work in what essentially amounted to a securing of their future services for the west, if not for the U.K.

With the passing of time the government came to see that the skills and abilities of these scientists could be used in British industry. In the spring of 1947 a proposal was made to extend the numbers of the scheme -- the Ministry of Defence had

\(^{119}\) PRO FO 371/72078: Internal memo, Wilkinson to Lt.-Col. H. Faulk (P.W. Division), dated 1 June 1948.

\(^{120}\) PRO LAB 8/1450: L.P.(45)42nd Meeting, Item 6.

\(^{121}\) PRO LAB 8/1450: C.D.P.(47)8.
drawn up a further list of 300 scientists whom the Russians shouldn't have. As part of the proposal it was suggested that the scientists be made available to British industry in general. If a private firm wished to have exclusive rights to the work of any Darwin scientist, it would need to have the Panel's approval. The period of the initial government contract would also have to have expired. If it had not expired then the firm would have to reimburse the government for its expenses in having brought the scientist over.¹²²

Along with this proposal to extend the terms of reference of the Darwin scheme, the Board of Trade suggested a further extension. In a memo to the Minister of Labour in late March 1947, the Board of Trade asked that the terms of the Darwin Panel scheme be extended to include 100 technical craftsmen resident in the allied zones of occupation. The purpose of including these craftsmen would be to have them train unskilled workers in industrial processes not hitherto established in the U.K. These included the manufacture of imitation jewellery, felsparic porcelain, and brass musical instruments. Such industries would aid the export drive and, because they were not already established, could be located in development areas. The memo noted that it would be necessary to act fast, as the Russians, the French and the Americans were set to employ such men. It might indeed be necessary to retain the men under government contract and pay them with public funds in order to keep them available until their usage could be worked out. However the memo also noted that there was a large enough pool of such craftsmen that selecting suitable ones would not be a problem from a security point of view.¹²³ The men, it was further noted, were mainly Sudeten Germans who had been expelled from Czechoslovakia during the war.

Isaacs was prepared to agree with the proposal, but

¹²² Ibid., C.D.P. (47) 9.

¹²³ PRO LAB 8/1450: Internal memo to Isaacs, 31 March 1947.
promised to hold off on consultations with the JCC until the Darwin Panel had agreed on terms of reference with the Ministry of Defence.\textsuperscript{124} In May 1947 the committee approved an extension of the scheme from 200 to 500 scientists. This figure would include 100 craftsmen to be approved by the Ministry of Labour.\textsuperscript{125} The subsequent draft to the JCC regarding the decision to extend the scheme stressed the contribution that the scientists and craftsmen could make to the development of British private firms and industry.

In the move to get the Darwin scientists into private industry, the responsibility for domestic control and monitoring was placed on the Ministry of Labour. Hitherto the Darwin recruits had been subject to the control of the departments they worked for, such as the Admiralty or the Ministry of Supply, or the Board of Trade. Henceforth their passports would be endorsed to the effect that they could not be employed without the approval of the Ministry of Labour. A code signal was also to be added to the recruits' Police Certificate of Registration (PCR).\textsuperscript{126} When a German with such an endorsement in his PCR showed up at a Local Office of the Ministry requesting permission to take employment with a private firm, his case should be referred to headquarters. All Darwin recruits were to have their documents so modified. For those that had been landed previously, this modification should be done the next time the Local Office saw the man. The new code name marked the evolution of the Darwin initiative into an industrial recruitment scheme. The code term to be used was SCIRE, a bland acronym for SCIence and REsearch. Instructions

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., Isaacs to Cripps (Board of Trade), dated 8 April 1947; and reply dated 17 April 1947.

\textsuperscript{125} PRO LAB 8/1450: C.D.P.(47)8: reporting conclusions from meeting of 30 May 1947.

\textsuperscript{126} Under the 1920 Aliens Act, all foreigners had to register with the police upon their arrival in the U.K., and were issued with a Police Certificate of Registration.
to have this code stamped on Darwin recruits' documentation were sent out to Immigration Officers and Local Officers of the Ministry of Labour in the summer of 1947, after NJAC approval and co-operation had been secured.¹²⁷ A Ministry circular issued in September 1947 to Regional and Local Offices told Local Officers that they should refer to headquarters (0.2) all cases where they suspected that a German was a Darwin recruit, even if he didn't have a SCIRE endorsement.¹²⁸

Although SCIRE scientists were controlled in this fashion, their restriction was not as severe as were restrictions imposed on other former enemy aliens resident in Britain. SCIRE recruits were treated very handsomely in comparison not only with other foreign workers and POW, but with British workers as well. German scientists were paid as much as six to seven hundred pounds per year.¹²⁹ By contrast a well paid coal miner - an occupation at the top of the pay scale for a working man - might make a little over three hundred pounds in a year.¹³⁰ There were other perquisites as well, one of which -- the right to bring over private domestics from Germany for their

¹²⁷ For instructions to Immigration Officers and Local Officers of the Ministry of Labour see GEN 320/52/64, in PRO LAB 8/1450. Also in this file is a record of NJAC approval. With regard to the code name to be used, MI5 had suggested simply "Research". One Ministry of Labour official thought this not broad enough to encompass "craftsmen and erectors", and countered with "Owl", which she claimed represented wisdom and learning. The more prosaic SCIRE, alas, won the day.


¹²⁹ PRO LAB 8/1450: See A.G. Bottomley to Maurice Edelman, 2 January 1948 re: a question of the salary of one particular German scientist. While there is no way of knowing whether this figure was representative of all SCIRE recruits, in the context in which it appears in the file this figure seems to be a fair indication of the average.

¹³⁰ This figure is based on a weekly earning of between five and six pounds, which was the amount advertised in the recruiting pamphlets for coal mining issued by the National Coal Board in 1948. See PRO LAB 12/489.
exclusive use -- will be discussed in greater detail in an upcoming chapter.

The Darwin Panel ceased its work in April 1949. Arrangements for the administration of future SCIRE recruitment was passed entirely to the Ministry of Labour's Foreign Labour Division (FLD). Several changes in the position of SCIRE recruits ensued. Wives and children of SCIRE scientists, who had hitherto been disallowed from working, would be able to work in the U.K. subject to the same provisos as other foreign workers (i.e. they must apply for a Ministry of Labour permit, and no British worker be available for the position). Home Office security checks were to be replaced by the Ministry of Labour referring on its own to a "Suspect Index", and to security vetting by Intelligence in Germany, before a travel document was issued. The SCIRE code would no longer be used, although it would not be removed from existing documentation (those who had been recruited earlier), unless the recruit brought up the matter themselves. Deletion of the SCIRE code would, it was deemed, "cause unnecessary trouble to sponsoring departments and firms". It would therefore cease to have any official significance, though remaining on documentation. Of course this was disingenuous, since while the designation might have ceased having any legal significance, its very presence

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131 PRO LAB 8/1451: C.D.P.(49)5: Paper on arrangements for future employ of Darwin scientists after Panel is terminated.

132 PRO LAB 8/1451: In C.D.P.(48)15, dated 19 November 1948, it was announced that a committee of American and British Chiefs of Staff would compile a "Combined Allocations List" of scientists and technicians resident in the bi-zonal area "whose importance in their own field is such that their employment by a hostile or potentially hostile nation might constitute a threat to the security of either the United States or the British Commonwealth." The committee would allocate these scientists between themselves, with considerations for the economic needs of Germany. The committee would also consider requests for scientists not on the list.

133 PRO LAB 8/1451: C.D.P.(49)5, 16 May 1949.
was a distinguishing factor that could have unofficial uses and consequences much as any other categorization might have. Moreover, until the SCIRE recruit came to know of the abolition of the SCIRE designation, they would be under the impression that they remained under official control.

Although the changes in administration did represent a significant freeing of the SCIRE recruits from restrictions, there continued to be a close eye kept on the scientists and technicians, and particularly where they could be seen to be displacing British labour, there was control exercised in the form of Local Office and FLD intervention. In some instances the government expressed a desire to keep certain scientists in the U.K., as for example in the case of some one hundred scientists employed by the Service departments on sensitive work. In the case of these men, it was deemed acceptable to place them in work that did not entirely fit the description of what they had been brought to do. But for the most part the SCIRE scientists were subject to the same restrictions that applied to all foreign labour. Beginning in May 1949, quarterly reports were compiled by the Ministry of Labour detailing who among the SCIRE scientists had changed employment, extended their permit, or left the country. As of 16 January 1951, there were 186 SCIRE scientists employed by private firms in the U.K. There had been a total of 304 placed in industry by the government originally.


135 PRO LAB 8/1675: "Arrangements for future handling of SCIRE upon transfer to Ministry of Labour".

Also in May 1949 the Lord Presidents Committee discussed the possibility of keeping some 200 German scientists working in Defence Experimental Establishments past December 1950. Under the Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Act of 1945, the normal rule against aliens working in defence establishments had been superseded by a clause which allowed for their employment as "temporary civil servants." The Act was due to expire in December 1950, and the government wished to give the scientists a "private intimation" that their contracts would be extended for a further two or three years in order that they might qualify for naturalization. Because this pledge to scientists was meant to be private, it was thought necessary to consult with the leader of the opposition. In a letter to Mr. Churchill the Committee noted that the government did not intend to take legislative action regarding the retention of German scientists in defence establishments, and that the extraordinary measures would be seen to be ending as of December 1950.

Government policy toward German scientists reflected the differential treatment given to various classes of prisoners. Yet despite such obvious differences, the government was careful to avoid anomalous situations in which one group or class of POW were seen to be given rights and privileges not granted to another group. This was particularly the case when removal of labour restrictions on civilianized ex-prisoners was contemplated. In this instance the removal of labour restrictions had also to be considered in the context of restrictions on EVWs, many of whom had arrived in the U.K. after POW had been civilianized.

Proposals to release EVWs and ex-POW from labour

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137 PRO CAB 124/875: L.P.(49)11th meeting, dated 13 May 1949.

restrictions were taken up with the National Joint Advisory Committee (NJAC) early in 1950. There were three main categories of controlled workers being considered at this time: EVWs, ex-POW (both Italian and German), and Ukrainian POW/EVWs. In July 1950 a formula for releasing these classes of workers was considered. It was proposed that all foreign workers be released from labour restrictions four years after their recruitment, or after the granting of civilian status. This proposal was met with scorn by some within the Ministry of Labour, who felt that 3 years for all classes of workers should be the time limit for maintaining restrictions.\(^\text{139}\) The difficulty with the three year proposal was that it would have left some 25,000 EVWs still under Ministry of Labour direction as of 3 March 1951, when most POW would have been released.\(^\text{140}\) This was a situation that both the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office wished to avoid. Moreover, the three year rule would have released ex-POW employed in agriculture from control before the 1951 fall harvest.\(^\text{141}\) As a result of these considerations it was decided to deal with the issue of EVW release separately from that of ex-POW. In July 1950 the NJAC agreed on the three year rule for all EVWs. This decision was made public on 26 July 1950.\(^\text{142}\) Following this agreement attention turned to the question of ex-POW.

\(^{139}\) PRO LAB 8/1679: Internal memo by Rossetti, dated 4 July 1950.

\(^{140}\) PRO LAB 8/1679: Ministry of Agriculture figures, given to Keith (Ministry of Labour) by F.M. Kearns, show that the vast majority of German POW had been given civilian contracts in the first three months of 1948. In March 1948 the cumulative total of civilianized German POW employed in agriculture was 16,770.

\(^{141}\) PRO LAB 8/1679: See meeting of Ministry of Labour, Home Office, Foreign Office (German Section) and Ministry of Agriculture. dated 10 November 1950.

\(^{142}\) PRO LAB 8/1679: Press release dated 26 July 1950, and accompanying note.
In January 1951 it was agreed that ex-POW would be released according to the four year proviso originally proposed for all foreign workers. In this way the anomalies feared by the Home Office, and the sudden withdrawal of labour feared by the Ministries of Agriculture and Labour, would be avoided. Under the revised policy, however, the question of how to treat Ukrainian POW arose. The Ukrainian POW, who had been deployed as EVWs since their arrival in the U.K. between July and December 1948, would not qualify for release at the same time as EVWs or most German ex-POW. The Home Office, who favoured "losing" the Ukrainians in the EVW force, warned the Ministry of Labour that it could not help in "reinforcing [Ministry of Labour] discipline after the end of 1951" for the 8,000 or so Ukrainians. In the event the compromise that was reached called for all POW and EVW remaining under control as of 1 January 1952 to be released at that time. In this way the Ukrainians could be treated as ex-POW, as the Ministry of Labour argued their landing conditions required, and no compromising anomalies arose as between different classes of ex-POW, and EVWs.

The desire to avoid anomalous policies extended to all aspects of foreign labour recruitment. And yet the bureaucratic record of postwar POW labour clearly shows that official policies varied for different classes of prisoners. Some of these differences can be attributed to the nature of work that

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143 PRO LAB 8/1679: NJAC meeting #34, dated 31 January 1951.

144 PRO LAB 8/1679: Internal memo, Keith to Rossetti, 27 November 1950.

different classes of prisoners undertook. German scientists, for example, were treated preferentially because of the sensitive and skilled nature of the work they were brought to Britain for. Differential treatment was also the result of foreign policy imperatives such as concern for the reputation of the Italian government, or commitments made at the Council of Foreign Ministers in the spring of 1946. But much of the differential treatment can also be attributed to issues and prejudices revolving around the nationality and ethnicity of prisoners.

Official and popular perceptions of German and Italian POW are most striking in this regard. As we shall see in the final chapter, the repatriation of Italian prisoners after the war had international repercussions which informed government policy to a great extent. But the Home Office appraisal of Italian prisoners, and trepidation over the social consequences of their presence in large numbers in the British countryside, also had much to do with the restrictive policy applied to them. German POW were on the whole considered better workers and a better fit with British society. Ukrainian prisoners seemed to fit somewhere in the middle; they were of the right racial stock and were properly anti-communist, but were also considered somewhat socially primitive, although that was not an insurmountable obstacle to their integration into the labour force. Thus criteria for the official appraisal of classes and nationalities among POW comprised perceived suitability for agricultural work, and assimilability with the social fabric of rural Britain.

The following two chapters will look at aspects of the construction of British national identity in the context of EVWs and Polish servicemen, and recruited colonial workers. All three of these sub-sets of recruited workers were meant to be permanently integrated and assimilated into British society, and therefore offer a unique opportunity to see how officials conceived of their own society. Prisoners of war were meant to
be temporary workers only. The use of POW labour in the U.K. is thus more significant in an economic sense, for what it says about the government's strategy for reconstruction. German and Italian prisoners were the closest the government got to running a guest worker scheme of the sort more often associated with continental Europe. But the case of POW also provides a significant glimpse of official social perceptions. With the persistence of labour shortages, and the changing political climate in Europe in 1947 and 1948, quite a few prisoners were invited to stay in Britain, and over 18,000 of them took up the offer. Their selection and handling reveal the nature of the social and ethnic hierarchies that also shaped policy toward the subjects of the following chapters.

Chapter Two: Polish Servicemen and European Volunteer Workers

By far the largest number of foreign workers recruited under official schemes were of east European origin.¹ East Europeans were of course available in large numbers, and as refugees their resettlement was a concomitant concern of the government. But there was also a racialist official reasoning for this preponderance. East European refugees were recruited to work and settle in the U.K. for two reasons: to fill immediate labour shortages in essential industries, and to address an anticipated demographic decline.² With respect to the latter function, east Europeans were perceived to be of an appropriate "racial stock" to intermarry and assimilate with the indigenous population of the U.K. Both the labour and demographic functions that these recruited workers were meant to perform grew out of the mandate of the Labour government to

¹ Jacques Vernant, The Refugee in the Post-War World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), p.365, contains a table listing the breakdown of national origin of the 84,871 European Volunteer Workers recruited between 1947 and 1949. All but a few thousand are from eastern Europe. Vernant notes that many of those claiming to be Ukrainian, Polish, Rumanian or Baltic, were in fact Soviet citizens who concealed their nationality to avoid repatriation, though it is difficult to ascertain how many were in this category. Adding another 185,000 Polish servicemen who came to the U.K. after the war (115,000 of whom joined the Polish Resettlement Corps), Vernant arrives at a total of around 260,000 refugees, mainly from eastern Europe, that were brought to the U.K. after the war.

² The Royal Commission on Population Report of 1949 estimated that the population of Great Britain, which in 1947 stood at 48.2 million, would level off at around 50 million by 1962. Several scenarios were put forth for where the figure would go from there; in the most expansive one this figure would remain just about constant into the year 2047. In the least expansive scenario the population, excluding migration, would drop to 29.6 million in 2047. Moreover, the population would grow progressively older as the years went by, creating a top heavy situation that would pose a danger to the viability of contributory social service programs. See: Royal Commission on Population Report, 1949 (London: HMSO, 1949), Cmd. 7695, pp.84-7.
build up the welfare state within a capitalist economy. Labour shortages threatened the market pressures which, in a capitalist economy serve to allocate sufficient numbers of workers to the least attractive jobs. Recruiting foreign workers helped tilt the balance of the market back towards the employer. At the same time the injection of numbers of assimilable immigrants buoyed stagnating population trends that threatened to derail the Beveridge program.

Government policy towards east European recruits was thus one of assimilation. The assumptions and reasoning that went into the conceptualization of this policy shed light on a number of aspects of the construction of British national identity. The transmutation of Empire into Commonwealth, and of Britain into a self-contained European state in this period gave rise to the division of Britishness into separate "spheres of identity."¹ The 1948 Nationality Act discussed in the opening chapter, gave a statutory definition of Britishness, and the postwar welfare state defined this nationality status in terms of citizenship. This was a purposefully objective definition, and one that was meant to serve diplomatic, as well as domestic, exigencies. Defining Britishness in terms of legal technicality allowed the government to affirm Britain's position at the hub of a global family of nations (an important symbolic function), while facilitating the maintenance of adequate population levels in the U.K. through migration.

But while British citizenship was increasingly defined in formal terms, an informal, ethno-racial construction of Britishness was used to define the nation as well, and to exclude those deemed undesirable or unfit to belong. Thus the two definitions complemented each other to an extent, the one dealing with civic culture, the other with social culture; the one including industrious citizens, the other excluding

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immigrants deemed racially incompatible. This dichotomy ultimately worked in favour of the assimilation of east European immigrants in Britain in that it broke the process of assimilation into two stages: the first involved integrating into society as legitimate citizens -- becoming legally British. The second stage involved being absorbed seamlessly into the fabric of the nation, of assimilating or becoming ethnically and socially British. The latter process was one that would happen of its own volition, and was conditioned upon a perceived racial compatibility between the immigrants and the indigenous population. But in order for this assimilation to happen time was needed. The concept of good citizenship bought east European immigrants that time by providing a space for them to live in Britain as aliens who nevertheless belonged. Once suspicions that the newcomers would make poor citizens were allayed, the road was cleared for their eventual assimilation into the informal British nation.

As was noted in the introductory chapter, East European migration in this period can be broken down into two major strands: Polish servicemen, of whom there were some 91,000 that finally settled in the U.K., and EVWs, who numbered around 84,000. The settlement of Poles was chronicled by Jerzy Zubrzycki and by Jacques Vernant in the 1950's; more recently the topic has been thoroughly covered by Keith Sword, Norman Davies and Jan Ciechanowski. The EVW scheme has been detailed

4 The numbers are set out in the first chapter. The figure for Polish servicemen reflects Jacques Vernant's (op.cit., p.344) estimate of the number of PRC members still in the U.K. as of 1952. Keith Sword estimates that there were some 220,000 Polish servicemen who were demobilized in the U.K., and spent some time at least in the country, and 115,000 in all joined the PRC, (Sword, op.cit.).

by Vernant, Elizabeth Stadulis and by J.A. Tannahill in the 1950's, and more recently has been re-interpreted engagingly by Diana Kay and Robert Miles. After a period of thirty years from the mid-1950's to the mid-80's, during which scholarly attention was largely focussed on the migration of Black colonial citizens to the U.K., the settlement of so many east European migrants in the immediate postwar years was noticed again in the context of the late 80's collapse of Soviet hegemony, and fresh migrations of people from eastern Europe.

Polish soldiers were brought to the U.K. from Europe and the Middle East after the war for demobilization. Churchill had pledged to help them resettle either in the U.K. or throughout the Commonwealth, and the Attlee Government was bound by this pledge. The priorities of the government to 1947 were, however, to repatriate as many Poles as wished to return to Poland, and to resettle abroad as many of the rest as possible. Only as a last resort were Polish soldiers to be settled in the U.K. At a time of labour shortages this prioritization drew some criticism in parliament and in the press. The Poles, it seemed to some, were a ready made answer to the labour crisis of the immediate postwar years. M.P. Peter Thorneycroft's statement in a parliamentary debate in early 1946 was typical of the attitude expressed in the House of Commons in this period:

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8 PRO CAB 134/301: Minutes of the first meeting of the Foreign Labour Committee, dated 14 March 1946.
Are they [the Government] encouraging the Poles to leave the country as the Prime Minister said the other day, and, if so, why? ... I cannot see the sense of complaining in debate after debate of a shortage of men on the land, or a shortage of domestic servants, or, as I see in the Press today, that the Minister of Health cannot give a target for the housing programme because of a shortage of men, or that exporting firms have their order books full but cannot get any men to make the exports. I should have thought that, instead of turning men away from this country at the present moment, the policy of the Government would have been to turn every British Consul in the world into a kind of talent scout. We should try to get these men in, paying their passages to this country, even bribing them to come and work in the mines.  

Yet despite inter-party calls for "a more generous policy of immigration", the government was wary of taking in a large number of these Poles.  

The resettlement of Polish servicemen and exiles in the U.K. was initially viewed by the government as an undesirable policy for several reasons. Firstly, there were the diplomatic consequences of such a policy. Relations with the Warsaw provisional government were in a delicate state in the summer of 1945, and the presence of an organized Polish opposition in exile in London did not help matters. The Foreign Office felt the need to placate the Warsaw regime to some extent. Thus on 5 July 1945 the British government announced that it was withdrawing diplomatic recognition from the Polish government.

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10 Elizabeth Stadulis, "The Resettlement of Displaced Persons in the United Kingdom" in Population Studies, 3(1952), p.211: The phrase is taken from a Labour sponsored resolution of June 1946, which was nearly identical to a simultaneous Liberal Party resolution.

in London. At the same time the Foreign Office made a show of encouraging exiles to return to Poland, as the Warsaw regime was pressing them to do. Indeed Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, in a bid to head off anti-British propaganda in Warsaw, made scarce shipping available in order to speed Polish repatriation. However, as the Polish political situation hardened through 1946, British efforts to encourage repatriation grew half-hearted. The Foreign Office was loath to strenuously counsel the return of exiles to Poland because of the worsening conditions there; as Warsaw receded behind the Iron Curtain, the British government felt that it "really could not accept the responsibility of advising men to go back."

Yet the prospect of "digesting 200,000 highly indigestible" Poles, as one Foreign Office official put it in the summer of 1946, was considered unpalatable for domestic reasons. Much of this had to do with the government's perception of the nature of the Polish exile community. As Jerzy Zubrzycki has pointed out, Polish emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries had tended toward a pattern of temporary exile, with a highly politicized culture that maintained its national identity through a rhetoric of return and reconquest. In addition to being a thorn in the side of London-

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12 Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op. cit., pp.185-92.
13 Ibid., p.237.
16 Jerzy Zubrzycki, Soldiers and Peasants: The Sociology of Polish Migration, (London: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 18-19: Zubrzycki employs the dichotomy of political and economic migrations; the former are imbued with a sense of romance, and are generally viewed less pejoratively by the host community. In a political migration, the attachment to the culture of the "old country" is much greater, and the willingness to
Warsaw diplomacy, such a migrant community would present problems for a British government seeking to redefine and reinforce the definition of British citizenship and national identity at a time of reconstruction and change. Britishness in the postwar period was a purposefully inchoate construction, containing a cultural as well as an obviously racial component. It was thought to comprise both the lifestyles and traditions of the British people, as well as the genetic prerequisite of white skin. British citizenship, on the other hand, was increasingly a legalistic construct that depended upon the legitimacy and authority of the state, and on the relationship between the citizen and the state. The traditional, and highly politicized, nature of the Polish community in exile made it a challenge on both these levels. The insistence on maintaining the Polish culture in exile, and on the myth of return, challenged the informal codes which bounded the construction of British national identity. And the questionable allegiance of Polish political exiles to the British state was seen as subversive of the state's legitimacy.

The perceived indigestibility of the Poles thus came down to an ingrained Home Office notion that the Poles who might wish to stay in the U.K. rather than return to a communist Poland would be a highly politicized group. As Sword has noted: "The ambition of British policy towards the Poles was their gradual assimilation, and 'depoliticization.' It was hoped that in due course the Poles here would become, more than merely nominally, British subjects of Polish descent." The problem with this scenario was that many of the Polish servicemen and civilians that remained in the U.K. after the war, or were brought over from camps in the Middle East, Germany and Italy, were vigorously anti-communist. The Observer noted, for

assimilate much less.

17 Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, p. 296-7.
example, that Polish troops stationed in Italy had vented their anti-Soviet grievances "in a most extravagant manner", and that "no Left-wing party -- whether Communist, Socialist or Liberal -- could feel safe from their wrath and vengeance."\(^{18}\)

For these reasons the initial Home Office response to Churchill's offer of resettlement was lukewarm. In addition to the indigestibility of Poles there was also the question of setting a precedent for wider scale immigration to the U.K. Herbert Morrison, when Home Secretary in the coalition government, noted: "It is much hoped that a situation in which we are obliged to offer British nationality to large numbers of Poles will not arise." If it did, he urged that some sort of differentiation should be imposed so that this would be recognized as payment of a debt of honour and a special case.\(^{19}\)

It is not surprising then that in the first months after the end of the war the British government concentrated on the resettlement of Polish servicemen elsewhere -- such as throughout the Commonwealth and Empire -- or on their repatriation. However the number of Polish servicemen and civilians in the U.K. was large, and not very many of them were interested in returning to Poland. In late 1945 there were roughly 60,000 Polish troops in the U.K., of whom only about 23,000 desired repatriation. The percentage desiring repatriation was much lower in the Navy (40 of 4,000) and Air Force (57 of 12,000).\(^{20}\) In addition to this number there were some 160,000 more Polish troops being maintained by the British Government abroad, at a considerable cost to the British exchequer.\(^{21}\) It was therefore decided that the Polish forces

\(^{18}\) Observer, 26 May 1946.

\(^{19}\) Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op.cit., p. 233.

\(^{20}\) Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, pp. 305-6.

\(^{21}\) See C.P.[46]58, Cabinet Paper on Overseas Deficit, written by J.M. Keynes, dated 8 February 1945, cited in Sword,
should be brought to the U.K. and disbanded. This decision meant that the numbers of Poles in the U.K. rose to something over 220,000 by the middle of 1946. By the end of 1946 approximately 61,000 of these had been repatriated, and 20,000 awaited shipping. This still left a considerable number in the U.K., many of whom were considered "hard core"; that is, determinedly anti-communist and unwilling to return to Poland under the current regime.

Much of the government's concern thus centred on the anticipated difficulties of integrating such a large number of Polish servicemen into British society. In January 1946 the Home Office warned of anti-alien agitation if as many as 20,000 Poles were resettled in the U.K. The number of Poles that eventually were resettled was much higher. The prime concern in the face of this huge number of Poles was the maintenance of control and discipline. In a memo to the Cabinet Polish Forces Committee in March 1946 the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, noted: "Unless military discipline can be fully enforced some of these men will certainly cause trouble and make it still more difficult to reconcile the public to tolerating the continuing presence in this country of large numbers of Poles." Chuter Ede's concern over Polish discipline was twofold: firstly there was the notion that Polish political activity in Britain would be troublesome. Secondly, and perhaps as importantly, the Home Office was concerned that there would be friction between Poles and the indigenous population over

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Davies and Ciechanowski, op. cit., pp. 239-40. The maintenance of this many Polish troops, in addition to causing diplomatic tension with Warsaw, was costing 2.5 million pounds per month.

22 Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op. cit., p.446.

23 PRO HO 213/1226: Hughes (Home Office) to Shaw (Foreign Office), 10 January 1946.

24 PRO FO 371/56627: Home Secretary memo to Cabinet Polish Forces Committee, 27 March 1946.
access to scarce resources and jobs. On this last point, the Secretary of State for Scotland had reported that Polish servicemen stationed there had often quarrelled with the locals over women, and had been involved in a certain amount of brawling.\textsuperscript{25}

At the first meeting of the Cabinet Foreign Labour Committee in March 1946, Chuter Ede had stated that "Poles were a peculiarly difficult people to assimilate", and the Secretary of State for Scotland added that they had tended to be of poor quality as workers. Chuter Ede argued that recruitment of foreign labour should be restricted to western countries that shared a "democratic tradition" with Britain. It was also noted that the sanction of deportation was less available in the circumstance of the Poles, a factor which militated against the recruitment of stateless Displaced Persons as well.\textsuperscript{26}

By this time labour shortages were becoming more evident, and the policy of promoting further migration of Polish exiles in Britain was being re-evaluated. At the next meeting of the Foreign Labour Committee both Chuter Ede and the Scottish Secretary again argued that if Polish servicemen were to be recruited to stay in the U.K., some sort of official control on them should be retained.\textsuperscript{27} One suggestion for doing so was to enlist Poles into a non-commissioned position within the British army for a period of service. This was the germ of the idea for the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC). The PRC was to be the organization through which the vast majority of Polish servicemen were integrated into British society. Such a military style organization had several advantages from the Home Office point of view: the men could be housed in barracks, which would

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 2nd meeting, 3 April 1946.
\item \textsuperscript{26} PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 1st meeting, 14 March 1946.
\item \textsuperscript{27} PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 2nd meeting, 3 April 1946.
\end{itemize}
relieve the pressure on scarce housing stock; the British
government could control their deployment and dispersal, which
would be useful in breaking down their command structure; and
upon enlistment, Polish soldiers would be disarmed, and made to
swear an oath of allegiance to the King, an act of great
symbolic importance to the Home Office. Although the PRC would
later be presented as a helpful hand to Polish settlers in the
U.K., it is clear from the Committee minutes that the original
intention was the maintenance of control.28

The threat of disruption from Polish forces stationed in
the U.K. was considered a very real one in the fall of 1946. At
this time the leader of the Polish Second Corps, General
Anders, was being supplanted at British behest by General
Kopanski, a more moderate figure.29 It was thought that there
might be some resistance to this move on the part of the more
extreme elements within the Second Corps. In September 1946 the
Home Office and the War Office discussed contingency plans to
deal with Polish soldiers who refused to hand in their weapons
and enlist in the PRC. In a rather alarmed memo the War Office
noted that there were not enough troops available to put down
an armed rising of Polish servicemen if they "mutinied" in
great numbers.30 A further War Office memo noted: "... the
Second Corps may think that armed demonstrations will get them
better terms, or there may be spontaneous explosions of despair
and resentment against what they will consider their further

28 For a rather rosy presentation of the Polish
Resettlement Corps as a mechanism for smooth integration see
Tom Rees, "Immigration policies in the United Kingdom" in
Charles Husband, ed. "Race" in Britain: Continuity and Change,
(London: Hutchinson, 1982).

29 Part II of Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op.cit.,
deals extensively with the politics of the Polish government in
exile.

30 PRO HO 213/1234: Brig. H.E. Pyman memo to Home Office.,
17 September 1946.
betrayal by Britain." The War Office recommended that the British government gain the co-operation and trust of the Polish leadership, and use them to disarm the Polish troops as quickly as possible. Those soldiers who refused to join the PRC should be pressured to do so by every means possible.

In the memos that passed between the War Office and the Home Office on these questions in the fall of 1946, the theme of lack of allegiance to the British Crown featured prominently. At this time the Warsaw Government, employing pressure tactics of its own, announced that Polish soldiers joining the PRC would forfeit their Polish nationality. This announcement had a sharp effect on Polish soldiers, some of whom refused to join the PRC while at the same time refusing to return to Poland. These "fence sitters" or "recalcitrants", as they came to be called, were a source of some exasperation to British officials who thought that such a position betrayed a socially divisive allegiance to a foreign nation. As one Home Office official put it, refusing to join the PRC because of the Warsaw decree amounted to another case of some Poles "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds." If these Poles were against the Warsaw government then they should not care what it had to say about their nationality status; if they accepted that regime's authority then they should be made to return. In any case, they showed an alarming lack of "allegiance to His Majesty", which made their presence in the U.K. threatening.3

"Fence sitting" was taken by some in the War Office as evidence that opposition to the Warsaw regime among Polish servicemen in the U.K. was not so great as it was made out to be. Many of the enlisted men, it was thought, were influenced by their extremist officers, and many "would prefer a leftist

31 PRO HO 213/1234: H.E. Pyman to Sir Frank Newsam (Home Office), 19 September 1946.

Poland to a British Army unit." The Warsaw decree was seen by some as "a most helpful weapon" since it would force fence sitters to choose between the PRC and repatriation, and to abandon the vain hope of reconquering Poland under Anders. A Home Office memo noted:

The Warsaw broadcast may do something to prick the bubble and bring the men face to face with the real situation: and I agree that rather than face permanent, as opposed to temporary exile, many will plump for going home now; and more will do so if they are faced with the plain alternative of hard work in the British Army and no more temporizing with fate. [This might] reduce our commitment to say 50,000 instead of 6 or 8 times that number including dependents, would be an enormous relief.³⁴

At a meeting of the Polish Forces Official Committee in September 1946, it was estimated that no more than 8% (about 20,000) of Polish soldiers would refuse to enlist in the PRC. It was determined that these "recalcitrants" should be isolated from the rest of the Poles, and that their lot should be made difficult.³⁵ The threat of deportation to Germany was also recommended, and in fact about one hundred recalcitrants were deported before a public outcry put a stop to this practice.³⁶

³³ PRO HO 213/1234: Hill (Home Office) minute, 19 September 1946.
³⁴ Ibid.
³⁵ PRO HO 213/1234: PFOC 5th Meeting, 23 September 1946.
³⁶ PRO HO 213/1234: PFOC Sixth meeting, 11 November 1946; the suggestion was floated at this meeting, and taken up at subsequent meetings, that token numbers of recalcitrants -- batches of 100 to start -- would be threatened with deportation to Germany and relegation to DP status. These deportations would be publicized within the Polish Forces to try to reduce the number of recalcitrants. However, this policy was not to be publicly advertised as there might be legal and humanitarian objections to the practice. In the event public abhorrence put a stop to this tactic, but not before some numbers were
Nonetheless, the policy of intimidating Polish recalcitrants was fairly successful.\textsuperscript{37}

In order to sway public opinion in favour of the PRC, and against recalcitrants, the Home Office waged a concerted propaganda campaign. In public pronouncements, particularly in the House of Commons, Polish recalcitrants were portrayed as loafers and potentially dangerous characters, who were outside the bounds of society in important respects. During the course of the parliamentary debate over the Polish Resettlement Bill in March 1947, Chuter Ede stated that Poles who refused to join the PRC were contentedly "living at taxpayers' expense." In an attempt to justify the last minute insertion of a clause in the PRC Bill that would allow for the enforcement of Polish military law on recalcitrants, Chuter Ede added that Polish forces in the U.K. were "a more or less voluntary association of aliens who had been admitted to this country without going through the normal processes of immigration law."\textsuperscript{38} On another occasion he stressed the dangers of allowing large numbers of aliens absolute freedom of movement in the U.K.: "We have no disciplinary power over these people other than that which I possess as Home Secretary to deport an alien whom I think better out of the country than in. It would be most unfair to the people of Britain to have 70,000 or 80,000 Poles able to leave their camps when they liked and wander about the country."\textsuperscript{39} Here Chuter Ede played to the resentment of British deported. Also, see: HO 213/1235; and: Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, op.cit., p.306; and: Manchester Guardian, 13 January 1947, p.4.

\textsuperscript{37} See Keith Sword, "'Their prospects will not be bright': British responses to the problem of 'Polish recalcitrants', 1946-9", in Journal of Contemporary History, v.21 (July 1986), pp.367-90.

\textsuperscript{38} Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, v.434, 354, 4 March 1947.

\textsuperscript{39} Manchester Guardian, 5 March 1947, p.8, col e.
workers who were at this time tied to their jobs through government control. He also appealed to anti-alien public paranoia. Such hysteria during the war had an impact on many refugees and aliens resident in the Britain.\textsuperscript{40} By stating the numbers and invoking the image of men wandering from their camps like unguarded prisoners and possibly wreaking havoc, the Home Secretary certainly did little for the public image of Polish soldiers in Britain, although he hastened to add that his remarks did not include those Poles in the PRC, who were "under military discipline."

In light of comments such as these from the Home Secretary, the element of purgatory inherent in the PRC was significant. Soldiers who had fought in the Wehrmacht, as some 55,000 Poles in the U.K. had done, could "wash away their sins" by a period of national service such as this.\textsuperscript{41} A similar cleansing process was available to German prisoners of war. By joining the PRC and working at prescribed jobs "in the national interest" Poles could be seen to be paying their dues and earning the respect of the British people. Chuter Ede also noted: "if members of the Polish forces are to have the help of His Majesty's Government in finding means of livelihood it is not unreasonable that they should be asked as a first step to volunteer ... for a period in ... His Majesty's Forces and undertake work which is helpful to this country."\textsuperscript{42} Joining the PRC was presented as a prescribed rite to attaining social acceptance, if not citizenship.

The PRC thus accomplished two things. It gave the government direct formal control over Polish ex-soldiers; and at the same time, it blunted the resentment of indigenous

\textsuperscript{40} See Cesarini and Kushner, eds., op.cit., for example, on the imprisonment of aliens in the U.K. during the war.

\textsuperscript{41} PRO HO 213/1226: Memo by Hughes, 22 January 1947.

\textsuperscript{42} PRO LAB 13/192, Draft of Home Office proposal to Cabinet, 19 March 1946.
British workers, who felt that certain social dues had to be paid in order to be accepted into the fold of British society. Successful assimilation of Polish soldiers was contingent upon their being accepted and integrated into the workforce. Thus the second of the functions of the PRC was as important as the first.

In this project to sell the Poles to the public at large, the government needed, and eventually received, the cooperation of the trade unions. However the initial hostility of the trade union movement toward foreign workers in general, and toward these Poles in particular, had first to be overcome. On 22 May 1946, the day that Bevin announced plans for the PRC, the TUC General Council met to nominate members to a Polish Consultative Employment Sub-Committee of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). Despite ongoing consideration of the terms under which Polish labour would be accepted, slow progress was made through the summer. By the fall of 1946, government frustration was beginning to mount at the resistance of certain unions to the intake of Polish labour. The NUM had been particularly difficult on this question. In the foundries the unions were steadfastly rejecting both Polish and Italian foreign labour. At a Foreign Labour Committee meeting in September 1946, Aneurin Bevan, in charge of housing and therefore anxious that metal castings production be stepped up, cursed the intransigence of the foundry union, but noted that most of the general trade union opposition to Poles had been the result of communist influence, which was now abating. He speculated that perhaps another approach to the TUC would now be more fruitful. In the meantime the Committee invited the Board of Trade to circularize suitable firms -- that is, those whose workforce was not heavily unionized -- to accept more Poles into their employ. In November, anticipating imminent

43 PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 3rd meeting, 23 May 1946.

44 PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 5th meeting, 26 September 1946.
trade union approval, the Foreign Labour Committee decided to set up a high level sub-committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, to supervise and stimulate PRC absorption in industry.\(^{45}\)

Two committees arose from this directive. One was chaired by Sir Harold Wiles, and was concerned with the employment of Poles in the U.K. in general. The other was chaired by W.L. Buxton, and was called the Committee on Employment of Poles in Mining. On 31 January 1947 the NUM had finally agreed to accept Polish servicemen in mining.\(^{46}\) At the first meeting of the Buxton Committee, on 7 February 1947, a campaign to advertise career opportunities for Poles in mining was agreed.\(^{47}\) A publicity sub-committee was established to serve both the Wiles and Buxton committees. The publicity sub-committee, headed by a Mr. Moriarty, decided upon both a general publicity campaign, and one aimed at PRC members in camps.\(^{48}\) The main thrust of this campaign would be to direct Poles into essential industries by emphasizing the stability of employment prospects in these industries, and the contribution that such work made to the national welfare. The coal mining recruiting pamphlet, for example, stressed that mining was recognized as crucial to the nation's strength and success, the implication being that work as a miner would gain one acceptance and respect.

The Polish response to the publicity campaign was tepid, and the machinery to place PRC volunteers in essential employment moved slowly. Figures after the first fortnight of the campaign, reported to the Buxton sub-committee in mid-March 1947, showed that around 1600 volunteers had come forward, and

\(^{45}\) PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) 6th meeting, 7 November 1946.

\(^{46}\) PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(47) 1st meeting, 14 February 1947.

\(^{47}\) PRO LAB 12/463: Circular 58/21, issued 18 February 1947, contained the policy decided at the first meeting.

\(^{48}\) PRO LAB 12/463: The Moriarty sub-committee first met on 10 February 1947.
of these only 300 or so had been interviewed. The interview process was noteworthy in itself; a Ministry of Labour circular instructed interviewers to determine such things as the nationality at birth and army record of the volunteer, and his intentions to settle in the U.K. They were also to make it clear to the volunteer that he would have to join a union, and would be replaced if suitable British labour was made available. His response to these points was to be noted and filed for future reference.

The intake of Polish volunteers proceeded at a slow pace. After 8 weeks some 4800 volunteers had come forward, with about 1900 being interviewed. The delay in placing and interviewing them was causing significant numbers of volunteers to withdraw their names (about 250 had done so to this point in mid-April). The delays were particularly long in the coal mining industry, where language training was deemed essential to industrial safety. In addition, recruitment of Poles by France and other countries was taking place in the U.K. at this time, and this was reported to be having an "unsettling" effect on potential volunteers.

By the summer of 1947 the Publicity Sub-Committee was entertaining various strategies for speeding the intake of Polish volunteers into essential industries. The Buxton Committee discussed the possibility of seeding a number of success stories of Polish volunteers in certain industries -- coal mining for a start -- in papers such as the Daily Herald. Placing ads in the Polish language press was also


50 PRO LAB 12/463: M.L. Circular 58/21, Supplement #1.

51 PRO LAB 12/463: Committee on Employment of Poles in Mining, 6th Meeting, 9 April 1947.

52 PRO LAB 12/463: 9th meeting of Buxton committee, dated 12 June 1947.
contemplated as a method of reaching Polish civilians outside the ambit of the PRC.\textsuperscript{53} The PRC had been heavily canvassed, and of the 90,000 or so members of the Corps, only some 43,000 remained to be placed in civilian work by the end of 1947, and most of these were either officers, disabled, or employed at service duties from which at present they could not be removed. The most fertile field for future recruitment was therefore deemed to be the civilian Polish population, which at this time numbered as many Poles as had enlisted in the PRC, and comprised dependents of soldiers, members of the disbanded government in exile, and refugees. On the recommendation of the Publicity Sub-Committee then, the Treasury approved funds for the placing of twice weekly adverts in two Polish language dailies, beginning in July 1947.\textsuperscript{54}

The advertising campaign had first to be cleared by the Foreign Office, and this was a more time consuming process than the Ministry of Labour would have liked. The press campaign finally got under way in August 1947, and was almost immediately derailed, as it were, by a mining disaster in Cumberland which caused the scheduled ads in the Polish papers -- Dziennik Polska and Orzel Baily -- to be pulled. Given the fact that part of the ads stressed the improved safety of the industry, this was not particularly surprising, and the ad campaign was resumed in the following week, before the month was out.\textsuperscript{55} In addition to this campaign, other efforts, such as taking selected Poles to such NCB exhibits as "The Miner Comes to Town", which made a tour of the U.K. in these months, were also made.

Despite these efforts the Ministry of Labour did not deem the rate of recruitment satisfactory. At a meeting of the Wiles

\textsuperscript{53} PRO LAB 12/463: Moriarty to Hoppe, 27 June 1947.

\textsuperscript{54} PRO LAB 12/463: Publicity Sub-Committee of CEPM, 11th Meeting, 9 July 1947.

\textsuperscript{55} PRO LAB 12/463: See Moriarty to LeBrun, 22 August 1947.
Committee in late July 1947, it was noted that the intake of Poles into industry had fallen to a rate of 1700/week, from 1800/week some two months earlier. Part of the problem was that many of the PRC camps and pockets of Polish civilian population were situated in areas where there was not much work to be had. Where there was work, trade union acceptance of foreign workers in certain industries was slow in coming. In coal mining in particular, roughly three quarters of the lodges approached in the summer of 1947 were unwilling to take in Polish recruits.\(^5^6\) However, as the summer drew on, agreements were reached in the hosiery, pottery, and timber industries, and discussions were proceeding with the relevant unions in engineering, land drainage and road maintenance.\(^5^7\)

The placing of PRC members in industry coincided with the beginning of recruitment of Displaced Persons in the late spring of 1947. The decision to recruit Displaced Persons had been made in the fall of 1946, following the success of a small scale pilot scheme -- code named Balt Cygnet -- which will be dealt with in the upcoming chapter on female foreign workers. The official announcement of the scheme came in March 1947, on the heels of the release of that year's Economic Survey, which emphasized the labour shortages that were hindering the economy.\(^5^8\) By the end of June, some 19,000 displaced persons

\(^5^6\) PRO LAB 12/463: See Committee on Employment of Poles in Mining, 11th Meeting, 18 June 1947.

\(^5^7\) Ibid., 15th meeting of Wiles Committee on general employment of Poles (OCEP), 21 July 1947.

\(^5^8\) The Economic Survey for 1947 was one of the most significant economic documents of the immediate postwar period, containing as it did analysis of present, and forecast of future, trends and policy. Alec Cairncross, The British Economy Since 1945 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), discusses it in some detail (p.3). Peter Burnham, The Political Economy of Postwar Reconstruction, (London: Macmillan, 1990), gives a Marxist contextualization of post-war economic planning and policy; Jim Tomlinson, Employment Policy: The Crucial Years, 1939-1955,
had been brought to the U.K., and about 10,000 were immediately placed in work. Although the circumstances of these displaced persons, or European Volunteer Workers (EVWs) as they were publicly euphemized, were drastically different than were those of Polish servicemen in the U.K., they were in many ways linked to the Poles in both official and popular perception. Both presented similar challenges to government officials seeking to integrate them into the workforce. And EVWs were in the main Polish or east European, and thus viewed in much the same stereotypical way by the public at large.

At the beginning of 1947 Cabinet had urged the Foreign Labour Committee to consider pursuing the recruitment of Displaced Persons "as a matter of urgency", and to abandon the limitation of recruiting only female nurses and domestics from the camps. The Ministry of Labour countered that the focus of recruitment should remain on women. Its rationale was that the government should wait to see how well Polish servicemen were absorbed into industry. There was no point in bringing over male Displaced Persons to compete with Polish men for jobs and resources. Female Displaced Persons would not pose the same threat. Moreover the agreements worked out with the JCC regarding the Poles did not apply to Displaced Persons, and there was no guarantee that organized labour's co-operation


Stadulis, op.cit., p.213.

Home Office records from 1951 show that of 76,987 EVWs brought to the U.K. as of 31 December 1950, 24,259 were from the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, over 25,000 were Polish or Polish-Ukrainian, 8,019 were Ukrainian, and 9,629 were Yugoslav. See Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.43, for citation and chart.

PRO CAB 134/301: The Ministry of Labour memo on this request -- FLC(47)4 -- was discussed at FLC(47)1st meeting, 14 February 1947.
regarding EVWs would be forthcoming. 62 In addition, the Ministry of Labour noted that male Displaced Persons would want to bring dependents with them to the U.K., and again this would strain overstretched resources needed to settle the Poles. In a section of the Ministry of Labour report on the FLC directive entitled "the Effect of Polish resettlement on recruitment of D.P.s", it was stated: "... it is important not to prejudice or delay the resettlement of Poles by introducing other foreigners who will compete with them for the employment and accommodation available." 63

There were several other important considerations impinging on EVW recruitment policy. The need to strike some sort of ethnic or national balance between the EVW and Polish resettlement schemes was one. It was noted that of the estimated 95,000 men and 52,000 women who were potentially recruitable in the British zone of Germany -- and a quarter of that number again in Austria -- about one half would be Polish.

Correspondence within the Ministry of Labour noted that "In selecting the Displaced Persons we must give priority to Balts. We obviously want as few Poles as possible." 64 In keeping with Morrison's comment, quoted above, regarding the need to make the absorption of Polish servicemen a special case, the Ministry of Labour deemed it important to maintain the distinction between PRC and EVW schemes; the programs would be more difficult to distinguish if Polish Displaced Persons were

62 J.D. Tomlinson notes that the government's emphasis on consultation essentially amounted to keeping labour and management informed about decisions that had already been made. If so, then the threat of rejection of foreign workers was exaggerated by the government. See J.D. Tomlinson, "The Iron Quadrilateral: Political Obstacles to Economic Reform under the Attlee Government" in Journal of British Studies, v. 34, #1 (January 1995).

63 PRO LAB 12/422: FLC(47)4, dated 12 February 1947, memo by the Ministry of Labour to Foreign Labour Committee.

64 PRO LAB 12/422: Ince to Veysey, 19 February 1947.
recruited in great numbers. And of course, as with the Polish servicemen, international politics also affected EVW policy, with the Warsaw government pressing London to "return" Polish Displaced Persons to Poland, or at least to refrain from encouraging them not to return.

Poles were not the only Displaced Persons to be excluded from the field of desirable recruits. At a meeting of various departmental representatives in March 1947 at Lubbecke, in the British zone of Germany, the number of employable Displaced Persons available in the 130 or so camps in the British zone was listed. The list was cross referenced into categories of male and female, and of Poles, Balts, Yugoslavs, Jews, Undetermined and Others. It was noted that if one "for the moment" excluded male Poles, Jews, and Yugoslavs, the total field was approximately 86,000.65 The hierarchy here had Jews and Yugoslavs lumped in with male Poles as undesirable, although each for a different reason; the Poles because there were already too many male Poles in Britain to be quickly absorbed; Yugoslavs because they presented a diplomatic problem; and Jews because they were thought to be difficult to absorb in any circumstance, and assimilation was the watchword for this sort of recruitment scheme.66 Another important factor in these considerations was that the majority of the Polish Displaced Persons in Europe were classified as peasants and workers, while nearly half the Balts were considered well-

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65 PRO LAB 12/422: Telegram CCG 04521, 18 March 1947, reporting on meeting held at Lubbecke on 17 March 1947.

66 The official attitude linking assimilability to the "race" of European migrants was nothing new. In a Home Office memo written by permanent undersecretary Sir John Pedder in 1924 and cited by David Cesarini (1987) and in turn by Robin Cohen, it is suggested that "different races display very different qualities and capabilities for identifying themselves with this country." He went on to place "Latin Teuton and Scandinavian races" in the readily assimilable category, Slavs and Jews and other central and eastern Europeans in the recalcitrant category. See Cohen, Frontiers, op.cit., p.47.
educated and middle class. Although they were wanted for rough work, foreign recruits had also to be integrated into western society, and the superior education and social status of Balts was thought to reflect favourably on their propensity to fit in. As one civil servant minuted: "Balt and Ukrainian labour is the best both from the point of view of eventual assimilation into the British population and their immediate use as a labour force." 

At this same meeting it was noted that the potential of attaining British citizenship should be offered if the scheme was to be enticing to Displaced Persons. On the other hand it was suggested that the recruitment teams should weed out those volunteers who had numbers of ill dependents, since it would be impossible to refuse to accept them too if a volunteer was accepted. If a man were brought over without his dependents, he should be encouraged to voluntarily remit some of his pay for their support. The German economy would have the ultimate responsibility for supporting such dependents, but EVWs could be taxed in the U.K. as if they were single to help make up the cost. It was also advised that the Home Office should send a representative to screen out undesirables, rather than have them returned after they had been in the U.K., which might have a bad effect on morale in the camps.

There was confusion at this stage on the part of the Ministry of Labour representatives in Germany, over the nature of the scheme. The stated intent was that this was to be an

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industrial scheme, and not a resettlement scheme per se. And yet there was a hierarchy of nationalities laid out quite explicitly, which suggested that general assimilability was the prime selection consideration. The question of whether or not recruits were suited for the type of work for which they were being recruited would obviously be a consideration in the vetting process, but the criteria for selecting volunteers discussed at these meetings seemed to hinge primarily on nationality and gender. The contradiction in this position was laid bare in a statement made in the appendix of the minutes of the meeting: "No distinction on the grounds of nationality would be made [in the selection procedure] as this was primarily an industrial scheme; but it was the intention that first priority should be given to stepping up the recruitment for 'Balt Cygnet' women and thereafter the recruitment of Balt and Ukrainian men. Initially Poles will have a low priority."^{70}

All of this points out that while the settlement of Polish servicemen in the U.K. was meant to be an exceptional undertaking, there was an official tendency to lump together the issue of integrating and assimilating PRC Poles and EVWs. Despite contrary intentions, the EVW program was very much seen as a supplement -- if not a complement -- to the PRC. Several times it was suggested by civil servants or employers wishing to clear a batch of workers through the Ministry of Labour permit system, that Poles be treated as EVWs, or EVWs be considered as PRC, for the purposes of quotas and industrial agreements. More often than not the Ministry of Labour was adamant that Poles and EVWs represented two distinct categories, and could not be mixed. And yet there were

^{70} PRO LAB 12/422: Telegram CCG 04521, 18 March 1947, reporting on meeting held at Lubbecke on 17 March 1947. One civil servant even suggested that an announcement be made to the effect that Poles would not be eligible for the scheme. The rationale was that such an announcement would discourage Poles from delaying their repatriation in the hopes of being included.
instances, most notably the inclusion of 8,000 Ukrainian prisoners of war in the EVW numbers, where convenient administrative arrangements were made.\textsuperscript{71} Moreover, it was obvious that the two groups would be linked in the public mind, and that the success of programs to integrate them into the workforce were mutually contingent.

One example of this sort of linkage was seen in the recruitment of EVWs for the textile industry. In a letter to the Board of Trade in May 1947, E.M Gray of the Cotton Board noted that there was still room for Polish men in the textile industry, although the capacity to absorb them depended on the number of women that could be recruited to perform complementary tasks. The ratio of men to women needed was about three to seven. "In a word" wrote Gray, "our ability to absorb Polish men depends upon our ability to get female displaced persons."\textsuperscript{72} He advised that until female Displaced Persons began arriving in numbers, recruitment of Polish men for the industry should not be pursued. The recruitment of EVWs was thus at once a challenge to the process of integrating Poles into British society and, conversely, a necessary step in integrating them into the labour force.

In November 1947 the Publicity Sub-Committee was instructed to focus their campaign on EVWs as well as Polish servicemen. One of the methods preferred by this committee was to publicize the positive experiences of foreign workers in Britain. In a January 1948 NCB report, for example, the benefits of putting a positive face on the integration of Polish workers in northern coalfields were emphasized:

\textsuperscript{71} See previous chapter on POW. The Ukrainians were lost in the EVW numbers for purposes of employment agreements, but their release from work restrictions was done on the basis of them being prisoners of war.

\textsuperscript{72} PRO LAB 12/464: E.M. Gray to Miss E.M. Feilbrush (BoT), 8 May 1947.
... if these good relations and any encouraging and friendly events were publicized more fully in local papers, it would have a very beneficial effect on the general settlement of foreign labour, as it would penetrate into such places where conditions have not yet developed so satisfactorily. ... if Polish volunteers would satisfactorily settle down in this country and adopt the British standards and ways of life they would be of considerable help and guidance to other foreign workers who may be brought to this country, by having a very desirable influence upon them.  

In this instance Polish servicemen were cast in the role of vanguard for future foreign workers. Their successful integration into the workforce was meant to pave the way for the acceptance of east European workers by the British population and, as importantly, to set a positive example for other foreign recruits.

Although the large scale recruitment of Displaced Persons was broached at the beginning of 1947, the Westward Ho scheme took some time to get going. By the end of the year the Ministry of Labour was anxious to see recruitment sped up. A note to the Central Office of Information (COI) in December requested that recruiting literature for coal mining and agriculture be distributed in the Displaced Persons camps as soon as possible:

Our EVW branch emphasize that there is considerable competition among several nationalities in the Zones for the recruiting of EVW and it is essential that some leaflet publicity should be got going as rapidly as possible .... The importance of the time factor lies in the fact that it is anticipated that the American and Canadian governments may shortly launch a recruiting campaign which will be very attractive to EVWs and it is therefore of the utmost importance that we should be the

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first in the field.\textsuperscript{74}

Much of this urgency came from the government's desire to recruit the best prospects from the camps, and to not get stuck with the less eligible Displaced Persons who would require care. Thus aside from the need for the labour of able bodied Displaced Persons, there was also this element of self interest involved in EVW and refugee policy.\textsuperscript{75}

Meanwhile labour shortages in British industry were also urgent, and nowhere more so than in coal mining.\textsuperscript{76} In a bid to get more Poles and EVWs into the industry, the COI had been working on a recruiting pamphlet for some time. A general mining recruiting pamphlet was adapted to serve the EVW and PRC purposes. The British pamphlet had repeatedly used the terms "we" and "the nation's welfare", stressing the importance of mining to national reconstruction. This language was considered "inappropriate" for the foreign recruitment. The national importance of mining was still emphasized but so too was the importance of coal mining to European recovery. "The nation's welfare" was replaced by "Great Britain's welfare." This was an interesting differentiation between the nation and the state. Clearly it was presumed that east Europeans, while they might become citizens of the British state, would not necessarily identify with the British nation. The nationalization of the

\textsuperscript{74} PRO LAB 12/489: E. Moriarty (Public Relations Department MLNS) to F.S. Hoppe (COI), 30 December 1947.

\textsuperscript{75} Michael Marrus, The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 340-6, deals with the complications of British policy in particular towards dependent refugees in postwar European camps. Diplomatic considerations of one sort or another (the Cold War in eastern Europe and Palestine are two important examples) made the job of resettling refugees an urgent one.

\textsuperscript{76} In the early stages of PRC and EVW recruitment, coal mining was given absolute priority, and advertisements for other industries were held back. See: PRO LAB 12/463: Hornsby to Moriarty, 20 February 1947.
industry, promoted to British workers by the NCB as an incentive to work hard, and as a point of pride, was sold to Poles and EVWs as a guarantee of security. With the mines under public ownership, the draft pamphlet prepared in December 1947 ran, one's job in mining was secure. Moreover the pamphlet implied that one's contribution to "Great Britain's welfare", would facilitate one's social acceptance. Working in the mines would be a good way of paying one's dues, and of being thought a useful citizen; camaraderie with "both the British miners and your compatriots" was also stressed as an attraction of the work. The title of the pamphlet, "A Well Paid Man's Job", reflected the sense of belonging that the job would confer. Mining was presented as well paid and steady work, and as a chance to recover one's manhood, one's place in society. This message would particularly appeal to Displaced Persons eager to find a niche in their new surroundings.

The adaptation of the recruiting literature for mining illustrated the government's conception of the distinct identities and concerns of foreign workers. The mining pamphlets were also modified to reflect the perceived physical distinction of foreign workers. In early 1948 -- the final pamphlets would come out in April of that year -- a COI civil servant commented on a proposal to leave the miner's face on the cover of the pamphlet literally featureless. "The blank face on the cover has been suggested as we have no EVW miner's head as yet and to show a British miner might look as though his job was being offered to the EVW. In addition, the blank face suggests the EVW might visualize himself filling it." The notion that there would be a visible difference between the face of an EVW and a British miner indicated a very distinct perception of racial difference in the official mind. Again,

77 See PRO LAB 12/489 for pamphlets and correspondence re: this campaign.

78 PRO LAB 12/489: Gladys Watkins, (COI), to A.W. Beckett (Ministry of Labour), 2 January 1948.
although the EVW might become a citizen in time, he would still not be fully British in an ethno-racial sense. On the other hand, the invitation to the recruit to visualize himself as a British miner seems to infer that the possibility of integration and acceptance was open. In the event, several versions of the pamphlet cover were issued, each with a different face meant to convey the image of a distinct white nationality.

Despite this sort of crude racial stereotyping, east European foreign workers had been targeted by government recruitment schemes precisely because they were of the appropriate "human stock" -- as the Royal Commission Report on Population had phrased it -- to be assimilated into British society.\textsuperscript{79} The appropriateness of their "stock" clearly had much to do with the fairness of their skin. Given this perception of their racial compatibility, the main threat to social harmony that east European Displaced Persons were seen to pose was constructed around their social and political traditions. Uncontrolled political activism by Displaced Persons might prove as diplomatically embarrassing and as socially troublesome as in the case of Polish servicemen.

An example of the official trepidation over the political activity of EVWs came in December 1947, when the possibility of switching over the production of an EVW-run newspaper from the British zone in Germany to the U.K. was promoted within the Ministry of Labour. It was stressed that there could be no question of official assistance to independent, national newspapers of this sort for "political purposes". Still, the

\textsuperscript{79} The phrase in the Royal Commission Report outlining this proviso went: "Immigration on a large scale into a fully established society like ours could only be welcomed without reserve if the immigrants were of good human stock and were not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged in it." This statement obviously revealed racialist preconceptions about British society. See Royal Commission Report on Population, 1949, op.cit., p.124.
British government might help with respect to provision of licences for paper -- no small matter in the immediate postwar years -- and the screening of staff. In this way the government could keep a hand in the operation: "... unless something is done on these lines independent newspapers may be started for EVWs in this country who may give an unfortunate twist to news and views which no Government in this country would welcome, but would be unable to stop."\(^{80}\) The proposal called for the Ministry of Labour to give its blessing to the transfer of this newspaper, and to take some advertising space to publicize government schemes and other information. In this way a steady watch could be kept on the paper, and the implication of control could be exerted.

In addition to trying to sell recruited foreign workers on the benefits of working in essential industries, the government also concentrated on selling the EVWs and the Poles to the British public. The man in charge of co-ordinating the EVW scheme, A.W. Rouse, noted in June of 1947 that negative publicity regarding Poles and EVWs had come out at the recent Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) conference, and from Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) pronouncements. The two main points of attack were the stereotype that Poles and east Europeans were inclined to support fascism, and the fear that foreign labour would take away jobs from British workers and lower British living standards. A subtle approach was called for in countering these anxieties effectively: "The education of public opinion would have to be very delicately handled and carefully directed" instructed Rouse. "On the one hand it must be effective; on the other it must not create in the minds of British workers the impression that vast numbers of foreign workers are going to be placed here."\(^{81}\) Positive publicity

\(^{80}\) PRO LAB 12/489: Moriarty to Beckett, 12 December 1947.

\(^{81}\) PRO LAB 12/513: Rouse to Buxton, 31 July 1947.
would thus have to seem spontaneously generated. Rouse suggested that trade union periodicals, as well as the private press, be regularly circularized with glowing reports of foreign workers, and that a prominent Cabinet minister be impressed into delivering an appropriate speech on some well publicized occasion.

The subtle approach reflected the fact that much had already been done to publicize the EVW scheme, and many officials felt that little more could be added. Since the publication of the Economic Survey for 1947 in March and the premature leaking of details of the Westward Ho scheme in April, the EVW theme had been "done to death" in the press, according to one civil servant. In general the tone of reporting had been sympathetic toward EVWs. Polish servicemen, however, had not received as favourable a press. An internal Ministry of Labour memo noted that "there are thousands of people who, while thinking of 'd.p.s' in terms of Belsen and Buchenwald, think of Poles in terms of illegitimate children in Scotland and elsewhere." It went on to suggest that the publicity for Poles and for EVWs should be handled separately because of this sort of differentiation: "In so far as we lump together Poles and displaced persons -- fighting men and oppressed civilians -- we shall only prejudice the absorption of EVWs, whose acceptance is already 'in the bag.'"

The suggestion that EVWs had some claim to public sympathy because they had suffered during the war may have had some validity. Certainly the notion of a social debt had some currency within the context of the postwar welfare state; service or suffering during the war was one way of having paid one's citizenship dues in advance. Those who had done neither were perceived as owing their debt to society still. And yet British popular opinion, as commented upon by Orwell at the

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82 PRO LAB 12/513: Herbert to Moriarty, 26 August 1947.

83 Ibid.
time, and historians of postwar fascism subsequently, did not favour the victims of the war in any sort of direct way. There was a general sympathy for the downtrodden, but also a reluctance to have to deal with the problems associated with those who had fallen so low. While Polish servicemen may have been reviled as fascists by certain union opinion, they were also painted as valiant warriors who had fought with the allies. Displaced persons, on the other hand, were often seen as "the scum of Europe". As time went by the publicity efforts of the government took into account the best and worst elements of these sorts of stereotypes, and addressed aspects of each. The distinction between Displaced Persons and Polish soldiers that was so evident in the first two or three years after the war eventually faded in the public mind. By 1951 an amalgam stereotype had replaced the differentiated images that had featured in the popular media earlier.

Immediately after the war the stereotype of Polish soldiers as fascists had received a lot of play, particularly in the left wing press. In the late summer of 1945 it was reported that soldiers wishing to return to Poland were being

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84 See for example, George Orwell, "Antisemitism in Britain", in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume III (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), pp.332-341. Orwell wrote: "There is more antisemitism in England than we care to admit, and the war has accentuated it..." (p.340), and quotes from his own informal poll: "Intelligent woman, on being offered a book dealing with antisemitism and German atrocities: 'Don't show it me, please don't show it to me. It'll only make me hate the Jews more than ever.'" (p.333). See also Richard Thurlow, Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

85 Churchill had said of the Polish servicemen in February 1945: "... we should think it an honour to have such faithful and valiant warriors dwelling among us as if they were of our own blood." Sword et. al., op.cit., p.232.

86 PRO LAB 12/513: Ince to Buxton, 2 September 1947.
intimidated from doing so by their right-wing officers. In August 1945, the Manchester Guardian reported that Polish troops in Italy had shot it out with Italian communists over the erasure of communist graffiti. In November 1946 Tribune noted the dilemma of Polish Jewish soldiers who were reluctant to join the PRC because they feared anti-semitism and unfavourable treatment. Earlier in that month, at the 78th TUC conference, speakers had suggested that the Polish officer corps were "highly suspect to the British Labour movement", and were indoctrinated anti-semites and anti-socialists. A quote from the conference printed in the Western Morning News (Plymouth) ran: "The Poles strut about like the arrogant fascists they are, well fed, well clothed -- indeed better clothed than our British lads." This sort of attitude softened only slightly with time; in September 1949 for example, a review in Tribune of a book by General Anders entitled "An Army in Exile" read in part: "his book follows the pattern of that modern emigre literature bent on covering up the connections between past sins and present visitations. It obscures the point that Old Poland's flirtations with Nazi Germany contributed to the country's downfall in 1939, just as its super-chauvinism, resurrected in exile, has had its full share in developments since."

The tabloids also stoked the image of the Polish soldier as disruptive hooligan. Front page headlines such as: "Poles in Hotel Bar Battle" (Daily Herald, 8 October 1945), and "Pole on Attempted Murder Charge" (Evening Standard, 6 June 1946) were

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87 Daily Herald, 25 July 1945, p.4.; Times, 4 August 1945, 2b.
88 Manchester Guardian, 14 August 1945, p.4, col. d.
89 Tribune, 13 November 1946, p.4.
90 Western Morning News (Plymouth), 24 November 1946, p.2.
91 Tribune, 21 September 1949, p.6.
common fare for consumers of tabloids. Stories always identified the nationality of the suspect, as in "Michael Kott, aged 28, a Pole of Kensington Park Road."
(Daily Herald, 18 September 1945, p.4) and this was usually done in the headline. Stories tended to turn on several recurrent themes: brawling and gun play, often of a sinister, organized criminal nature; black market scams such as currency fiddles and smuggling; and episodes of sexual philandering. This latter theme seems to have exercised a particular hold on the mystique surrounding Polish servicemen. In June 1947 for example the Evening Standard ran the headline: "Some Poles played havoc with the ladies", above a blurb about a judge proclaiming an opinion in a divorce case.92

Also in that month, the story of the hunt for an escaped Polish prisoner featured nationally. This story brought together all of the major themes: The Polish "gunman", Stanley Zborowski, was a somewhat dashing and dangerous figure who had managed to elude police and soldiers for nearly a month, after escaping with two mates from a Norwich prison, where he had been serving time for larceny. He engaged police in several gun battles during his spree. At one point police dispersed a camp for Polish "recalcitrants" (those refusing to join the PRC) because they suspected that Zborowski was getting aid from them. When Zborowski was finally captured at Southend, some three hundred people gathered outside the court to get a glimpse of him. In the aftermath questions were raised about the alleged cache of arms and black market stores that were

92 Carolyn Steedman's recent article in Literature and History, ["A Weekend with Electra", Spring 1997], looks at a short story written by E.P. Thompson in 1965, which deals with a fallen British woman who had had an affair with a Polish "alien." The article also discusses the novels of Len Doherty, set in mining villages and dealing candidly with the sexual preoccupations of such insular communities. The article shows the way in which the perception of foreigners or "aliens" as sexual predators works within a superstructure of male dominance and the repression of sexuality.
confiscated from the Polish camp. Several days after his capture the Daily Express (among several tabloids) reported a visit to Zborowski by a "pretty blonde girl" who brought him cigarettes. The girl claimed she was visiting Zborowski on behalf of a friend who knew him well but whose family did not approve.93

Polish soldiers were thus portrayed in a fairly vigorous and active light. Fascists they may have been, but they were also fighting men. Ironically, while Poles were portrayed as fascists because of their anti-communism, many Polish soldiers in turn held EVW Poles in contempt and suspicion because of their association with the Nazi regime, even if only as slave labour.94 The fascist label was rather loosely applied in these years, and EVWs did not completely escape its application to them. Aside from the particular histories of these two groups, this sort of rhetoric reflected the pervasiveness of political ideology within popular discourse in these years.

For the most part however EVWs were portrayed as victims of fascism rather than as fascists. But sympathy for them on this basis eventually wore thin, particularly as they moved into the private housing market, and began competing for better jobs and scarce resources. Minor scandals arose over the perception that EVWs were receiving larger rations than British workers, or that they were getting more government assistance than British ex-servicemen in finding housing.95 Ernest Bevin’s


94 See, for example, Sword et. al., op cit, p.339.

95 PRO LAB 12/513: One example was a letter from Marjorie Freeman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, dated 12 December 1947, accusing the Ministry of Labour of giving EVWs at a Shropshire hostel a bacon ration far above the British norm. The Ministry of Labour despaired of explaining the complex and ad hoc system of differential rations to Mrs. Freeman, and referred her to the Ministry of Food (Hornsby to Freeman, dated 23 December 1947).
infamous remark about Jewish Displaced Persons jumping the queue in European camps reflected a sort of general attitude about Displaced Persons; they were at once pitied and despised. The euphemism European Volunteer Worker for Displaced Person was purposefully contrived: European suggested a racial and cultural affinity to Britain that was at least closer than, say, Slavic or African. Volunteer connoted selflessness and initiative. And Worker comprised the paradigm of good citizenship in the postwar welfare state, implying a sense of active contribution to the construction of an egalitarian society. “EVW” was thus meant to transform the image of the Displaced Person from that of pathetic wanderer to that of purposeful toiler.

This facelift was engineered in the context of a public discourse that emphasized the importance of pulling one’s weight. It is remarkable how often the term "taxpayers' expense" comes up in the debates for and against the use of Displaced Persons as labour in the U.K. In the March 1947 parliamentary debate on manpower, the notion that Displaced Persons should be brought over to the U.K. was defended on the basis that at least that way they would be earning their keep, and not be a "burden on the British taxpayer."

Displaced Persons who defied government direction were conversely depicted as "being kept by the British taxpayer."

Certainly the British taxpayer was not a new creature, and the prospect of his largesse being misspent had been invoked before. But in the context of the welfare state, the construction of the ‘British taxpayer’ took on a distinctly populist character. The working class aversion to accepting charity had coloured the conception of the welfare state model; in the postwar period, social services were to be delivered as a matter of right, not of charity. But for foreign workers, the

96 Manchester Guardian, 1 March 1947, p.6, col. f.
97 Ibid.
construction of a rights based citizenship left them in a position of limbo, the objects of charity until such time as they could earn their right to citizenship. One important way to earn that right in the postwar years was through work in essential industries.

Working class and collectivist mores were thus very influential in the social mood of the immediate postwar years. Ethnic, racial and national stereotypes must be considered in this context. Social codes also varied from region to region. Many of the EVWs and Poles were settled in areas of the north where a different social code prevailed than that of, for example, the southeast. In London, the anti-semitic, fascist Polish soldier may have come off second best to the persecuted victim of Hitler and Stalin. But in Yorkshire, the image of the proud, stolid Polish soldier, reluctant exile with a certain amount of machismo, was less debilitating than the image of degraded peasant refugee, or worse yet, sharp operating Jew, that sometimes clung to EVWs. If the tabloids are any indication of certain elements of working class culture and popular attitudes, British society at that level was defined by a significant element of stern and sometimes violent machismo. A punch in the nose was more often than not portrayed as a better response to injustice than turning the other cheek. Given this sort of code of reference, passive victims were not going to be much admired.

Government efforts at public education had to take such stereotypes into consideration. Despite Rouse's injunction against too active a role for government propaganda in this education process, a "Committee for the Education of Public

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99 In a letter to Tribune, dated 13 July 1945, (p.11), for example, one woman wrote: "The industrial cities of the north, the suburbs and clubs of the south, the Armed Forces, are full of this latent poison [anti-semitism].... Where one or two are gathered together...the Jew is still the scapegoat."
Opinion on Foreign Workers" was struck in October 1947 to oversee a propaganda campaign. This committee, which was meant to be short-lived, met for the first time on 5 December 1947. The committee comprised representatives of the Ministries of Health and of Labour, the War Office, the Central Office of Information, and several women's organizations such as the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The composition of the committee, including the appointment of a woman, Amy Curtis, as head public relations officer, pointed to the conviction that it was vital to mobilize women's organizations and energies to gain the social acceptance of the newcomers. At this meeting emphasis was placed on combatting allegations of preferential treatment for EVWs. These allegations often revolved around food and clothing rations, which were considered issues of particular concern to women.

But it was continually stressed that propaganda efforts should be low key, and that the government should not appear to be pushing local authorities to accept EVWs and Poles. For this reason an official circular -- perforce public -- was decided against, as was a newsreel, which might overblow the numbers and enormity of the scheme. Newspaper editors who ran troublesome stories were not to be approached officially about brightening their coverage. Instead the personal approach was advocated. Private calls to editors of local papers and local Labour Officers (LOs) would get the message across in a more seamless fashion. Word of mouth rather than overt propaganda was to be employed. The campaign would feature indirect methods such as sponsoring an EVW talent show on the BBC, an apolitical vehicle that would emphasize the contribution that EVWs could make to British life. Here was an attempt to de-politicize the

100 PRO LAB 12/513: minutes of meeting held on 1 October 1947.

101 Ibid., meeting of 5 December 1947.
newcomers, and to substitute instead a sort of overriding humanism and a shared European culture.

In the following weeks and months the initiatives planned at the December meeting were put into effect. Editors were canvassed to tour some EVW hostels and to write stories about what they saw. The Ministry of Labour Gazette ran a special message for staff on the importance of educating public opinion about foreign workers. A basic document was drawn up and distributed to local government offices and voluntary agencies as a guide to the history of foreign workers in the U.K. Prominent Cabinet Ministers were also enlisted into the project. At a press conference on 29 January 1948 Sir Stafford Cripps, speaking on the importance of the export drive, referred to EVWs:

They are a most useful if small addition to our labour force. They badly need friendliness and to be encouraged to speak English. Many of them can contribute, if allowed, to the life of a community out of working hours for they are often surprisingly neat fingered and clever with crafts and cooking. They are lonely people in a strange land but have come to help us and we must do our best to help them to fit into our social life.

The concern with not overstating the size of the EVW population, and of presenting a balance between sympathy and

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102 PRO LAB 12/513: A handwritten note in this file for example, dated 10 February 1948, asked Mr. Michael Thomas of the Yorkshire Post to visit some hostels and write a story or two about it. See also: Ministry of Labour Gazette, February 1948 issue.

103 Ibid., Curtis to Hornsby, 12 May 1948; this document was entitled "Workers From Abroad", and gave a brief history of the EVW and PRC schemes, as well as the recruitment of foreign workers to the U.K. in the postwar period. Ten thousand copies of this document were initially distributed to voluntary organizations, trade unions, government departments, the press and interested individuals.

104 PRO LAB 12/513: Text of speech.
self interest, was evident in this statement.

In February 1948, Miss Curtis embarked on a tour of several Regional Offices of the Ministry of Labour. Before she left, the results of a National Services Hostel Corporation (NSHC) questionnaire circulated at 15 hostels were discussed by the committee. The questionnaire asked about the communal behaviour of EVWs and Poles in hostels, and about their propensity for mixing with British residents and with each other. The results showed that foreign workers generally mixed with British residents better than with each other. Among the foreign workers Poles tended to disdain EVWs, and Balts disdained Ukrainians. EVWs tended to mingle better with the local population than did Poles. At the same time EVWs tended to keep up their national cultural practices more so than did the PRC Poles. On the whole the Polish ex-servicemen tended to be involved more often in fractious incidents, particularly over relations with women. The Regional Controller for the North East Region noted: "On the whole [Poles were] excellent workers ....[but] their inclination to cultivate the affection of the ladies has given rise to several instances of serious inter-racial violence through feelings of jealousy on the part of British residents, particularly Irish and coloured West Indians." On the basis of these findings it was suggested that the best policy was to get the EVWs and Poles out into the community in their spare time in order to break the tendency to remain within their national groups: "... the strong and natural inclination to stick together in national groups would soften if the members of the groups were associating with the English people as their common friends, and learning the

105 PRO LAB 12/513: This questionnaire was decided upon at a meeting of the publicity committee dated 5 December 1947. Questions were asked about punctuality, co-operativeness, cleanliness, and personal habits of residents, as well as their propensity to mix with residents of other national groups.

106 PRO LAB 12/513: minutes of meeting of 6 February 1948.
language and customs in the best way - practically."\textsuperscript{107}

Miss Curtis returned from her tour cautiously optimistic about the integration of European foreign workers. On the whole Polish ex-servicemen were being more readily accepted, particularly as they were now out of uniform and in civilian clothes.\textsuperscript{108} On the other hand, the issue of housing continued to rankle, and it was reported by Regional Controllers that EVWs were coming to expect "British" standards, and that the substandard conditions of NSHC hostels would not be tolerated indefinitely. In the North West Region, where the textile industry predominated, it was reported that attempts to get EVWs to join "local community life" were being spurned: "the EVWs were tending to form their own clubs, which often had rather strong political leanings."\textsuperscript{109} The complex system of food rationing was also a major source of controversy. Both British and EVW workers suspected each other of getting preferential treatment. Again the prescription for these problems seemed to be to let foreign workers sort things out for themselves without undue interference.\textsuperscript{110}

These findings showed that the integration of EVWs had now passed to the local level, at which the details of day to day life were the main loci of disputes and difficulties. It is thus significant, though not surprising, that women's organizations were enlisted to play such a heavy role in the assimilation process of Poles and EVWs. The WVS was particularly involved. It helped to monitor press coverage of the immigrants, and was allotted the task of writing rebuttals

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\textsuperscript{107} PRO LAB 12/513: Curtis to Hornsby, 9 February 1948. \\
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., report by Curtis dated 19 February 1948. \\
\textsuperscript{109} PRO LAB 12/513: Report of Conference of Assistant Regional Controllers, 29 January 1948. \\
\textsuperscript{110} PRO LAB 12/513: Meeting of Committee of Education of Public Opinion regarding Foreign Workers, dated 26 February 1948.
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to unfavourable reports.\textsuperscript{111} The teaching of English was facilitated by WVS training materials, and other types of "community outreach" programs were pursued.\textsuperscript{112} On 20 April 1948 the WVS sponsored a conference on the "Welfare of Poles and EVWs", at which the Ministry of Labour and the National Assistance Board (NAB) were represented. The Dowager Marchioness of Reading, in the chair, opened the conference by noting that Britain ("we"), as "a homogenous nation", should help others to "assimilate." She went on: "The British way of life was not found in Hansard nor in the newspapers -- it was found in our homes .... employment did not mean assimilation unless further help was given."\textsuperscript{113} The problem of assimilation was particularly acute, she noted, with respect to Polish servicemen, who had not after all volunteered to come to the U.K. to work, and among whom there was a considerable social diversity. Polish officers and their wives had found it particularly difficult to adjust to the sort of manual work that was offered to them. The PRC was meanwhile blamed by some at the conference for encouraging recalcitrance.\textsuperscript{114} The solution was to invite the newcomers into British homes, where they might experience British life at first hand.

Another element of the Marchioness' speech was to draw attention to "the international aspect of the problem." This internationalist message was reiterated by Lady Albermarle in a speech at the 28th general meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) at the Albert Hall on 28 April. Lady Albermarle made explicit the connection between the

\textsuperscript{111} PRO LAB 12/513: Memo to Regional Offices of Ministry of Labour and to WVS regional offices, dated 17 February 1948.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.; the WVS used "Eckersley's Essential English" as its main text in teaching English to EVWs.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., WVS Conference on Welfare of Poles and EVWs, dated 20 April 1948.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
assimilation of Poles and EVWs and foreign affairs: "Two years ago in this Hall we passed a resolution pledging ourselves to work by every means in our power for the promotion of friendship among nations .... Are we wholeheartedly taking this chance [the presence of PRC Poles and EVWs] to practice what we preach?" The role of women in politics as expressed in these two speeches was to maintain the rudiments of British national life, and to interpret the particulars of British culture for newcomers. The Poles and EVWs were to be assimilated, and in this process British domesticity was to play a leading role.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this strategy of allowing the process to run a largely unregulated course, EVWs did not integrate into British life as smoothly as had been hoped. Elizabeth Stadulis, writing without the benefit of having seen the files of the Committee on Public Education, has argued that "administrative indifference" subverted the process of integration. Perhaps more important than government lassitude was the constrained state of the private sector of the economy, which left little space for the sort of seamless integration that officials favoured. Thus the housing of many EVWs in hostels continued for a considerable period of time. In June 1951 there were still 10,000 or so EVWs living in hostels. Mixing with the local population also proved sporadic, the more so as one got into the industrial towns. Often this mixing was the source of confrontation. The initial policy of assimilation was predicated upon the teaching of English to the newcomers, and their becoming involved in various aspects of British

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115 PRO LAB 12/513: report of 28th General Meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, dated 28 April 1948.

116 Elizabeth Stadulis, op.cit., p.237: Stadulis wrote: "It would be presumptuous to draw sharp conclusions from the narrow picture I have painted. But operation of the program to resettle D.P.s in Britain may, I think, be justly criticized on two main points: for losing sight of its original purposes, and for a general administrative indifference...."

community life, such as sporting clubs and church functions. But by 1949 a Ministry of Education survey had found that thousands of Poles and EVWs knew "little or no English, and thousands know only sufficient to do a little shopping, in spite of the fact that many have been 18 months in this country." EVWs were perhaps not so much indifferent to the English language and culture as they were fiercely determined to preserve their native traditions and culture in diaspora.

Such trends, coupled with an often overt hostility on the part of the British population in general, and of the unions in particular, made it clear that the assimilation of first generation EVWs was not going to happen. By 1949 the realization of this fact caused a shift in government policy. Assimilationist expectations were modified in favour of a longer term approach. In essence the older migrants were given up, and the focus was put on the younger generation. While employment restrictions remained in place on older workers, EVWs under the age of 25 were permitted in 1948 to leave essential work to attend school for a period of two years, provided they could support themselves. With time these and subsequent generations might be assimilated into the British nation. As for the parents and those older migrants who maintained an attachment to their native lands, the emphasis was placed on de-politicizing their cultural trappings. Thus as Kay and Miles note, the "folkloric element" of migrants' culture was deemed "legitimate national activity", while the political expressions were deemed "excessive nationalism". Not surprisingly, many of these supposed folkloric aspects became the focus of migrant political culture as well. This was particularly the case with the religion of the various migrant

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120 Kay and Miles, op.cit., pp.142-4.
groups, which became a symbol not only of their separateness from British culture, but also of their resistance to the godless communism that had overrun their homelands. Churches serving the Polish or the Ukrainian or the Lithuanian communities became the institutions that guarded the traditions of old cultures, and in this way they acted against the original policy of assimilation.\textsuperscript{121}

This shift in policy was both an acknowledgement of the difficulties of seamless integration, and a comment on the duality of the official conception of Britishness in this period. Postwar Britishness was on the one hand a construct based on a statutory definition of citizenship. There was room in this construction of Britishness for certain tangential additions, as long as the main planks were left in place. The emphasis on the quaint folkloric traditions of migrants was in keeping with the notion, made manifest in imperial propaganda, that British society took the best parts of cultures from around the world and absorbed them onto a basic structure premised on evolved political and social customs. The result was, like the Christmas pudding made from ingredients found throughout the empire, a superior product that reflected the virtue and vigour of British society.

But while there could be a symbiotic relationship between British and foreign cultures, two provisos applied or were assumed: firstly, the foreign culture's contribution was restricted to uncontentious areas such as food, clothing style, or the arts. In the realm of political culture, the supremacy of British parliamentary social democracy could not be challenged. Secondly, while such Britishness could be attained statutorily, belonging to the British nation depended also on the acceptance of British tradition as well as on racial compatibility. In this sense true Britishness could only be nurtured on British soil; its transferability was therefore an

\textsuperscript{121} See Stadulis, op.cit., p.226.
osmotic process that was best left to its own devices. Appropriate immigrants would be assimilated through a natural process that might take years, but that was self-activating.

One episode illustrates these themes particularly well. In March 1948 an interesting letter was received by the Central Office of Information from a Mr. Panchuk of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain. Panchuk noted that the government of Canada had released a publication entitled "Canadian Citizenship" which laid out a conception of Canadian identity for new immigrants. Such a document, he suggested, would be useful in the U.K. as well. The response, drafted by Miss Curtis, dismissed the need for such a course:

In Canada the Ukrainian communities apparently tend to remain self contained and aloof from the general population, and so there is a need for publicity ... to encourage them in patriotic sentiments towards their country of adoption. Our aim is their assimilation locally by the indigenous population, and in this way we hope that they will settle down to the British way of life without the aid of any national propaganda.\textsuperscript{111}

Of course it was disingenuous for the woman in charge of the public education efforts of the government to suggest that no national propaganda was deemed necessary in Britain. Obviously the government had decided that a subtle approach was the best one. But there was more than just dissimulation in Miss Curtis' reply. Inherent in the rejection of the "citizenship" guide for the U.K. was a conception of British identity as on the one hand indefinable, and on the other hand much stronger and more deep seated than Canadian identity. In Canada, the national culture was still in the process of being defined, whereas foreign workers in Britain would be engulfed by the pervasive traditional culture. There was thus no need

\textsuperscript{122} PRO LAB 12/513.
for the British government to intervene in the assimilation process. This conception of Britishness has been highlighted in an article on the Assisted Passages scheme by Kathleen Paul, that identifies the Attlee government's attempt to spread British culture throughout the Commonwealth after the war, while creating British citizens out of European migrants in the U.K. All that was needed to accomplish this, it was thought, was a utilitarian program of language training, and a guide to the bureaucratic workings of the state. The latter, Curtis informed Panchuk, would constitute the government's version of the Canadian document.

There was in this attitude an important implication for the development of British national identity in the postwar period. The view of British identity expressed by Curtis was an extremely conservative one. It was of a nostalgic, unchanging culture rather than of a dynamic one. The newcomers were meant to blend into the status quo rather than affect it. Perhaps even more to the point, the assimilation of these newcomers -- largely working class, religious, rural -- seems to have been intended to reconstitute the British working class along compliant, familiar lines. Ironically, the assimilation of a foreign bloc of workers seems to have offered an opportunity to bolster a nostalgic, traditional conception of British working class culture and national identity.

By 1951 the concern of the government with the public perception of EVWs and Poles was less oriented towards gaining their acceptance into the workplace, and more towards integrating them into British society as citizens. The Curtis Committee on Public Relations stopped its work with the completion of the Basic Document "Workers From Abroad", in May 1948. Yet although this committee had ceased to operate, its

efforts, and those of the unofficial groups working to influence media coverage, were evident in a number of articles in the press in 1951 that addressed the loneliness of the foreign workers' lot, and the negative stereotypes that still adhered to them.

In August 1951 an article in the *Manchester Guardian* on the loneliness and isolation of EVWs again raised the topic of integration into British society. The *Guardian* article indicated that the integration of EVWs remained a halting and difficult process. The *Guardian*'s prescription agreed with that of the WVS in the sense that both thought the best method to further integration was a more active welcome from British women. But the *Guardian* and the WVS might have disagreed as to what this welcome entailed. The WVS envisioned tea parties and home visits for Polish and EVW women. The *Guardian* had another thing in mind: "The greater number of the foreign workers are men; most of them are between 25 and 40, and most of them single. They need more than any other single thing an opportunity of meeting in pleasant surroundings decent women and girls of their own or other nationalities. Failing it, they will find available all too many opportunities of meeting disreputable ones in squalid places."\(^{124}\)

A series of articles in the *Yorkshire Observer* in July 1951, which showed every indication of being influenced by government propaganda efforts, addressed an amalgam of the negative stereotypes of EVWs. Significantly, all foreign workers, whether PRC Poles, Displaced Persons or others, were now lumped together discursively as EVWs. The articles addressed accusations of favouritism towards EVWs at work and in housing. They told of the thrift and self denial of the EVWs, and noted that these qualities showed "contemporary Englishmen a recipe for life which brings its own rewards." EVW methods of buying their own houses were outlined in order to

\(^{124}\) *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1951, in LAB 12/513.
deflate the rumour that they received Government assistance and favouritism. The articles acknowledged that the EVWs stuck to their own national groups, but claimed that in time they would be absorbed into the British communities; the final instalment in this series was entitled "EVWs are willing to fit into Our Ways." At the same time, certain apolitical aspects of EVW culture -- "the laying of afternoon tea like a banquet" for example -- were acknowledged, and the articles remarked on these as positive additions to British society. EVWs were described as "hardy men and women from eastern Europe" with a "stolid gait [that was] the unmistakable badge of continental birth." It was emphasized that these EVWs were reluctant guests in Britain, and that they were trustworthy, law abiding and sanitary.125

These were telling emphases: they were meant to combat notions that EVWs were degraded peasants, who lowered British living standards and undermined the welfare state. Their contributions to reconstruction through hard work in essential industries were emphasized to make it clear that EVWs were not a drain on national resources. Moreover, the "stolid gait" and grim bearing of the EVW were meant to appeal to the gritty stoicisn and machismo of Yorkshire working class culture. The presentation of EVW culture in quaint and homey terms also reflected the desire to de-politicize the discourse surrounding them. This desire in turn reflected the fact that the image of east European foreign workers was informed by a discourse that emphasized their political and ideological zeal. These articles pointed to qualities that made "EVWs" good citizens.

In both the control measures placed upon Poles and EVWs in these years, and the subtle public relations campaign waged by the government, there are significant statements about the nature of citizenship in the postwar period. Although Steve Fielding, among others, has argued on the basis of survey data

125 *Yorkshire Observer*, 26, 27 and 30 July 1951.
that the egalitarianism and public spiritedness of these years has been somewhat overestimated, it is still remarkable how much of the rhetoric of this period refers to the public good, the social contract and the duty of citizenship.\footnote{Steve Fielding, "'Don't know and don't care': popular political attitudes in Labour's Britain, 1945-51", in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.) The Attlee Years, (London: Pinter, 1991).} In an attempt to promote a felicitous image of the east European foreign worker, government propaganda alluded to the concepts of "paying one's passage to citizenship" through "hard work in essential industries." When it wanted to justify control and disciplinary measures which seemed harsh, the government also made use of the same imagery, but with the negative spin that foreigners threatened the contract of the welfare state by their reluctance to pull their weight and pledge their allegiance to it. On the whole, the rhetoric surrounding Poles and EVWs bespeaks a definition of citizenship and the state that is for the most part secular and collectivist in a broad sense.

The fact that east European foreign workers were viewed not only as useful additions to the nation's labour force in the short term, but also as good human material from which to regenerate the stagnating population of the U.K., also says much about the duality of definitions of British citizenship and British national identity in this period. British citizenship was seen as a transferrable construct, entailing acceptance of a culture that could be learned and transmitted, and in some respects even modified. This culture was based on the English language, and on a social democratic political system. East European foreign workers could in time be made into workable British citizens, provided that their political traditions were subsumed by those of the U.K. In this sense Britishness in the postwar period was undergoing a process of codification that made it more amenable to a number of purposes, including the consolidation of Commonwealth
relations, and of domestic social and economic policy. The British nation on the other hand was a much murkier construct that encompassed an ethnic and racial, as well as cultural dimension. It was possible to become a member of the nation, and indeed this was the main goal of the policy of assimilation, but in order to do this migrants had to pass through an organic and time consuming process.

That east Europeans were considered candidates for assimilation says much about the importance of skin colour in the definition of British national identity. The following chapter will deal with this issue in more depth. Skin colour was not the only factor in the definition of race, and as we have seen, even among the white skinned, racial distinctions were drawn. But in general, the fairness of their skin made east Europeans of whatever national origin suitable candidates for assimilation. In both official control mechanisms, and public images of EWJs and Poles, the construction of the alien threat posed by east European migrants was built around secular, cultural characteristics that could be modified. Political ideology and social class, not skin colour, were the particular impediments to the smooth integration of east European migrants into British society. The integration of east European migrants was thus taken in two stages: the first involved making them into good British citizens, which meant in essence that they be good and honest workers and contributors to the welfare state. In order to convince the public to accept the newcomers the government had to utilize an egalitarian rhetoric of citizenship in keeping with the mood of postwar

127 Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, op.cit., is mentioned above. Laura Tabili, whose work on the Coloured Alien Seaman Order of 1925 will be discussed in the next chapter, also dwells on the implications of varying the definition of British nationality in order to suit different agendas. See Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seaman) Order, 1925", in *Journal of British Studies*, v.33, #1 (January 1994), pp.54-98.
Britain. The second stage involved transforming these immigrants, or their children, into members of the British nation. In this process the government's role was envisioned as minimal; the passage of time and the inexorable inertia of British culture would ultimately lead to assimilation.
Chapter Three: Recruited Colonial Workers

The official recruitment of foreign labour was generally confined to white Europeans in these years, in part for reasons of colour prejudice both official and public, and in part because such foreign workers were more malleable to government control. The issue of uncontrolled migration of Black colonial and Commonwealth citizens to the U.K. arose in the latter part of the Labour government's tenure. There were two main official concerns regarding this migration. The first was that a relatively large influx of people of colour would cause social disruption. The second was that these migrants might abuse the beneficence of the welfare state. Both concerns were based on racist stereotypes and assumptions; in the first instance the notion that skin colour determined social compatibility, and in the second the notion that people of colour were inherently lazy and degraded. The assumption of social incompatibility was premised on the ethno-racial, informal construction of Britishness discussed in the previous chapter. The threat that migrants of colour were thought to pose to the postwar social contract was grounded in the formal, statutory definition of British citizenship, and showed this definition to have a strong racist underpinning as well. Colonial migrants were legally British citizens -- the 1948 Nationality Act confirmed this. As such their rights within the welfare state were guaranteed. The government showed every sign that such a guarantee was worrisome to it, and every attempt was made to control and influence both the volume of migration to the U.K., and the behaviour and movements of Commonwealth and colonial migrants of colour while in the U.K. The assumption implicit in this policy was that British migrants of colour would make poor citizens of the welfare state.

However several small scale schemes to import colonial labour to the U.K. were undertaken by the postwar Labour
government. These schemes were motivated more by the desire to solve colonial problems than to address the domestic economic crises of the postwar period. They also constituted an experiment in the controlled movement of colonial peoples to the U.K. These schemes mixed aspects of the recruitment of white foreign labour in this period, with the voluntary migration of hundreds of thousands of migrants of colour from the colonies and Commonwealth, which would become such a highly charged issue from the late 1950's onwards. Clearly notions of race played a great role in the definition of what Kathleen Paul has called the "informal code" of Britishness, and the policies reflected in the various schemes for colonial migrants show the government's acquiescence, if not active participation, in the entrenchment of such informal coding. At a time of transformation from Empire to Commonwealth, the dichotomization of Britishness into formal and informal definitions was manipulated to serve both imperial and domestic exigencies.

Policy towards colonial migrant workers of colour recruited by the government in this period was informed by racist assumptions, and had racialist effects and outcomes. A clarification of these terms is necessary before proceeding further. In his seminal work on British racial discourse, Frank Reeves distinguished *racism* -- a term applying to a particular form of the written or spoken word which assumes the existence of races classified according to perceivable characteristics -- from *racialism*, a term referring to the effects of policies or actions which are derived from racist discourse, and which place one racial group in a subordinate position to another.¹ He further subdivided racism into three categories: weak, medium and strong. At the weak end of the scale, race is

strictly a descriptive construct, with no explicit value judgements or prescriptions for action or behaviour. Scientific discourse of race often falls into this category, and although such discourse can be used to justify racialist prescriptions, it does not itself attribute value judgements. Medium racism does place racist discourse into a value system which holds one race superior to another, although at this part of the racist scale, the prescription for policy is not necessarily discriminatory towards the allegedly inferior race in a straightforward sense. An example of medium racism, notes Reeves, is the sort of attitude that characterised the late Victorian new imperialism: "the ideas of a ruling race that, while accepting its genetic superiority and entitlement to rule, exercises a benevolent paternalism, or even a positive discrimination, in favour of 'lesser mortals'."\(^2\) Strong racism is both evaluative and prescriptive in a straightforward sense, holding that the superior race is entitled to more favourable treatment than the inferior race. This tripartite framework allows for a flexible assessment of race discourse, taking into account both the intention and the outcome of pronouncements and policies that have racialist implications. As Reeves noted, the outcome of policies or actions may be racialist by intention, or unintentionally. The difference is important in both a moral and a clinical sense.

The framework suggested by Reeves is useful to the material in this chapter not because it allows for the exoneration of the Labour government's policy towards recruited Black workers, (i.e. they didn't mean to be racialist), but because it illuminates the shades of racism involved in the various schemes discussed. It is possible, in Reeves' framework, to classify certain racist discourse as neutral, in the sense that a statement might assume the existence of racial categories without evaluating their relative merits. If such

\(^2\) Ibid., p.13.
racist statements, and the assumptions that underlie them, lead to racialist policy and outcomes, this does not mean that such outcomes were intentional. The assertion then that the government's policies were informed by racist assumptions and had racialist outcomes is not a moral condemnation so much as it is a statement of fact. Reeves' framework allows us to probe the level and modality through which racialist circumstances were constructed and perpetuated in Britain in the immediate postwar years.

Moreover, Reeves' framework allows for an expanded notion of racism, which encompasses a multi-dimensional definition of British national identity. Reeves notes that Michael Banton's definition of racism, which held that racism was "the doctrine that a man's behaviour is determined by stable inherited characteristics deriving from separate racial stocks having distinctive attributes and usually considered to stand to one another in relations of superiority and inferiority" is inadequate. Racism, he writes, need not be based on a biological justification, nor does it necessarily imply value judgements. Reeves cites Fanon's notion of cultural racism as an example of a non-biological "folk racism" that can be as strongly prescriptive as that founded on physical prejudice. Perceptions of east Europeans, as we have seen in the previous chapter, could fit into this sort of cultural racist model. Racism, then, does not equal colour prejudice in any sort of limited way, and Banton's categories of "national", "ethnic", and "racial" minorities -- though he admits that they often

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overlap -- become much less important as discrete categories.

There are obvious problems with Reeves' rather elastic definition of racism. For one thing the notion that racism need not be a pejorative term flies in the face of accepted contemporary usage, and given Reeves' own description of the racialist implications that follow racist thought -- whether intentionally or not -- it can be argued that a pejorative connotation is merited. Moreover, arguing that racism can be divorced from a biological determinism threatens to dilute the concept of racism beyond any sort of cogency. To speak in terms of race must necessarily be to define attributes which are thought inherited from birth and which are immutable. However, given these provisos Reeves' framework is useful in delineating the layers of racist discourse and policy, and the ways in which notions of race, culture and nation overlap.

It is difficult, as Reeves' study of racial discourse in parliament shows, to find openly racist statements of the strong, prescriptive kind in mainstream political discourse. Evaluative racist statements -- medium racism -- are more prevalent, and particularly so as one delves into the semi-private realm of civil service memoranda and policy papers. It is these sorts of racist statements and assumptions that one finds with respect to colonial migrants and recruits to Britain in these years. The social problems anticipated by the presence of migrants of colour in the U.K. prompted government officials to treat them differently than European foreign workers or white British citizens. In this sense racialist policy followed racist discourse. In the terms laid out by Reeves, this racist discourse was of a medium nature. That is, it was evaluative of racial differences, and at times prescribed racialist action -- segregating coloured workers, for example -- although more in the name of social harmony than of subjugation.

Racist discourse and assumptions were also manifest in the government's striking of a Cabinet committee in 1949 to look into the possibility of limiting the migration of Black British
subjects to the U.K. Here it will be enough to note that although the Labour governments of 1945-1951 did not in the end act upon their concern for Black migration, the concern was palpably there. This same concern affected the several small schemes taken to recruit colonial subjects of colour to Britain.

The dichotomy between "communities of Britishness" (to borrow Kathleen Paul's term) in this period is thrown somewhat into relief by the discourse surrounding recruited colonial migrant workers on the one hand, and recruited European foreign workers on the other. It is illuminating to contrast the negative stereotypes of east European migrants with those of colonial migrants. The Europeans were mainly problematized, as we have seen, in terms of cultural differences. Racial prejudice was also prevalent, particularly in terms of notions of temperament and proclivity for work. But in the main, east European migration was problematic only to the extent that the migrants themselves showed reluctance to fully assimilate into the dominant culture. Even where such reluctance was apparent, and it was plainly apparent in most cases, the pull of British culture was expected to be overwhelming in due course. By contrast colonial migrant workers in this period were problematized in terms of their physical unsuitability for integrating with the native population. Their culture was British, and they were legally British citizens, but they could not hope to become assimilated into the British nation.  

Formal and informal definitions of Britishness thus split national identity into two complementary parts. On the one side Britishness encompassed a cultural definition of the nation which helped to buttress the model of citizenship for the welfare state. This was the formal code of national identity,  

whose relative openness and inclusivity allowed the government some flexibility in both its foreign and domestic policy. On the other side an informal British identity encompassing an ethno-racial definition of the nation was perpetuated. This informal code facilitated the control of Black colonial migrants in Britain, though this may not entirely have been its intent.

As with the east European migrant workers dealt with in the preceding chapter, so too with Black British citizens was there a racialized hierarchy prevailing within official circles. P.S. Gupta has written of this hierarchization within Labour thought throughout the twentieth century, particularly as it pertained to imperial affairs. Gupta outlines a sort of racial scale in which propensity for civilized culture -- political and social -- was thought to correspond to the relative fairness of skin colour. In this view, for example, Arabic peoples were rated more advanced than Africans, and therefore more able to organize, and live within, a western social system. This hierarchization was nowhere more apparent than in the various small scale schemes to recruit colonial subjects for work in the U.K. In these schemes the colour of the proposed recruits was weighed into official considerations, and stereotypical assumptions were made about their behaviour. Moreover, the government showed a great sensitivity toward the colour prejudice of British society in general, and fretted constantly about the reception recruits would get in Britain, and the sensation that they might cause.

The first official scheme to recruit colonial migrant workers in the postwar period involved several hundred men from the island of Malta. Maltese ranked toward the top within the prevalent racial hierarchy, though British officials did not consider them absolutely 'white.' Late in 1946, the Colonial

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Office proposed that some Maltese be brought to the U.K. to work in essential industries. The numbers proposed were not great -- approximately 1000 got talked about -- and in March 1947 around 220 Maltese who had registered for recruitment were interviewed by Ministry of Labour representatives in Malta. Forty two of these said they would come to the U.K. if they could be assured of a job and accommodation. For a time it was proposed that these 42 should be brought to Britain by way of an experiment. The Ministry of Labour discussed the possibility of exercising control over their placement in industry, as in the EVW scheme. It was, however, finally concluded that as the Maltese were British subjects, they could not be adequately controlled, nor could they be guaranteed accommodation or work. Under the circumstances it was decided that no formal offer should be made to the Maltese, although they were obviously entitled to come to the U.K. if they could find their own way.

The main stumbling block to this scheme was the lack of control that the Ministry of Labour might exercise over the Maltese, and the fear that they might drift into undesirable work or become a drain on public resources. In large part this trepidation had to do with the stereotypical view of Maltese as somewhat indolent and shifty. Maltese were categorized as a Latin people and thus stereotyped as both mercurial and, at the same time, possessed of that languid and frivolous nature endemic to inhabitants of a warm climate. Their relative poverty was an obstacle too in that it was thought that the wealth and allure of the welfare state might dull their


8 Ibid., internal memo dated 2 May 1947.

9 Ibid., internal memo from Bevan to Veysey, dated 12 August 1947: Bevan wrote: "One of the difficulties about any such scheme is ... that we have no real hold over any Maltese that we may bring to this country and they may tend to drift into non-essential work or become unemployed and claimants for public assistance."
incentive to work hard (or at all). In addition, the Maltese community in the U.K. carried a reputation for criminality; tabloid articles sensationalizing organized crime rings run by Maltese were not uncommon. In June 1947, for example, the tabloids featured a story of three brothers of Maltese descent being involved in a knife fight in the streets of London. The three admitted to being part of a gang that was implicated in currency fraud, extortion, and even a white slave trade. Just as stories of Poles being involved in organized criminal activity nurtured negative stereotypes of Polish servicemen, so too did stories such as this contribute to the bad image of the Maltese community.

The Colonial Office proposal had been a tentative attempt to relieve poor conditions in Malta. The Ministry of Labour and the Home Office had been less than enthusiastic for domestic reasons. A similarly small scale scheme to assist indigent Maltese and Cypriot residents of Greece in coming to the U.K. was broached in January of 1948. This time it was the Foreign Office that proposed the scheme, in response to a request made by the British Embassy in Athens. At the same time the fate of Maltese in Egypt and in India was also being considered. One hundred Maltese and Cypriots were involved in the Athens proposal.

Although the British Embassy in Athens was concerned with the well-being of indigent British subjects, other government officials voiced different concerns. In a letter to the Ministry of Labour in May 1948, W. Russell Edmunds of the Treasury noted that his department was not satisfied with the fairly relaxed conditions to be imposed on the would-be migrants. These conditions called for the migrants to register with Employment Exchanges upon their arrival in the U.K., and

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10 Evening Standard, 28 June 1947, p.3.

to link up with the British Maltese community. The latter condition, argued Edmunds, "may not be compatible with the right kind of assimilation of these people in the economy of this country. I have a fear that these people may find lucrative offers of employment with employers whose activities may be suspect." Here again was the criminal stereotype of the Maltese community in Britain. Edmunds suggested that the Maltese be made to work in specified industries where their labour was needed: "Employment in such trades, I take it, would be immediate, and while it will avoid any lengthy charge to public assistance, it would surely be making the right contribution to our needs which is the underlying purpose in bringing these people to this country." A return letter from the Ministry of Labour noted the impracticability of placing the Maltese from Athens or from Cairo, and promised that Ministry of Labour Local Offices would be given instructions to take special care with respect to placement.

In any case even if the Ministry of Labour had wanted to place Maltese migrant workers in areas where labour was needed, union objections and colour prejudice were obstacles. In coal mining, for example, it was noted that "many union lodges object to the employment of people from abroad even though they are British." A lack of fluency in English was a particular concern, and safety reasons were cited in this regard. Less defensibly, the emotional make up of the Maltese was called into question: "The NCB considered the employment of Italians but came to the conclusion that people of Latin countries are not temperamentally suitable for coalmining. This would no doubt apply to Maltese." Thus it was that an internal Ministry of Labour memo noted in September 1948: "There has been no question of recruiting these Maltese as labour to meet

12 PRO LAB 13/261: Edmunds to Bevan, 21 May 1948.
13 Ibid., letter dated 26 May 1948.
14 PRO LAB 13/261: Flindall to Tavener, 29 June 1948.
our own shortage. They are not really the sort of labour we need and since they are British subjects it is hardly practicable to bind them to an undertaking to do only specific work."

Any scheme to import Maltese or Cypriot migrants was thus meant to assist British subjects in distress rather than to address the needs of British industry. But even so there were serious reservations on the part of the several departments concerned. Any recruitment would have to begin on a limited, experimental scale. In the early fall of 1948 it was decided that a party of three young Maltese men would arrive from Cairo at the end of November and go to the Walham Green Employment Exchange, there to be placed in suitable employment. The results of this experiment would presumably determine the fate of the Athens scheme, which by now seemed to have been placed on a back burner. The arrival of five hundred West Indian migrants on the Empire Windrush in the summer of 1948 had, in the meantime, brought the issue of uncontrolled colonial migration to the fore.16 The fear of precipitating "another Windrush" was the reason for the cautiousness and small scale of this initial project. As with the several other schemes to recruit colonial labour, the government wished to keep the details quiet for several reasons: it did not want to encourage more migration than could be controlled or manipulated, and it also wanted to avoid seeming to be giving preference to one group of colonials over another.

This particular experiment got off to rather a poor start. In late December 1948 the Ministry of Labour reported that the three men were proving difficult to place as they were "choosy"

15 PRO LAB 13/261: Bevan to Veysey, 29 September 1948.

and the employment situation in London "was hardening." It was also noted that "employers are somewhat reluctant to accept workers from abroad, particularly if they are coloured, even though very slightly and in spite of our assurance that they are British subjects." Indeed as the Christmas season settled in, the situation for the three looked quite grim. They had been housed privately rather than in hostels, and the added expense of their lodgings had depleted their allowances rather quickly. It was noted that the expense of their accommodation had given them a false impression of the amount of money that would be required to maintain themselves, and this had led to their "choosiness" in taking employment.

By April of 1949 the three men had all been placed in employment, and a fourth was about to be sent. In general terms this small scale experiment was not a great success. It highlighted the difficulties encountered by migrants of colour in finding employment in the U.K., and it also showed the preference of the Ministry of Labour for recruiting foreign labour rather than labour from within the sphere of the empire. The three Maltese had faced a difficult time integrating into the workforce precisely because they were, to a large extent, left to their own devices. And yet as British subjects their arrangements could not have been as controlled as were those of other foreign recruits. In a sense Mr. Edmunds' misgivings about the scheme were prophetic.

As the Maltese were struggling to find their bearings in the metropolis of London, another group of colonial subjects were being recruited to work in the English countryside. These recruits came from the tiny and remote mid Atlantic island of St. Helena, and their recruitment further highlighted the various issues raised by the very limited recruitment of Maltese workers. The St. Helena scheme was in many ways much

more like a formal recruitment scheme than was the recruitment of the Maltese. The numbers involved -- 100 men were recruited -- were much larger than the number of Maltese that were recruited. The St. Helenians were treated as a group, housed communally and deployed directly by the Ministry of Labour on fixed contracts agreed to before the departure of the men from their homes. However, the issues of control and of racialization were quite similar to the ones exhibited in the Maltese case, except that in the case of the St. Helenians these issues were magnified in intensity because the numbers were that much greater, and because the St. Helenians were positioned even lower within the prevalent racial hierarchy than were the Maltese.

The scheme to import some 100 St. Helenians to work in British agriculture was first broached to the Ministry of Labour in October 1947. The initiative again came from the Colonial Office, whose main concern was the high rate of unemployment in St. Helena. In 1947 unemployment stood at 140 from a population of nearly 5000. The closing of the British garrison on the island, and the departure of U.S. troops from the associated island of Ascension during the year had led to a slump in the island economy, and the Colonial Office felt that only emigration could solve the problem of a surplus of men. The Colonial Office spent L.4,350 in 1947 on unemployment and poor relief, from total expenditures of L.96,278. As St. Helena was largely financed by the British government, it was thought that something needed to be done to lessen this burden.

At the initial meeting at which the Colonial Office

18 PRO MAF 186/24: M.A. Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to Bartlett (Ministry of Agriculture and Food), dated 29 November 1947.

19 In 1947 for example L.27,000 was received in grant-in-aid, and L.22,170 in Commonwealth Development and Welfare Grants. These comprised nearly L.50,000 from a total revenue of L.83,628. See Great Britain Colonial Office Report on St. Helena, 1947, HMSO.
proposed the scheme, on 2 October 1947, the reception of the departments concerned was mixed. The Permanent Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labour, M.A. Bevan, was in the chair, and seemed favourably disposed to the idea. However, the Ministry of Agriculture's representative seemed reluctant to accept the responsibility. The Ministry of Agriculture was not in a strong position to refuse given that they had recently accepted some 30,000 Poles, Balts, and Ukrainians -- "many of whom" it was pointed out, "will have fought on the other side in the war". The St Helenians, it was noted by way of contrast, were British subjects who spoke English. However the Ministry of Agriculture representative felt that it would be necessary to discuss the proposal with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the County Agricultural Executive Committees (CAECs) involved, and that they did not "feel able to force the St. Helenians on a Committee against its will."21

The nature of the Ministry of Agriculture's objection was made clear in an internal note dated 3 October 1947:

20 It was not mentioned in this correspondence, although it may have come out in informal discussion, that the St. Helenian dialect was much different than standard English, let alone the various dialects spoken throughout the British countryside. For more on the St. Helenian dialect see Ian F. Hancock, "English in St Helena", Society for Caribbean Linguistics, Occasional Paper #11 (February 1979).

21 PRO MAF 186/24: Internal memo by Bartlett, dated 2 October 1947. It should be noted here that the war time County Agricultural Executive Committee system was extended into the postwar years in order to address persistent labour shortages in agriculture. Many of the prisoners of war talked about in the opening chapter were employed under this system. Essentially, workers under this system were pooled in rural hostels and hired out to farmers by local Agricultural Executive Committees (AECs) at set rates of pay. This system provided a mobile, flexible labour force especially suited to seasonal labour fluctuations. For agricultural policy in general see C.J. Bartlett, A History of Post-War Britain, 1945-1974, (London: Longman, 1974), pp.57-8.
If they were put in hostels with other workers -- particularly other British workers -- it was fairly certain that colour prejudices, coupled with differences in habits and customs, would lead to trouble and would probably mean that we should lose more labour than we gained. If, on the other hand, the men had to be put into separate hostels and then began to drift away, we should be sterilizing badly needed hostel accommodation, for the sake of a relatively few workers.

Moreover the note also stated that the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) might have objections, seeing this "small experiment" as an example of the government's willingness to "rake the world" for foreign labour rather than improving conditions for indigenous agricultural labourers. On the other hand it was also noted that if the St. Helenians were "only slightly coloured, and 'civilized' in their habits", and if they could be housed with the EVWs and the Poles, the objections of certain CAECs might be lessened.22

In a subsequent note dated 4 October 1947, commenting on the above memo, another Ministry of Agriculture official stated that as long as the scheme was viewed as a temporary measure, there would be less of a problem selling it: "From our point of view the men are more like civilianized German prisoners than Poles or EVW."23 Clearly the initial objections made by the Ministry of Agriculture hinged upon the colour of the St. Helenians, and the difficulties that might arise from local resistance to their presence. The fact that they were British subjects and that they spoke English and in many other ways shared a British culture, seemed to be less important. This attitude contrasts with objections made against EVWs and Polish servicemen, which tended to hinge upon their inability to speak English, and their alien culture. Interestingly, it was thought

22 PRO MAF 186/24: Internal memo by A.E. Johns, 3 October 1947.

23 PRO MAF 186/24: Internal memo by Dunnett, 4 October 1947.
more important to separate both the St. Helenians and the EVWs from the British populace in the countryside, than it was to separate them from each other. Both were considered foreign (though for different reasons) and therefore to be lumped together in hostel accommodations. The main difference was that in time the Polish servicemen and EVWs could be assimilated into the British nation through intermarriage and the adoption of British customs and language. The St. Helenians, legally British though they were, could never really be assimilated into the British nation.

The NUAW also expressed opposition to the scheme on the basis of race. Yet despite all of these objections, arrangements were discussed through the spring of 1948. In the interval the arrival of the Empire Windrush raised the question of race even more prominently. The arrival of the Windrush prompted some officials to suggest the need for a more restrictive colonial migration policy. The recruitment of St. Helenians was meanwhile justified by arguing that they were more acceptable in a racial sense than were the "Windrushers." The Colonial Office had stressed that the St. Helenians were "so markedly more akin to the European than the West Indian and the African" and were more "industrious" and "of a type much more likely to be favourably received in this country." But the argument that the St. Helenians were not "as coloured" as the West Indians arriving on the Windrush seemed to raise the question of a colour bar or racial hierarchy which might in the end prove embarrassing to the government. This point was made in a memo from the Treasury to the Ministry of Labour, in June

24 PRO MAF 186/24: Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to Bartlett, dated 29 November 1947: It was noted that the General Secretary of the NUAW, Alfred Dann, had objected to the St. Helenian scheme on the basis of the men's colour, stating that "we cannot agree to the importation of this type of labour on to the British countryside."

25 PRO MAF 186/24: Mackay to Bevan, 29 June 1948.
1948. While the government sought to discourage others from following the Windrushers, the inconsistency of sponsoring St. Helenian migration might leave them open to charges of racism.\textsuperscript{26} Taking note of this point, the Colonial Office informed the Treasury in September 1948 that a Working Party was to be set up to discuss the question of colonial migration and employment in the U.K., and the St. Helena situation would be considered in this context.\textsuperscript{27}

The discussion of colonial migration was obviously very pertinent to the St. Helenian scheme. It will suffice here to note that the decision taken by that Working Party, and by subsequent committees examining the issue, was that although there were potential difficulties involved, the scale of colonial (read: Black) migration to Britain was so small that it did not merit any sort of action which might prove detrimental to colonial relations. Prior to the delivery of this conclusion, however, the St. Helena situation grew more dire, and it was decided to consider the scheme separately from the Working Party's deliberations.\textsuperscript{28} At a meeting of interested departments held on 23 February 1949, the decision was taken to go ahead with the St. Helena scheme on a limited basis.\textsuperscript{29} It was to be a one off venture and not the thin end of the wedge, a concern voiced primarily by Ministry of Labour representatives. It was agreed that the St. Helenians would be offered contracts similar to those offered to EVWs and other foreign recruits. Contracts would run for an initial period of two years, with repatriation costs paid by the government at

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., letter from A.W. Gaminara (Colonial Office) to A. Mackay (Treasury), dated 8 September 1948.

\textsuperscript{28} PRO MAF 186/24: Colonial Office memo to Mackay, 31 January 1949.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., memo from Mackay to H.E.O. Hughes (Home Office), dated 22 March 1949.
the end of that period if the man chose to return to St. Helena.

There was, however, a reluctance to see the St. Helenians return to the island with their accumulated savings after their contract expired, in part because such a triumphant return might encourage mass colonial migration to Britain, and in part because this venture was after all intended as a somewhat permanent solution to the problems of overpopulation and underemployment in St. Helena. The ideal scenario envisioned by the Colonial Office was that the men would choose to settle in the U.K. permanently. However, there was also the feeling that announcing this goal at the outset would make it difficult to return any unsuitable or undesirable men, especially as they were British subjects and thus entitled to stay on in Britain if they wished. It was therefore agreed that the goal of permanent settlement would not be stated initially: "The best thing would be to intend and hope for a permanent emigration but not to announce it." 30

Preference in selection would be given to single men, as they were thought to be more likely to settle, although married men would also be accepted. The Colonial Office gave assurances that the St. Helenians would easily integrate into British society, and that they would not congregate in urban centres, as did West Indians and Africans. This assurance probably had much to do with the fact that St. Helena had no urban centre, and the men would come from a decidedly pastoral lifestyle. In a sense this assurance spoke to the fear that control over these recruits would be difficult, and that they might drift off into non-essential work, or otherwise slip out of state supervision.

The decision to proceed with the scheme having been taken, attention turned to the question of housing arrangements. The central issue was whether to house all the men together in one

30 Ibid.
hostel, or whether to disperse them broadly. It had been suggested at the outset of discussion that the men should be dispersed among EVWs in hostels, in order to deflect tensions that might arise with the local population over colour prejudice. In a letter from H.C. Goodall of the Berkshire Labour Office to the Ministry of Agriculture on 1 April 1949, it was noted that "quite possibly the people in the nearest village to the hostel will have something to say if they find that the coloured men are the only men in their area." Goodall suggested that the men be dispersed in groups of ten among EVW hostels, in order to avoid an undue concentration that might attract attention. Counter suggestions had argued that this sort of dispersal might cause more trouble and that the men should be concentrated. In the event it was decided that the St. Helenians were to be divided between three CAECs, with forty going to Warwickshire, and thirty each to Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

In response to Goodall's letter the Ministry of Agriculture pointed out that the men "were British Subjects, speaking English, and their presence ought to be as acceptable, if not more so, as that of EVWs." Yet despite this assertion the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Labour clung to the notion that the St. Helenians should be segregated in hostels, despite the fact that they were ultimately to be settled in Britain. In Warwickshire, for example, the forty St. Helenians were to be housed in one hostel (at Gaydon), and the 19 British workers living there were to be moved out. Again the important thing seemed to be to separate those who were

31 Ibid., T.H. Goodall to H.C. Marjoram, 1 April 1949.
32 Ibid., internal memo dated 3 April 1949.
33 PRO MAF 186/24: Marjoram to Goodall, 6 April 1949.
34 Ibid., correspondence between Warwickshire AEC and T.J. Marjoram, 29 March and 12 April 1949.
considered foreign from the indigenous population in order to avoid anticipated troubles.

The St. Helenians were also to be lumped in with the EVWs in another respect. The NUAW wished to count them as part of the quota of foreign workers agreed for the industry. The Ministry of Labour initially resisted this request. In June of 1949 the Berkshire AEC wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture Labour Supply branch asking that the St. Helenians not be sent them, as they were in danger of exceeding the quota of 750 foreign workers agreed with the NUAW. The reply from the Ministry of Agriculture was that the men were already on their way, and that if necessary some EVWs could be removed in order to remain within the target. The point had thus been conceded: the St. Helenians were indeed to be considered foreign workers. Moreover, though EVWs "could be scattered" among other CAECs, it was thought necessary to keep the St. Helenians together, presumably so that they could give each other comfort and maintain a semblance of their cultural routine. Here again there seemed to be a contradiction between the goal of integration, and the notion that the St. Helenians could not hope to be easily accepted and assimilated into British society.

Several other questions regarding the contract to be offered St. Helenians were left to be ironed out. Because the scheme was essentially a Colonial Office initiative meant to address the poor conditions in St. Helena, it was thought imperative that the men be made to remit some portion of their

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35 Ibid., correspondence between Berkshire AEC and Ministry of Agriculture, dated: 1, 9, 10, June 1949.

36 The St. Helenians were also accompanied by a complement of domestics -- cooks and orderlies -- to run the hostels for them. Contrast this with the requests of Austrian or EVW recruits for their own cooks, often turned down by the government on the basis that the workers would sooner assimilate if they grew accustomed to English food and customs.
pay to family back in St. Helena on a regular basis. However it was not legally possible to write a mandatory remittance of pay clause into the contract. Instead a paragraph was inserted stating that "Workers will be expected to remit money for their families or dependents in St. Helena". This clause, it was hoped, would be enough to convince most of the men that remittance was mandatory. In addition the men were encouraged by the recruiting officer in St. Helena -- on orders from the Colonial Office -- to sign a form allowing a remittance to be automatically deducted from their pay. In the end nominal rolls from the Berkshire district showed that all but four of the men had signed such an agreement.

The Colonial Office also wanted to provide the St. Helenians with some spending money to tide them through the period before they actually began work and collected their first pay in the U.K. In April 1949 the Colonial Office suggested that a sum of four pounds per man be set aside: one to be doled out upon embarking in St. Helena, one upon disembarking in the U.K., and two more for the period until they could get settled. The Treasury was reluctant to agree to this sum, not because the figure would be so great (400 pounds in all), but because the men would thus not have as great an incentive to work immediately. A memo from the Treasury to the Colonial Office stated: "We consider everything possible must be done to encourage the men to start work as soon as possible after their arrival at the hostels, and human nature being weak, one of the best ways of doing this is to keep down pocket money." It was noted that 2 pounds represented two weeks pay for "arduous" work in St. Helena. The suggestion here was that

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38 Ibid., Note from Colonial Office to St. Helena Labour Officer, dated 29 June 1949.

39 Ibid., F.T. Hallett to H.E.O. Hughes, 2 May 1949.
the men might be spoiled if they received such a bounty instantly. In the end it was agreed that the four hundred pounds would be set aside by the Treasury, but would only be doled out in cases of emergency.

The wording of the contract was also revised as it went through the stages of drafting, with references to "Health and Unemployment Insurance" changed to "National Insurance", and the term "British" -- as in "rights of British workers" and "British rates of income tax" -- being changed to "United Kingdom". One effect of the changed wording seemed to be to obfuscate the nature of the rights which the St. Helenians could claim; national insurance is a much more vague term than unemployment insurance. Another effect would be to distinguish between British and United Kingdom subjects, again illustrating the dichotomy between residents of the U.K. and British subjects in the broader, formal sense. In fact in all three of these questions regarding the contract -- repatriation, remittance of pay, and provision of spending money -- there seems to have been a desire to keep the St. Helenians unsure of their status and security in the U.K.

The St. Helenians arrived in the U.K. in August 1949. By early September the first reports of their settling in were arriving at the Ministry of Agriculture.40 These reports were mixed. In Oxfordshire the men seemed to be settling in nicely. The small, market farmers were pleased with the St. Helenians because they spoke English. Such farming as there was in St.Helena was of the market garden variety, and no doubt the men were more easily able to adapt to the rhythms of this type of agriculture.41 It was even reported that the men were quite

40 Ibid., summary of first reports by C.W.L. Purkis, dated 9 September 1949.

adept at playing soccer, which indicated that they were already mixing in with the local populace. The Berkshire CAEC's report was not nearly so favourable. H.C. Goodall of the Berkshire CAEC reported that the St.Helenians were too small and "primitive", and were not worth the 94s/wk minimum wage that they were getting. It was difficult, he said, for the Committee to find them work at this rate, which was the minimum for "Englishmen" but should not be for "these unskilled darkies." He recommended that the St.Helenians be dispersed so that they might be sent out in mixed crews, with one St.Helenian to three Englishmen. In this way they might learn the job more quickly and farmers would be more easily persuaded to accept them. A Ministry of Agriculture report on these returns soft-pedalled Goodall's criticisms, noting that he had also been troublesome with regard to German and Italian POW at first; by the time they were being repatriated, Goodall was pleading for them to be kept on. Still, the memo noted that several farmers had complained at the lack of size of the "black boys", and that work in the Berkshire area where they were stationed was at a slack period. Although the report rejected Goodall's proposal to disperse the St.Helenians -- the men knew each other and had come over together, and as such were a comfort to one another -- it did contemplate the transfer of the men to Oxfordshire.

A further Ministry of Agriculture internal memo in


44 Ibid., summary of reports by C.W.L. Purkis, dated 9 September 1949.
September noted that there was "a certain amount of feeling against coloured people around that area (i.e. Berkshire), as there were many coloured men in the U.S. Forces stationed there, and this has not made matters easy in placing them." Although in general the scheme seems to have begun well, the notion of shifting the St. Helenians from Berkshire to Oxfordshire looked to be an unavoidable solution, and in a note to Goodall in late September, the Ministry of Agriculture stated that this would be done as soon as possible. By the end of the month, the men had been moved to Oxfordshire. Thus the reluctance to participate in the scheme shown by the Berkshire CAEC from the outset of the proposal was stubbornly maintained even after the arrival of the St. Helenians. In the end this stubbornness seems to have succeeded. Objections to the men were couched in terms of their ineffectiveness as workers, but from the Ministry of Agriculture's point of view the reason for removing them from Berkshire had more to do with the colour prejudice prevalent in the county, and the desire to avoid friction with the local farmers and community.

Berkshire was not the only area from which warnings about racial friction emanated. In a letter sent in September 1949 to W.J. Brown (M.P. for the Warwickshire district where Gaydon Hostel was located), R.H. Verney, a retired Air Commodore living in the district, wrote of the potential for problems resulting from the St. Helenians' presence. He noted that he was writing on the advice of John Profumo, then a prospective candidate in the new Stratford-on-Avon and South Warwickshire Division. Verney referred to the St. Helenians as "West Africans", a somewhat dubious categorization. Interestingly, Verney didn't seem to know anything about the scheme, and was in fact asking the government for more information. He had


46 Ibid., Purkis to Goodall, 23 September 1949.
heard from rumours that there were some forty St. Helenians. He expressed the concern that these men would have a lower "standard of living" and thus might undermine existing social relations.47

Far from being content to work for less than the British standard, however, some of the St. Helenian men were restive about being paid too little for their efforts. Goodall had complained that the wages being paid the St. Helenians were excessive given the contribution they were making. The wage to which he referred -- of 94s./wk -- was the full wage given to men over the age of 21. However many of the St.Helenians were under this age and so were making as low as 64s./wk. As a Ministry of Agriculture report noted, the younger men felt this to be unfair: "...in that island, they mature very quickly and ... nearly all those men ... are married and have two children and they tell me they consider themselves men and entitled to a full wage as soon as they get married."48 For most of the 18 to 19 yr. olds, the balance left after paying lodging costs and remittances home (which averaged 30s./wk), was around 10 to 12 s./wk. With winter coming and supplies and clothing to buy, it was feared that this amount would not be enough, and the men might have to resort to "stealing" or some form of "black market" activity to get more money. The author of the above report, C.W.L. Purkis, therefore recommended that all the recruits be paid the full men's wage. Here the concern was not whether the St.Helenians were worth the money, or whether they would be easy to place with local farmers, but rather that they not be enticed into the underground economy, and away from government control. There also seemed to be an assumption here that the St. Helenians would have a propensity for illegal behaviour, and also that they were clearly different -- "they

48 Ibid., Report by C.W.L. Purkis, 14 September 1949.
mature faster" -- and were therefore to be treated as a special case. There is no question that once the returns had started to come in, the pretence that the St. Helenians were not really "black" was dropped, as obviously the Berkshire respondents continued to view them as such.

There were several other questions around the matter of rates of pay for St. Helenians. Should any of the men find private employment, the mechanism for deducting remittances was uncertain. Should any of the men fall sick and require any sort of social assistance, again the deduction of remittances would be in doubt. Under existing rules the St. Helenians would not be eligible for sick pay benefit for the first three months; after this period they would be eligible for 5 weeks benefit at full pay and then four at half pay. After six months they were eligible for National Insurance, but in any case it was doubtful if this would be enough money from which to pay a remittance. Given these concerns it was thought that some sort of special arrangement with the St. Helena authorities might be necessary. In November 1949 a telegram was sent to St. Helena by the Ministry of Agriculture outlining a scheme whereby in the event of sickness the man's family would be supported out of the St. Helenian unemployment insurance fund. The amount thus paid would be retrieved by the CAEC from the man's wages in weekly instalments of 5s. when he recommenced work. Of course the man's consent would be necessary, but there were clearly ways to get around that.\textsuperscript{49}

Towards the end of 1949 the question of sick pay arose with respect to two St. Helenians who were suffering from stomach ulcers. The initial diagnosis was that the men would be unable to work for an indefinite period. Under the circumstances the Ministry of Labour advised that the best course would be to repatriate them. However as the men were British subjects they

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., Telegram #143 to St. Helena, sent on 10 November 1949.
would have to consent to repatriation since, after all, they had a right to stay. An interview was to be arranged with the two in order to get their consent. A memo from the Ministry of Labour to the Colonial Office suggested that a Ministry of Labour representative should not attend this interview as their very presence might "tend to divert the men's ideas to an alternative which under the circumstances would hardly be appropriate." In other words, the St. Helenians might get the idea that they could stay in the U.K. and that they could look for another job.

As long as the men stayed in segregated hostel accommodation in the countryside, their presence did not seem to constitute a threat to public order, except in the sense that the odd incident might take place at the hostel or in a nearby town, and the St. Helenians would get the worst of it. But faced with the possibility that the men might move into a larger conurbation and compete with "British" workers for jobs and amenities, the Ministry of Labour began to alter its somewhat favourable position on the presence of the St. Helenians in the U.K. The Colonial Office had all along tried to sell this scheme as a means of permanently readjusting the St. Helenian population equilibrium, and so were much more anxious to see the men resettled in Britain. As in many other cases in which the Ministry of Labour had to deal indirectly with foreign labour questions, their preferred method was to be coy about exactly what rights the workers in question enjoyed. From the start of this scheme there was a sense that the St. Helenians could be manipulated through suggestion and disingenuousness, and that in fact they must be manipulated in this way because there was really no concrete, legal mechanism in place to control them.

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50 PRO MAF 186/25: Keith (Ministry of Labour) to Hughes (Colonial Office), 10 December 1949.
In February 1950 the Warwickshire contingent of St. Helenians was also transferred to Oxfordshire, where there was more work for them. Gaydon Hostel was closed down. In May a report on the men, who now comprised one fourth of the four hundred strong Oxfordshire CAEC force, noted that about twenty of them had been sick with the flu. This was taken as a sign that they were having difficulty with a "real English winter". Complaints from farmers, it was noted, revolved around "stature and colour", and there was some difficulty in placing the men. Only two of the St. Helenians were causing real trouble, and these, perhaps tellingly, were the two -- brothers as it turned out -- who had earlier complained of suffering from ulcers. These two were considered bad apples, and had been separated from their compatriots and placed in an EVW hostel in Broadwell. It was noted that the disciplinary action had had an effect on the other St. Helenians: "there were lots of tears and apparently it has put the wind up them."52

By the summer of 1950 the question of the future dispensation of the St. Helenians was being broached. In a meeting of Colonial Office, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Labour representatives at the Colonial Office in July, various questions of policy were raised, including how and when the subject of permanent settlement should be brought up with the men, and what arrangements could be made to ensure continuing remittances if the men left for private employment.53 On the latter question it was thought that "some sort of control" should be maintained, although it was noted that this "control" would have to be "influence" rather than any sort of legal binding. The concerns of the

51 Ibid., B.E. Butler (Warwickshire AEC) to D.W. Peddie (Ministry of Agriculture), dated 31 January 1950.
52 Ibid., Internal memo by C.W.L. Purkis dated 4 May 1950.
53 Ibid., Meeting dated 13 July 1950.
Interdepartmental Committee on Colonial Peoples in the U.K. regarding the possibility that migrants of colour would be unable to find work and would therefore drift into colonial ghettos, were also raised.\textsuperscript{54} It was agreed that a representative panel would interview each of the St. Helenians "as a first step in determining whether they can be placed in permanent employment."

The timing of the interviews needed some thought as well. At the end of October a Ministry of Labour note to the Colonial Office suggested that early December might be the best time to approach the St. Helenians regarding their future in the U.K.\textsuperscript{55} An earlier approach might interfere with the year's harvest. A later one might mislead farmers into believing that the men would be available for another year. As all the men were by now in Oxfordshire, and comprised one fifth of the Committee labour force there, it was desirous that a gradual drift into other employment be encouraged. A mass exodus of the St. Helenians would be problematic. However it was intended that all CAECs be wound down by 1952, and all the men should have found alternate arrangements by then. The interviews, it was decided, were to take place between 15 and 17 December 1950. It was agreed that if the men were willing to stay on a few extra months past the expiry of their contracts in August 1951, to help with the harvest, then they would still be eligible for repatriation at government expense.\textsuperscript{56}

In December a report of the interviews issued by the Oxfordshire CAEC ranked the St. Helenians.\textsuperscript{57} Seventy seven of

\textsuperscript{54} For the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Colonial People in the U.K. that raises this concern, see CPUK(50)23, 10 August 1950.

\textsuperscript{55} PRO MAF 186/25: Kearns to Hughes, 28 October 1950.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., meeting at Colonial Office, dated 24 November 1950.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., Oxfordshire AEC report dated 21 December 1950.
the men were rated good to moderate, and twenty were rated undesirable. Only ten of these were considered "hard core" -- that is, they kept cropping up in complaints from police and employers regarding laziness or disorderly conduct. Thirty six of the men definitely wished to be repatriated; six were doubtful and 53 had decided to remain. Of the 36 that wished to return to St. Helena, 20 said they would be willing to stay until the end of 1951 to help with the year's harvest. Of the men who wished to remain, most expressed a desire to switch to some sort of industrial work such as carpentry or mechanics. In St. Helena the wage rates for industrial work were higher than the average agricultural wages, and although it was noted that the St. Helenians did not know much about industrial conditions in the U.K., they most likely believed that the same situation would prevail there. The Oxfordshire CAEC suggested that the men would need help in finding work and accommodation in an urban setting, and recommended that they be kept together in small groups in order to help with loneliness and difficulty in acculturation. They also recommended that repatriation be staggered in order to avoid the "very serious social problems" that might arise from their return to St. Helena en masse.

At a meeting of the interested departments in early February 1951 it was agreed that the 53 men who had decided to stay should be registered with the Local Office of the Ministry of Labour at once, and found work by 31 May. In this way they would not be withdrawn from their CAEC duties in mid-season, and they would have a chance to experience three months or so of their new jobs and still change their minds and take advantage of the government repatriation offer. The Colonial Welfare Office would keep tabs on the men and any who lost their jobs could be returned to their CAEC pools up to 31 October 1951. The 10 undesirables would have their contracts

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58 See Great Britain Colonial Office Report on St. Helena, 1947-1951. HMSO.
automatically terminated, although it was noted that these men knew that, as British citizens, they could stay in the U.K. if they wished.\textsuperscript{59}

By the middle of June most of the men registered with the Ministry of Labour had been found work. Of the men left in CAEC employ and wishing repatriation there were 17 left. Many of the men had changed their minds since December, and decided to stay, and the staggering of repatriation meant that only a handful of men were shipped to St. Helena in the preceding months.\textsuperscript{60} It appears as though the weather may have influenced the men's decisions, and as the winter wore off fewer found themselves irretrievably homesick.

The post-mortem reports of the scheme, compiled in the fall of 1952 from the several CAECs involved, rated the scheme "fair".\textsuperscript{61} The reports stressed that the climate was against the men, and that some of them were too young and others too old to cope easily with the move. There was no allusion made to the difficulties raised by local farmers and residents with respect to the men's colour. Perhaps these problems waned somewhat with the transfer of the men to Oxfordshire. Interestingly, the Colonial Office report on St. Helena for the year 1949 noted that the savings on unemployment relief that resulted from the migration of the 100 men was offset by the cost --- put at L.7,800 --- spent on their transportation to the U.K.\textsuperscript{62} In the end the scheme seems not to have made much of a dent in the difficulties faced by St. Helena.

Its effect in the U.K. was also negligible. What is of

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., Meeting dated 7 February 1951.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., J.e. Thomas (Colonial Office) to D. Fullbrook (Ministry of Labour), dated 5 June 1951.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., Report dated November 1952.

\textsuperscript{62} Great Britain Colonial Office Report on St. Helena, op.cit.
interest are the assumptions made with respect to the assimilability of the St. Helenians, and the policies put in place to manipulate and control their behaviour. From a bureaucratic perspective the scheme was intended to relieve conditions in St. Helena. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture had both to be sold the proposal by the Colonial Office. Once in place, the mechanisms for remittances and access to the services of the welfare state took first priority. The difficulty for the Ministry of Labour in dealing with these men was that they were British subjects, and while they had to be controlled, the control had thus to be exercised in a somewhat covert fashion. Their rights as British subjects, particularly at a time when the government was seeking to unify the Commonwealth around the British Nationality Act of 1948, had to be respected if pressed. The only way to avoid having to grant troublesome freedoms and privileges to those men who were not entirely compliant was to keep them in a state of ignorance as to the exact nature of the rights they enjoyed.

The response of the local CAECs to the scheme, particularly in Berkshire, showed more than a hint of colour prejudice. Several justifications were given to excuse this bigotry. The men were too small and weak; the local citizenry had had a bad experience of black G.I.s during the war; there might be trouble with other migrant workers and settlers such as EVWs and Polish ex-servicemen. It was also feared that this scheme might set a precedent for a wave of coloured migration from other parts of the Empire and Commonwealth. In the end all these considerations affected the working of the scheme, with arrangements being exceedingly secretive at first, and then quite responsive to any sort of adverse reaction on the part of the local population. The movement of the men to Oxfordshire, where the least amount of friction was manifest, was an example of the sensitivity that government officials involved in the scheme had for the prejudices and sensibilities of the rural English population.
Perhaps the closest precedent for the St. Helenian scheme was the recruitment of some 850 British Honduran forestry workers during the second World War. Like the St. Helenian scheme, the Honduran scheme was meant to alleviate high levels of unemployment and destitution in British Honduras, as much as it was meant to provide much needed labour in the U.K. Both schemes were Colonial Office initiatives, and in both cases the Colonial Office had to give assurances that the colour of the recruits would not be an overwhelming social problem. In both cases the recruits were British subjects rather than foreigners. Both schemes revealed deep seated colour prejudice in official handling of the men and in their reception in the U.K. And yet the St. Helenian scheme took place in a very changed social and political context, and ultimately revealed an evolved conception of British citizenship and national identity.

The Hondurans, as Marika Sherwood's careful study has shown, were subject to much harsher terms of control than were the St. Helenians. Their pay was at the low end of the scale permissible for unskilled labour. They were carefully and restrictively segregated in remote parts of northern Scotland, and they were subject to forcible repatriation at any time that their performance or behaviour was deemed unsatisfactory. In the event most of the men were repatriated in 1943, as a result of complaints centering around issues of miscegenation and public health risks. This sort of control was not possible in the late 1940's, and not only because of the abatement of wartime conditions. The treatment of St. Helenians differed because of the changed status of colonial subjects in Britain.

in the postwar period.

The critical difference in the status of colonial subjects in the U.K. was manifested in the 1948 British Nationality Act. Kathleen Paul's recent work, as was noted in the introductory chapter, presents the 1948 Act as an attempt by the British government to consolidate its position of leadership at the centre of the emerging Commonwealth by asserting the right of Commonwealth citizens and colonial subjects to full citizenship rights in the U.K. Paul argues that by confirming the universality of British and Commonwealth citizenship, the 1948 legislation also affirmed the dichotomy between a formal code of British citizenship and an informal code of British national identity. The formal code defined nationality in legalistic terms, and was therefore objective and, in this sense, inclusive. The informal code comprised mythical and ethnic definitions of national identity, and was exclusive. The informal code worked to offset the inclusiveness of the formal definition of citizenship.

At the same time, the comprehensiveness of the postwar welfare state reflected a qualitative change in the perception of British citizenship. The relationship between the government and the citizen was in a sense turned on its head, with the emphasis of rights and privileges overtaking in importance the notions of responsibility and of service to the state. It was this relationship which T.H. Marshall characterized as social citizenship, a definition which David Morgan and Mary Evans have built upon in a recent book on citizenship and ideology in the Second World War. Morgan and Evans argue that the

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64 Kathleen Paul, "'British Subjects' and 'British Stock': Labour's Postwar Imperialism", in *Journal of British Studies*, v.34,#2(April 1995).

collectivism of the war effort facilitated a universalist notion of citizenship rights and entitlements. In essence the sacrifices made by the British people had earned them the rights of social citizenship. Robin Cohen has similarly described the citizenship conferred by the 1948 Act as "passively received legal categorization." The rhetoric of the welfare state was universal, and in this sense social citizenship was levelling of distinctions of class and entitlement.

On the other hand, the universality of the welfare state also placed a greater emphasis on distinguishing between those that belonged to the community and those that did not. Although elements of the welfare state were open to every inhabitant of the U.K. regardless of citizenship status -- the NHS is the best example of this -- the contractual model of the welfare state implied a greater emphasis on the determination of the parameters of the national community. On a popular level, for example, aliens had to be seen to be earning the extended privileges that the new citizenship conferred. Thus, as Paul points out, there was also an informal code which defined status within the community in less tangible, more subjective ways. Paul points out the rhetorical distinction between British "subject" and British "citizen" as illustrative of the separation of formal and informal status. The 1948 Act had eliminated the difference between the two; but the persistence of the dichotomy in official discourse shows that there were extra-legal criteria involved in the definition of the national community. This is the sense in which Paul describes the


67 For more on the contractual nature of the postwar welfare state see Jose Harris, "Contract and Citizenship" in Marquand and Seldon, eds., op.cit.
construction of "separate spheres of Britishness."

The difference between these separate spheres can be likened to the distinction between Britishness and Englishness. In an essay on the connection between imperial decline and the resurgence of English identity, Paul Rich discussed the idea that a mythical conception of Englishness -- begun in the inter-war period and centred around a romantic rural idyll of English life -- served to construct a definition of English identity which was racially and culturally homogeneous, and therefore exclusionary. The official concern with coloured immigration in the 1940's and 1950's, Rich argues, reflected the ascendency of this conception of English national identity. Immigrants of colour could not be integrated into the English nation because they "did not share the same cultural values as the surrounding society." Rich's description of a mythical English identity jibes with Stephen Haseler's description of a "theme park Englishness" that was based upon rather twee images and icons, and that was overlaid on some of the planks that had supported the Englishness of empire (racial superiority and conquest most prominent among these). The same sort of English chauvinism, it has been pointed out, has been employed as a hegemonic ideology within the United Kingdom itself. The life of the country squire and the stout yeoman may have been very far removed from the experience of most of the inhabitants.


69 Rich, op.cit.,p.47.


of the U.K., but such stereotypes formed the cultural paradigm to replace an imperial identity which itself had been constructed in spite of the lived experience of the majority of the population. Rich argues that the myth of the rural idyll was constructed to replace a faltering imperial identity. It is interesting to note in this regard that Martin Weiner has argued that the myth of the rural idyll had an earlier genesis in the 19th century, and was constructed in opposition to the industrial reality.\textsuperscript{72}

Both Rich and Haseler's depiction of the construction of Englishness around a racialized, rural idyll is particularly relevant to the St. Helenian scheme. The skin tone of the St. Helenians was clearly the main official concern with respect to their integration into the English countryside. Englishness was in turn the defining identity within what Paul calls the informal community of Britishness.\textsuperscript{73} The significance of racialization to the definition of Englishness was thus an important exclusionary factor in the informal definition of Britishness. Its significance can be seen in the parliamentary references to European migrants as being of the right "racial stock" to assimilate into British life.\textsuperscript{74} The EVWs and Polish servicemen, although they spoke no English and came from very different cultural backgrounds, could hope to assimilate eventually and become British, if not in the first generation then certainly in the next. In this sense they were the same as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} Keith Robbins, \textit{History of Religion and Ideology in Modern Britain}, (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), Chapter Four, also discusses the predominance and centrality of Englishness in the national identification of Britishness.
\item \textsuperscript{74} See, for example, the main debate on foreign labour recruitment in the House of Commons in February 1947, as cited in Kay, op.cit., among others.
\end{itemize}
all the peoples -- conquerors and conquered -- who had assimilated into the British nation. The St. Helenians, although they were British in culture and spoke English, could not fulfill the basic clauses of Englishness and therefore could never become assimilated into the informal British nation. The decision to segregate them in "sterilized" hostels reflects this train of thought. Where the goal for the Europeans was assimilation, the government made every effort to get the immigrants to integrate, to spread out into private accommodation and to mix with the population. The St. Helenians were actively discouraged from doing so.

In an article on the "Coloured Alien Seaman" Order of 1925, Laura Tabili stressed that the construction of racial difference -- "the definition of race and nationality" -- is an official process undertaken to meet the interests of elites in specific historical circumstances. Notions of racial difference are thus "positional" and constructed rather than natural to the species. In this instance the government's policy of requiring black sailors to produce documentation of their British nationality or else be classified as aliens, constructed a racial definition of Britishness which was then accepted or contested publicly. As circumstances change, argued Tabili, the definition of nationality and racial difference can change in order to suit the agenda of the day. Such a change is manifest in the move from the definition of nationality embodied in the 1925 Order -- which was exclusive -- to that of the 1948 Nationality Act -- which was inclusive. While Tabili's

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article dealt with what Paul called the formal code of national identity at a time when it was made restrictive, the interplay between formal and informal codes of nationality became more dynamic and significant under the circumstances of the postwar period, when the formal definition of nationality was made less restrictive.

In the case of the St. Helenians, while the informal coding excluded them from becoming fully British, their inclusion in the formal definition of British citizenship under the welfare state meant that they had certain rights, and it was these rights that threatened to limit the government's ability to control and manipulate their behaviour and movement within the U.K. This was the issue that was discussed at length by the Committee on Colonial Migration to the U.K. In several instances the question of control arose with respect to the St. Helenians. Unlike the Honduran workers, whose control was facilitated by the enhanced power of the state under war time conditions, the St. Helenians were free to remain in Britain if they desired. They were free to seek other employment and accommodation. They could not be made to remit any of their wages if they chose not to. In short they were free to exercise any right that a British citizen enjoyed. This also made their situation different than the EVWs that they were nominally thrown together with for purposes of administration. 77

Although the Colonial Office desired that the St. Helenians settle in the U.K. permanently, the Home Office and the Ministry of Labour both worried about losing control of the

77 It should be noted that EVWs too presented a problem of control for the government in that there was no real place to repatriate them should they prove unsatisfactory. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) did agree to the return of miscreant or unsuitable workers to the camps within a specified period (18 months), but this was thought to be a bad policy to practice on too large a scale for reasons of morale in the camps. Of 74,511 recruits under the two major EVW schemes, 3,574 returned to the camps, many of them deported by the government. See: Tannahill, op.cit., p.74.
migration process, not only of these 100 men, but of colonial subjects of colour in general. The Ministry of Labour's response to this situation was to bluff the St. Helenians about the exact nature of their status in Britain. Thus the men were not informed at the outset of the scheme that the purpose was to resettle them permanently in the U.K. This might have made it trickier to repatriate any that the government deemed undesirable. At interviews with the men the Ministry of Labour was careful not to imply that alternative courses of action were open -- such as for example changing jobs. When several "bad apples" threatened to reveal the tenuousness of government control, they were banished to a distant hostel. In short, part of the strategy of control exercised by the Ministry of Labour was to obfuscate the rights and status of the St. Helenian recruits in the U.K.

At another level the informal coding process also helped to restrict the rights and status of the St. Helenians in the U.K. It has been pointed out that while European migrant labour recruited to settle in the U.K. presented officials with their own set of "problems", the possibility of maintaining fairly rigid controls, and the view that they were racially compatible went some way toward alleviating concern. For colonial migrants of colour it was necessary to exercise informal control, through what Robert Miles has termed "racialization", because of the lack of formal controls that could be placed upon them.78 The reluctance of some farmers to hire the St. Helenians from the CAECs, and the government's acquiescence to such discrimination, clearly restricted the St. Helenians' sense of possibilities in the U.K., and contributed to keeping them under the control of the government departments that sponsored them.

In a sense then the St. Helenian scheme shows elements of

both the formal and informal control mechanisms at work. The
scheme imitated the forms used in other foreign labour
recruitment schemes, implying controls which drew their
legitimacy from a bureaucratic, legalistic definition of
citizenship. Given the status of the St. Helenians as British
citizens, this process of implication, of the suggestion of
control, was all that was possible. Government machinations to
maintain this false aura of control, and their readiness to
distinguish between levels of British community, show the way
in which informal codes of national identity worked to limit
the universality of citizenship under the welfare state.
Chapter Four: Female Foreign Workers

The most pressing shortages of workers in the immediate postwar period occurred in traditionally female occupations. While men returned to work from the services, women who had been pressed into industrial work looked to leave it in peace time.\(^1\) A Ministry of Labour working paper on economic prospects noted, in the spring of 1947, that the low inter-war birth rate boded ill for the prospect of reversing the trend of labour shortages in traditionally female work. Women were most involved in the workforce between the ages of 20 and 25, and it was in this age group that the low birth rate was manifest in the late 1940's. The Ministry thus predicted that the textile industry, where specific jobs were highly gendered, would become the "most important single man-power problem" in the next few years.\(^2\) The government had already begun to address other areas of female labour shortages by 1947. The initial motivation for recruiting Displaced Persons, for example, was to staff up nursing and domestic positions. The gendered nature of work in the U.K., coupled with the demographic circumstances of the postwar labour market, and traditional social patterns of behaviour among the working classes (such as the intermittent work pattern of women), combined to create a specific labour shortage which the government sought to redress through foreign recruitment.

There was, however, a general shortage of the sorts of women that the government deemed suitable for recruitment, and the EVW recruitment schemes in the end featured many more men

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than women. The Ministry of Labour specified that female recruits should be young (in most cases below the age of 35), unattached (if not single), and without dependents. Checks were also to be made against their "moral character", as well as criminal record and physical health. As the field of recruits defined in this way became exhausted in the British zone of Germany, recruitment was extended to the American and French zones, and to Austria. By the spring of 1949, the EVW recruitment mechanism was exclusively focused on women workers; no male EVWs were brought to the U.K. after May 1949. Still, the number of women recruited under the auspices of the EVW schemes was not great enough to satisfy the demand, and recruitment schemes had also to be undertaken in other European countries, most significantly in Italy.

The several schemes outside of the EVW orbit went by different operational titles. The "North Sea" and "Blue Danube" schemes, begun in mid-1948, were meant to bring German and Austrian women to work in hospitals and sanatoria; the Private Domestic Workers (PDW) scheme, begun in mid-1949, targeted the same source for domestic work; the Nursing Employment (NE) scheme was later added onto the PDW scheme to recruit nurse trainees and assistants as well; and Italian women were recruited to the textile industry from 1949 to 1951. Many of the recruits in these schemes had not qualified under the EVW scheme for a variety of reasons. For German women, the reasons for previous exclusion had to do with nationality definitions and political considerations. German women, whether considered

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3 Diana Kay lists Home Office figures which show, as of 31 December 1950, that of 73,665 European Volunteer Workers brought to the U.K., 54,713 were men. See Diana Kay and Robert Miles, Refugees or Migrant Workers?, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.43.

4 Ibid., pp.39-42.

nationals of a truncated, postwar West German state, or merely ethnically German, were subject to social prejudice and official restriction in the immediate postwar years. Uncertainty over their national status in the aftermath of the war exacerbated the complications involved in the recruitment of such women. Moreover, there was official uncertainty as to whether many ethnic German women could be classified as refugees, and thus qualify for the EVW scheme. Italian women were obviously not Displaced Persons, and so did not qualify for official EVW recruitment.

Nationality classifications, which as we have seen in the previous chapters played such an important part in foreign labour recruitment policy, played an especially significant role in the recruitment of female foreign workers and settlers for a number of reasons. For one thing the significance of nationality considerations was inflated by women's dual role as workers and as potential reproducers. In the context of popular and official concern over the stagnating and aging trend of the British population, female foreign workers were seen not only as labourers but as contributors to the nation's "racial stock." This was particularly the case with female recruits who were expected to settle permanently in Britain. Thus, in the case of female foreign workers, national stereotypes and assumptions about their propensity to integrate and assimilate into British society carried particularly heavy racial and sexual, as well as political, overtones.

The sexual mores of female recruits had to be in line with the sensibilities of respectable society (as imagined by civil servants). It is true that male foreign recruits also had to

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6 Such concern has been discussed in the introductory chapter. Two reports were released in these years which stoked this demographic preoccupation: The 1949 Royal Commission Report on Population, and Policy and Economic Planning report in 1948, entitled Population Policy in Great Britain. Elizabeth Stadulis, op.cit., pp.209-10, discusses the discourse around these two reports.
answer similar criteria, and in many ways the national hierarchy that the civil service employed was consistent along gender lines (i.e. both Baltic men and women outranked their Polish and Slavic counterparts on the official scale of social compatibility). But whereas the morality of male recruits was mainly measured in legal or political terms (thieves and communists were unwelcome), for women morality was measured primarily in terms of sexuality. The difference was one of degree rather than of kind, and tests for pregnancy and venereal disease had as much to do with the desire to avoid recruiting workers who might not be able to contribute to the economy as they did with the fear that unchaste women might cause social disruption. Still, the conceptualization of the recruited female worker's role in British society included a greater emphasis on sexuality than was the case for male workers.

The pronounced emphasis on nationality status for women was also reflected in the changing legal definitions of British nationality in this period. The British Nationality Act of 1948, although it has been studied more often for its impact on Commonwealth and colonial nationality definitions, also affected the position of European foreign workers, and particularly of women among them. Among other things the Act corrected certain gender inequalities in the definition of British nationality. But it did so in a way which restricted the passing of national status through marriage -- that is, by

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7 The construction of this hierarchy is discussed in a previous chapter. It should be noted here that this hierarchy was based upon an interplay of racial, and social, assumptions.

extending the principle that had applied to British women marrying foreign men, as opposed to the principle that applied the other way around. Thus, for example, women of British birth who married foreign men prior to 1 January 1949, and who as a result had lost their British nationality, were reinstated as British citizens by Section 14 of the Act. Women who had acquired their husbands' nationality also kept their British citizenship. Conversely, foreign women who married British men after 1 January 1949 did not acquire British nationality automatically, as they had done in the past.

A further revision of the Act stipulated that alien daughters of British born women would not automatically enjoy unrestricted landing conditions in the U.K. If the mother -- herself indisputably a British national by reason of place of birth -- had been born "by a mere accident" on British soil to foreign parents, or if the father of the child was subject to some form of restriction, then the child could also be restricted. Women whose British nationality rested on an "accident of birth" could also lose or renounce their British nationality, something which was made impossible by the Act for British born children of British parents.

Such tightening of nationality legislation can in part be attributed to the presence of foreign women workers in Britain. Much of the concern with defining and stratifying

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9 PRO HO 213/940: See Home Office circular No. 48/1949 (dated 16 March 1949) for clarification of changes in the acquisition of British nationality through marriage.


11 PRO HO 213/703: The notion of "accident of birth" conferring nationality was raised as a concern by the Home Office in regard to a proposed recruitment of Belgian women in late 1948. The Home Office reiterated the need for stringent pregnancy testing, so that British nationality would not be conferred indiscriminately on foreigners born on British soil. See: Recruitment of Belgian women for textiles and other
British nationality in this way was related to the presence of Irish women in Britain, but the implications for foreign female workers from Europe were also important. Henceforth marriage to a British man was no longer a guarantee of acquiring British citizenship. Moreover, children born to foreign women in the U.K. "by accident" -- the screening procedures for recruitment schemes always checked for pregnancy -- acquired a degree of British nationality slightly less privileged than had previously been the case. The reasons for redefining nationality in the immediate postwar years have been discussed earlier, and they apply here as well in terms of restricting access to the welfare state. These particular clauses, with respect to marriage and to children born in the U.K., reflect the fluidity of the female population in the immediate postwar years, as well as in the years leading up to the second World War. Although the British government actively sought to redress the perceived shortage of women in the U.K., both as mothers and as workers, they at the same time sought to maintain a strict control over the status and deployment of female foreign workers. This policy perforce involved matters of marriage and sexuality, and the national status of offspring.

There were two main pockets of underemployment and overpopulation in postwar Europe. One was in the territories of the former Reich. The other was in Italy. Britain was publicly committed to helping ease both situations. The record of the government with respect to Italian recruitment was not entirely

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industries, dated 16 December 1948.

As a September 1949 report on the scheme to recruit Italian women workers for the British textile industry noted, the number of women recruited from Italy would likely be quite small -- perhaps several hundred in all. However "even these small numbers would be taken mainly as a gesture to the Italians and in partial fulfillment of our obligations under OEEC." See PRO LAB 13/822: Report by Ball, dated 22 September 1949.
co-operative, as will emerge in the chapter on international diplomacy below. But despite some misgivings on the British side, the persistence of the Italian government -- and of female labour shortages in the U.K. -- eventually led to an official recruitment of female workers being undertaken in Italy. The recruitment of Italian women was less complicated than the recruitment of German and EVW women, because matters of national status were less uncertain. Unlike the EVW schemes, for example, there was no immediate question of permanent settlement in Britain for the Italian women. Rather their recruitment was a seemingly straightforward case of the British government wanting to recruit female workers on a temporary basis, and the Italian women wanting the work.

The British government had recruited Italian workers on one occasion before this date. In 1946 some 2,800 men had been recruited to work in British foundries.\(^13\) That recruitment will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter. There had of course also been the 1,400 or so ex-prisoners of war who had been allowed to return to Britain after being repatriated.\(^14\) However after those two groups of Italians had come to the U.K., the flow of Italian migrant workers had subsided, despite Rome's exhortations to the British government to take more Italian workers. At the beginning of 1948, the British government began negotiating with the Italian government the terms under which numbers of Italian women might be recruited to work in the British textile industry.\(^15\) The possibility of Italian men being recruited for work in

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\(^{14}\) See the chapter on prisoners of war for details.

\(^{15}\) PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of recruitment schemes, compiled by H.A. Pass, dated 1 September 1949.
coalmining and agriculture was also discussed concurrently, although these recruitments were considered discrete.

At the outset of the talks, the Italian labour attache in London, Signor Spinelli, had sounded hopeful about the possibility of several thousand women being available in the north of Italy. The British government preferred northern to southern Italian women on the supposition that northern women would be of a better "type" than women from the south of Italy. The same bias was evident in the recruitment of Italian men, and reflected a feeling of racial as well as social affinity with the more industrialized and "western" society of the north. This sort of prejudice was obviously appreciated, and shared to some extent, by Italian officials themselves. However, as the scheme unfolded it was evident that the projected number of workers could not be obtained in the north, and the recruitment had to be extended to the south of Italy as well, where there were greater numbers of unemployed.

Negotiations over the women's scheme dragged on rather longer than the British government expected. For a while the Foreign Office suspected that Spinelli, a Nenni socialist by all accounts, was sabotaging the scheme to subvert his government's relations with Britain. But in the end it was

16 PRO FO 371/73150: Note by Rouse, dated 2 April 1948.

17 The prejudice was evident in the recruitment of Italian men for the coal mines, which will be dealt with in the chapter on diplomatic considerations. From the Italian viewpoint, Spinelli noted that there might be fewer social objections raised in the north to the recruitment of single young women for work abroad, because there "the outlook was more similar to that of North West Europe." The compatibility of "outlook" was no doubt also an influence in official British thinking. See: PRO FO 371/73150: Rouse note, dated 2 April 1948.

18 PRO FO 371/73150: Memo from Crosthwaite (Foreign Office) to Rouse (Ministry of Labour), dated 18 June 1948: "It has occurred to me that part of the reason for this (delay) may be that Spinelli is himself a Nenni Socialist and may have been paying more attention lately to his party political activities than to getting a sound scheme working."
decided that the dilatoriness was the fault of the Italian government itself, which was demanding unrealistic wages and conditions for its workers. In July 1949, over a year after negotiations had commenced, an informal agreement was in place, and an experimental party of Italian women arrived in the U.K.

The draft agreement called for the Italian government to advertise the scheme in Italy, and to provide the proper forms for applicants. The British government would be in charge of the final selection of recruits. Volunteers would be recruited as a pool of workers to be more specifically placed once in the U.K. The British government would provide the forms for two referees of the applicant's character, and would also pay 4s. per volunteer towards the cost of a medical examination. This examination would specifically look at three areas: tuberculosis, pregnancy and venereal disease. The British government would also pay for travel to the U.K. from the holding centres in Italy where recruits would be assembled, as well as giving each recruit free board and 5s./week until they were placed in employment. The same amount would be paid to each recruit who fell ill before becoming entitled to British social insurance. (Entitlement was granted after six months residence in the U.K.). Repatriation would be paid for by the government after two years, or sooner if the recruit was deemed unsuitable. This informal agreement formed the basis of

19 PRO F0 371/73151: Letter from Rouse (Ministry of Labour) to Crosthwaite (Foreign Office), dated 23 June 1948: Rouse noted Spinelli's cooperativeness in this and related matters, and laid the blame for delays on the Italian government, who were demanding terms for their people that "would hardly occur to other countries concerned with the emigration of their nationals."

20 PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of schemes, compiled by H.A. Pass, dated 1 September 1949.
recruitment until the spring of 1951.\textsuperscript{21}

The performance of the first party of Italian women was discussed at an October 1949 Ministry of Labour meeting with the Italian conducting officer who had accompanied the women.\textsuperscript{22} This conducting officer -- Signora Magnino -- raised two concerns. The first was that the recruitment panel in Italy should be wary of recruiting communist volunteers. This concern arose because of the behaviour of one of the Italian women in the initial party, whom Magnino described as "troublesome." The second concern was that future parties should contain at least one English speaker. The Ministry of Labour responded that it was surely in the interest of the Italian government to ensure that no communist workers filtered through the selection process. Moreover Italian recruits should learn to fend for themselves, and there was therefore no question of having a Ministry of Labour officer accompany future parties.\textsuperscript{23}

The concerns raised by Magnino were conveyed to W. Braine, the British Labour attache in Rome. The "troublesome" woman who Magnino had identified as a communist was one Signora Pardi.

\textsuperscript{21} The recruitment of these and subsequent Italian workers continued on the basis of informal agreements renewed yearly until May 1951. The main problem that arose with this arrangement, which otherwise suited the Home and Foreign Offices, was the payment of a small levy by the British government to Rome for each woman recruited while she was in Britain. The levy was meant to guarantee the women's right to social security benefits upon their return to Italy. This was eventually settled by the British government agreeing to pay the sum of 10 shillings per woman for every month each woman was in the U.K. Payment was to be made upon the return of the woman to Italy. On the question of payment of social security levies, and for medical exams, see PRO LAB 13/814: especially: Ball to Braine, 16 December 1950, and internal memo to Starritt, 19 October 1950. Also see: LAB 13/822: File on EVW policy re: Italian women, and LAB 13/819: General survey of schemes compiled by Pass, 1 September 1949.

\textsuperscript{22} PRO LAB 13/822: For details of the meeting see: Ball to Braine, 6 October 1949.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
According to the Labour Office report at Chorley, Pardi had apparently bullied the other women, carried a knife, and spread grumbling petitions for others to sign.\textsuperscript{24}

Notwithstanding this report, Braine was less than impressed with Magnino's analysis of the situation, noting that she was "professorial" and "very probably out of sympathy with the working class." Regarding the exclusion of communists from future parties, he noted: "Before we start witch-hunting we should have clear evidence that a particular individual is conducting political propaganda or is deliberately acting as the agent of a particular political party." Braine also noted that English speakers were rare indeed among working and middle class women "of good character" in Italy, and that it would be difficult to ensure that there would be an English speaker among the recruits in future parties.\textsuperscript{25}

The Ministry of Labour was less concerned than the Home Office that communists were infiltrating the U.K. by means of this scheme. Braine undertook to research the personal histories of grousers such as Pardi (one or two others had come to light) at the Italian end. This effort was meant to reassure the Home Office that Rome cared about who they were sending abroad. But a Ministry of Labour memo to the Home Office also noted that "from our information Italian women were not so politically minded as their menfolk."\textsuperscript{26} However, concern was expressed about the welfare of the women in the U.K., many of whom were young and away from home for the first time. It was suggested that perhaps Catholic priests -- some of whom might speak Italian -- and well disposed members of the local Italian communities might be employed as cultural liaisons in

\textsuperscript{24} PRO LAB 13/822: H.J. Wilson to Ball, 12 October 1949.

\textsuperscript{25} PRO LAB 13/822: Braine to Ball, 13 October 1949.

\textsuperscript{26} PRO LAB 13/822: Ball to Phillips, 25 October 1949.
Britain. 27

In any case the question of vetting volunteers for political affiliation was quite a sensitive matter. At the time of the above communiques, representatives of the cotton and wool textile industries, along with a parliamentary secretary, were touring Italy checking on the screening arrangements for this recruitment scheme. Similar tours had been conducted in Austria earlier. As a Ministry of Labour official pointed out however, Italy was a sovereign nation, and such a tour might embarrass the Italian government. 28 Rome, the Home Office was assured, had agreed on the urgency of weeding out communist volunteers from the scheme, and volunteers were being vetted by the Association of Catholic Italian workers, and by Catholic Action. However, since being affiliated with the Communist Party was not a crime in Italy, such affiliation would not show up on police records, and it would be impossible to introduce a clause about political beliefs into a contract. 29 Even the intimation of such a proviso against communists would be politically incendiary in Italy.

Despite these concerns, the first party of Italian women had acquitted themselves well, and interest in obtaining more Italian women was expressed. The initial sluggishness of concurrent recruitment schemes for German women, which will be discussed in due course, prompted the Ministry of Labour to "intensify efforts to make the Italian recruitment a success." 30 The second party of Italian women was scheduled to

27 Ibid., Braine to Ball, 21 October 1949: Braine expressed surprise that Spinelli had not made contact with the women: "To place a number of foreign girls in an English working class locality without such guidance leaves us open to criticism."


29 Ibid.

arrive on 27 October, and 25 more women were to arrive each subsequent week to a number of 250. The intake was set at these levels despite the fact that Braine thought he could clear three or four times that number each week, and that the costs of sending recruits over in larger numbers would be less. The problem at this stage lay at the British end. The cotton industry in particular wished to spread their intake at a slow pace, fearing industrial opposition to the foreign workers if the pace was quickened.

By the end of the year, with the fulfillment of the initial quota of 250 women complete, the Ministry of Labour were once again writing to Braine asking for more recruits. The wool industry was in urgent need of some 500 women, and the Ministry of Labour suggested that Braine go to work at once to begin this recruitment, even though representatives of the wool industry were studying the experience of the cotton industry, and had not yet given their approval for the recruitment. Nor had the Italian government been informed of conditions in the wool industry, although on this score it was noted that wages would if anything be higher in wool than in cotton textile manufacture. So urgent was the need for wool industry workers that it was hoped to start "feeding the industry with Italian workers early in January (1950) to the extent even of diverting those who would have gone to cotton." In addition to this demand for wool industry workers there were proposals for recruitment of Italian women for the pottery industry (50 women), and for domestic work in remote hospitals for tuberculosis or mental patients (250). In all there was an immediate demand for some 925 more women. In the event, the 500

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31 PRO LAB 13/822: Braine to Ball, 20 October 1949.
32 Ibid., Ball to Braine, dated 27 October 1949.
33 PRO LAB 13/822: Ball to Braine, 9 December 1949.
34 Ibid.
women wanted for wool had been absorbed into the industry by the late summer of 1950, and 500 more were expected to be brought over in the next six to twelve months.\textsuperscript{35} By May 1951, when this recruitment was discontinued, some 1,655 Italian women had been recruited under this scheme.\textsuperscript{36}

The recruitment of Italian women was a fairly straightforward scheme, although as we shall see in the final chapter, there was more to this official scheme than merely the desire on the part of both governments to address their respective demographic and economic difficulties. The British government’s preference for northern Italian women was not remarkable. It illustrated the sort of stereotyping that was evident in the previous chapters. The notion that women were less a political threat "than their menfolk" was also indicative of certain official stereotypes about the place of women in society. Although negotiations between the two governments were lengthy, the issues negotiated were largely financial -- who should pay for what and how much. Nationality questions were not at issue in this scheme. The recruitment of German women by the British government was, by contrast, a much more complex process. Nationality status and questions of social prejudice intruded into considerations of this recruitment much more than they did in the case of the Italian scheme.

Concern with the public reaction to the presence of German women in the U.K. arose even before the first official recruitment schemes were undertaken. Prior to the end of the war the Home Office was already considering what to do about

\textsuperscript{35} PRO LAB 13/822: W.G. Fuller (Ministry of Labour) to D.J. Mitchell (Treasury), 16 September 1950.

\textsuperscript{36} This figure comes from Kay, op.cit., p.38. It should also be noted that by the beginning of 1950 some 220 private employment permits were issued each month to Italian women coming to the U.K. See LAB 13/822: Ball to Phillips, 3 January 1950.
foreign workers of German and Austrian descent resident in the U.K. Most of these were women employed in domestic work, many of whom had come to Britain as refugees during the 1930's. It was estimated that there were 60,000 such persons in all, a number that was logistically negligible, but that might prove socially contentious. As one Home Office official noted:

The effect of this number on problems of food, clothing and other rationed commodities is probably insignificant but the British public, to say nothing of the Press, is likely to agitate for the expulsion of everybody of German origin, especially if, for example, persons with German names (who may be British subjects or even ex-servicemen themselves) are found in employment or even occupying houses when British ex-servicemen are looking for jobs or homes. 37

Anticipation of virulent anti-German public sentiment was founded on memories of the social climate of the first World War.38 In the aftermath of the second World War, anti-German feeling did not run so high, and certainly dissipated quite quickly in the face of the ideological discourse that

37 PRO LAB 8/911: Internal Home Office memorandum, by H.H. Prestige, 26 September 1944.

38 See, for example, Panikos Panayi, The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War, (New York: Berg, 1991), for discussion of inter-war anti-German sentiment. Also, David Cesarini and Tony Kushner (eds.) The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain, (London: Frank Cass, 1993), has some interesting essays pointing out the endurance of such sentiment into the early stages of the second World War. Angus Calder, The People's War: Britain, 1939-45, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), on the other hand, describes the significant lack, during the second war, of the sort of virulent anti-German sentiment that prevailed during the first, despite the greater provocation.
overlapped national questions. Public discourse seemed to differentiate between the evil ideology of nazism, and the character and morality of the German people. Nevertheless there is no doubt that the war heightened anti-German sentiment in Britain, and the very fact that it was anticipated by the government affected the formation of policy.

The Home Office also anticipated that the reaction towards German refugees in Britain might vary according to their national status. The author of the above memo went on to note: "A further question is whether it is practical or expedient to differentiate between Germans and Austrians, and if so on what lines." At this point the need for the labour of these persons did not seem to play a role in the decision making process, although it was noted that those with special skills and/or independent means might make a useful contribution to the postwar economy. In the event it was agreed that all such Germans who were not resident in the U.K. by 1933 should be regarded as temporary residents, and thus subject to eventual mandatory repatriation.

After the war had ended, however, labour shortages in the U.K., and overcrowded conditions in occupied Germany, led to a re-evaluation of this policy. Letters in the press in 1946 and 1947 implored the government to enlist German women as

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39 Mass Observation surveys revealed that in February 1945, 54% of respondents expressed antagonism towards Germans in general; in October 1946 the figure was about 51%; by the summer of 1947 the antagonistic group was down to 20%, and though a substantial minority remained virulently antagonistic, it was noted that the level of conviction with which most antagonism was expressed was quite weak. See File #2565 (February 1948), Mass Observation Archives, (University of Sussex, Brighton).

40 PRO LAB 8/911: Internal Home Office memo by H.H. Prestige, 26 September 1944.

41 PRO LAB 8/911: Memo on conference on Germans in the U.K., dated 24 October 1944.
domestics to help British housewives cope with their burdens. In some of these letters and editorials there was a sense that the Germans owed Britain something for the havoc they had wrought; in this sense German domestic service in the U.K. was presented as a sort of expiation of past sins. In other cases there seemed to be a preference for German domestics, perhaps as a result of familiarity from the pre-war period. But before German women could be brought to Britain for work in industry or private households, industrial opposition had to be overcome, and the nationality classification of the women had to be sorted out. These two concerns often overlapped.

The nationality classification of recruited female workers was an important issue for two main reasons: the first had to do with national stereotypes and prejudices; the second with the question of repatriation of undesirable or redundant recruits. These concerns were evidenced in the first official recruitment scheme of the postwar period, of Baltic women from Displaced Persons camps in the British zone of Germany in the fall of 1946. The scheme, codenamed "Balt Cygnet", was meant to be an experiment; its success led to the development of the Westward Ho recruitment of Displaced Persons begun in the spring of 1947. The Balt Cygnet scheme was aimed at young, single women of Baltic origin in Displaced Persons camps who wished to volunteer for work in British tuberculosis hospitals and sanatoria. There were of course provisions made to return such recruits to Germany in extreme cases. A Home Office comment on the scheme in the spring of 1946 noted:

As the persons to be brought under the scheme would be

42 See, for example, a letter in the Western Morning News, dated 24 October 1946, or similar letters in Daily Express, dated 14 May 1946, The Times, dated 23 August 1946, and Tribune, dated 3 January 1947.

43 Kay and Miles summarize the Balt Cygnet scheme succinctly, as does Elizabeth Stadulis. See Kay, op.cit., pp.49-52, and Stadulis, op.cit., p.212.
Baltic nationals who were displaced persons in Germany and did not wish to return to their own countries because of the Soviet influence there it would be impolitic to have recourse to a Deportation Order for return. The whole arrangement would, therefore, have to be on a contractual basis. The individuals would contract for service for the specific purpose knowing full well that if they were not satisfactory or acted contrary to their landing condition they would be returned to displaced persons camps in Germany."

But since the dispensation of Displaced Persons in German camps was the responsibility of the British government in the first place, the government obviously did not want the number of returned workers to be great.

Because permanent settlement in Britain was thus implicit in this scheme, criteria for recruited workers focused on assimilability, as well as on propensity for the work. Established notions of nationality preference, as well as stereotypes about qualities which women recruits should meet, were imposed on this recruitment. These in turn were applied to subsequent official schemes. Thus Balt Cygnet women should be of good character (chaste), docile (politically quiescent), and easily integrated into British society (westernized). The reason for restricting the initial recruitment of Displaced Persons to Balts had much to do with the desire to resettle them before the question of repatriation to the Soviet Union could be raised. But it had also to do with notions of national hierarchy which placed Balts ahead of other east European national groups in terms of perceived compatibility with British society. It was thought that Baltic women fit the

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44 PRO HO 213/694: Internal memo by A.V. Judge, dated 4 April 1946.

45 Kay, op.cit., p.50.

46 Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.50: The nationality restriction of this scheme, writes Kay, "is partly explained by the fact that the Balts were regarded as the group least likely
government's criteria more than did, say, Polish women. This sort of national hierarchy was applied in subsequent schemes as well.

Although most female foreign workers were meant to perform unsavoury work for which British women could not be found, officials preferred not to recruit what were considered the "rougher" sorts of women. The concept of roughness was informed by socio-economic as well as national stereotypes. In some cases the former cut across the latter. Thus, for example, northern Italian women were officially preferred to southern Italians because the north of Italy was more westernized and affluent than the south. Women from the north could be expected to have more bourgeois values, and thus be more easily integrated into British society.47 In other cases socio-economic and national stereotypes overlapped. Thus Baltic women were thought to constitute better material than Polish or Ukrainian women, by the same logic that prevailed in the Italian case.48 Conceptions of good "racial stock" were also overlaid on this national framework.

The issue of repatriation or returnability was perhaps an even more important consideration in the question of national

to accept repatriation, ... but it also fortuitously coincided with the group which was generally depicted as the 'elite of the DP camps.' This last phrase is a quote from an undated government memorandum on Refugees and DPs in British zone of Germany.

47 In a meeting in April 1948, the Italian Labour Attache in London, Spinelli, noted that "the outlook (in the north of Italy) was more similar to that of North West Europe" than in the south. This statement was meant to reassure British officials that there were suitable recruits available among women in Italy. See PRO FO 371/73150: Memo by Rouse, dated 2 April 1948.

48 Kay notes that the Ministry of Labour assessed Ukrainian women as "aging more quickly than the Balts" and as "essentially peasant" and thereby "not fit(ting) into English life as easily as the Balts." See: Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.52.
status and classification. While the threat of return provided a useful control over recruited workers, the number of workers that could be returned to Displaced Persons camps was quite limited. The Balt Cygnet scheme thus represented a bit of a leap of faith, though the government never exposed itself to more than a harmless fall in the process. The vetting of recruits, for instance, was quite stringent, and the number of women recruited under the scheme was relatively small.\textsuperscript{49} In fact the difficulty of returning Displaced and stateless persons militated against their recruitment in general, as commentators on the EVW scheme have noted.\textsuperscript{50}

The question of returnability was thus obviously complicated by the political upheavals and boundary revisions caused by the war. The situation was particularly complex for ethnic Germans who had been expelled from territories outside of postwar Germany proper in 1945. Although ethnically German and residing after 1945 within the territory of the postwar German state, their national status was for some time uncertain. There were also those Germans who had resided in the area east of the Oder-Neisse line, and whose German national status was now called into question. Ethnic Germans whose national status was not immediately clear were in these years referred to by officials as "Volksdeutsche." Germans whose national status was not in question -- who had been citizens of that segment of the pre-Anschluss German state that formed the basis of the postwar territory -- were referred to as "Reichsdeutsche." These designations had significant repercussions.

One case from the Home Office files illustrates this

\textsuperscript{49} See Kay and Miles, op.cit., pp.49-52: for details of the vetting procedure and criteria. In May 1947 Balt Cygnet was merged with the EVW scheme; the number of women that had been recruited to that point was 2,575. The initial quota had been set at 5,000.

\textsuperscript{50} See Kay and Miles, op.cit., p.171, Tannahill, op.cit., and Stadulis, op.cit., among others.
point. In the summer of 1946 J.E. Keen of the Bristol Council of Refugees wrote the government on behalf of a woman of Sudeten origin who had been expelled from Czechoslovakia after the war and was currently residing in Germany. Her nationality was uncertain, and as a result she was having difficulty obtaining a permit to come to England to join the family she had worked for prior to the war. This family, it was noted, was Jewish, and the woman herself was "a strong anti-Nazi." The Home Office was less concerned with the woman's religion or politics, however, than with her nationality status. "Policy", it was noted, "is not concerned with the political sympathies of particular Germans but with their nationality in law." The main point was that if the recruited worker did not have travel documents which allowed for return to their country of origin, a Ministry of Labour permit could not be issued.

Such complexities were brought into broader relief when the official recruitment of German women was undertaken in the spring of 1948. Domestic opposition had first to be overcome, and this opposition also complicated questions of national status, as shall shortly be seen. But in the spring of 1948, after almost a year of negotiation, an agreement with the relevant unions was reached allowing Reichsdeutsche women to be recruited for work in hospitals and institutions, as well as in hardship domestic households. An experimental group of fifty nurse trainees from Germany arrived in the U.K. in August 1948. At the same time, the textile unions based in Scotland (though not in England), agreed to take small numbers of women from Germany, as did the hosiery industry in England and Scotland.

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51 PRO HO 213/697: J.E. Keen to Mr. S. Awbery, M.P., y in a case like this was in obtaining the proper travel documents to back up whatever nationality was claimed.

52 PRO HO 213/697: Lyon (Home Office) to Crookenden (Ministry of Labour), dated 5 September 1946.

53 PRO LAB 13/819: This file contains a general historical survey of foreign recruitment schemes.
By 31 August 1949, there were 4,303 Reichsdeutsche women in domestic work in Britain under these agreements, 708 in industrial work, 582 hospital orderlies, 387 nursing trainees, and 7 trained nurses. All of these women were brought to the U.K. under an official scheme code named "Action North Sea." Only women from the British zone of Germany were recruited.

Two other schemes were begun in the spring of 1948. One involved the recruitment of Sudeten women from Austria. The other involved a decision to include Sudeten women in the field of EVW recruitment. In order to be eligible the Sudeten women would have to be classified as refugees by the International Refugee Organization, though not necessarily resident in Displaced Persons camps. The government defined Sudetens as ethnic Germans who had come from the area around the north, west and south of the present-day Czech republic. The Czech coup in February 1948 cemented their status as refugees in Germany, and thus contributed to the timing of the decision to recruit Sudeten women. Yet there remained some question as to the final settlement of their national status, a fact which complicated the terms of their recruitment.

The scheme to import Sudeten women from Austria arose after a delegation from the British textile industries toured that country in the spring of 1948. The question of national designations for these recruits was a prime concern. The government applied the principle that these women were nationals of the state in which they had been resettled; that is, they should be documented as Austrian citizens. While this was convenient in terms of returnability of unwanted recruits, and in terms of trade union and industry acceptance,

\[54\] PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of recruitment schemes, dated 1 September 1949.

\[55\] Ibid.

\[56\] Ibid.

\[57\] Ibid.
this principle was one which would not be so convenient to apply in other cases.

The "Blue Danube" scheme, as the Austrian recruitment was called, proved to be expensive since the government had to establish administrative offices in Austria.\(^5^8\) Nonetheless, the government considered the numbers of Austrian women brought to the U.K. a "useful quota", especially in regard to the wool industry. In the fall of 1949 the Ministry of Labour noted: "In fact, at the moment, the Austrians are practically the only class of foreign workers being recruited which is acceptable to the woolen industry and all of them are therefore being sent there."\(^5^9\) As of 31 August 1949 there were 1,417 Austrian women recruited under this scheme. All but 100 of these women were placed in the textile industries; the rest were in nurse training, although recruitment for nursing had proven so difficult that it was quickly discontinued. By the fall of 1950, when official recruitment in Austria was wound down, the Blue Danube scheme had yielded 2,341 women, about the number that had initially been agreed.\(^6^0\)

The decision to recruit Sudeten women as EVWs was confined to those already resident in the British zone of Germany. However, the government simultaneously undertook negotiations to recruit Sudeten women from the American zone of occupied

\(^5^8\) Ibid.: The total cost per head in the Blue Danube scheme was L.29/5s./4d., of which L.11/5s. was administrative costs. The breakdown for the other schemes was: Italian - L.13/8s./3d; North Sea - L.14/13s./2 and L.2/6s.; Sudeten/EVW - L.27/1s./8d. and L.8/5s. The Italian administrative costs were not given, but there was an extra secretary seconded to the Labour Attache. The higher figures involved in the Sudeten and Austrian schemes were associated with the high cost of subsistence for staff in these areas.

\(^5^9\) PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of recruitment schemes, dated 1 September 1949.

\(^6^0\) The final figure for the Blue Danube scheme is taken from Kay, op.cit., p.38. The initial goal of the scheme was to recruit 2,000 workers. See also: PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of recruitment schemes, dated 1 September 1949.
Germany. These negotiations dragged on for the better part of a year. The American State Department insisted that this recruitment be carried out under the auspices of the Westward Ho scheme; that is, that it be run as a resettlement, and not a contract labour, scheme. The American zonal authorities did not want large numbers of recruits returning to their zone. On the other hand the British government was adamant that the possibility of returning unsatisfactory recruits be left open. This was one issue which made the documentation of Sudeten women of primary importance.

Negotiations with the U.S. authorities had stalled over the British insistence on recruiting only Sudeten women. The Ministry of Labour had stipulated that only women born in Czechoslovakia, or with parents born there, could qualify for the scheme. However the U.S. State Department was not in favour of differentiating between Sudetens and "Germans" in their zone. Under the Potsdam agreement, argued the Americans, all Volksdeutsche resettled in Germany were considered to be German citizens. From the British point of view, classification of the women as German nationals might not be recognized by a future German government. If these Sudeten women were not recognized as German nationals, they would essentially become

61 The compromise that was finally worked out gave Britain the right to return women to the U.S. zone within 18 months of their arrival in the U.K. if they were deemed undesirable -- defined as "a genuine threat to public order" -- or in poor health, or otherwise unsuitable. But the total number of women returned was not to exceed 5%. See: PRO LAB 13/44: Telegram #4917, Franks to Ball, dated 22 October 1948.

62 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal memo to Ball, dated 25 February 1949.

63 The Foreign Office's German Section Political Department had advised in this respect that although the Military Governors of the Occupying Powers had granted Volksdeutsche in Germany the right to settle as German nationals, there was no guarantee that a future German government would do the same. See: PRO HO 213/702: Internal memo by Wellstead, dated 3 December 1948.
stateless refugees in the U.K. Moreover, if this recruitment was to be sold to a textile industry in which a ban on Reichsdeutsche still largely prevailed, it would be easier if their documentation distinguished them from Reichsdeutsche. In the event the Americans had their way and the women's travel documents were stamped "German", though this necessitated a concerted campaign of assurances to various trade union and industry officials that these women were indeed of Sudeten origin. An agreement with the United States was signed on 18 March 1949, after almost a year of talks.

Although in the event it took almost a year to be implemented, the inclusion of Sudeten women in the EVW scheme had repercussions for the North Sea scheme. The North Sea and Westward Ho schemes operated concurrently, but were kept purposefully separate. A separate transit camp was established for the North Sea recruits, and a separate vetting and recruitment mechanism was set up as well. Although North Sea volunteers were interviewed by a Ministry of Labour officer, they passed through much of the initial security and medical check procedures at the hands of German officials. Certain restrictions were also imposed on the North Sea recruitment which clearly were intended to distinguish it as a temporary labour scheme. North Sea recruits did not need to be single, though they could not bring dependents with them. By contrast

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64 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal memo to Ball, dated 25 February 1949, re: talks with Wool and Allied Textile Employers Council, and various trade unions.

65 PRO LAB 13/44: Details of the agreement included in an undated memorandum in this file.

66 PRO HO 213/702: The German vetting procedures included checks with local police records, Public Safety and Intelligence Division records, and two character references. Medical examinations for venereal disease, and for pregnancy were also carried out. See Draft of scheme, circulated by the Ministry of Labour, dated 20 May 1948.
only single women were in the first instance recruited under the EVW scheme. North Sea women had to be born after January 1919; "Such women", it was noted, "have generally not been subject to the de-nazification procedure." The age limit for Sudeten EVW recruits was higher; it was noted that though there had been a Nazi party in the Sudetenland, it was doubtful that many women were associated with it.

Despite these distinctions, however, the inclusion of Sudeten women in the EVW scheme prompted officials on the scene in Germany to remark that it was not so important to insist that North Sea recruits be born within the 1939 boundaries of Germany. In other words, distinguishing between Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche was not considered as important in the North Sea scheme as a result of the acceptance of Sudetens under the EVW scheme. The returnability of Sudetens to Germany was confirmed by their recruitment under the EVW scheme, which thus opened the door to their recruitment under North Sea. The advent of an independent West German government in May 1949, and its confirmation of the Potsdam principle of nationality, also served to relax the issue of nationality classification somewhat.

Recruitment of Sudeten women under different schemes meant that some would be recruited as Volksdeutsche and some as Reichsdeutsche. The national designation would depend on the terms of the scheme. Sudeten women in the North Sea scheme were

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67 After the initial sluggishness of Sudeten EVW recruitment, it was suggested that the acceptance of women with their children might "help to make this [recruitment] less of a flop than it seems to be at present." Some women were subsequently recruited on these terms. See PRO LAB 13/44: Gabbutt to Pall, dated 9 June 1949.


69 PRO LAB 13/44: Pass to Ball, dated 8 December 1948.

70 Ibid.
recruited as Reichsdeutsche, in keeping with the Potsdam principle. EVW recruits were recruited as Volksdeutsche refugees, and their citizenship status was thus undetermined. EVW recruits from the U.S. zone were officially registered as German nationals, but presented to British industry as Volksdeutsche. Sudeten recruits from Austria were treated as Austrian nationals, which was convenient for purposes of repatriation and industrial agreements.

As one immigration official noted, nationality designation seemed only a matter of determining to which scheme the volunteer should belong. This official was thus not "quibbling" over nationality status because he figured that recruits whose national classification did not fit the scheme they were in could be shifted into the proper scheme later on. The Ministry of Labour was also willing to contort arguments and rationales to fit industrial and political circumstances. Thus, for example, where only Volksdeutsche were acceptable to a particular industry, the government could argue that Sudeten recruits fitted the bill. When it came to matters of repatriation however, the Ministry might turn around and argue that Sudeten women were nationals of the state they had been recruited in, including Germany. As one Home Office official noted, the Ministry of Labour pressed for the recruitment of Sudeten women under the North Sea scheme so that they would not have to wait for the IRO to screen volunteers and determine

71 file on Potsdam accord

72 PRO HO 213/702: Bennett memo to Chief Inspector, Home Office Immigration Branch, dated 18 October 1948.

73 As one official noted in the fall of 1948, the government was willing to argue that Volksdeutsche women who found themselves in Germany were German nationals. In the case of Volksdeutsche women recruited in Austria, however, the government had argued that they were citizens of neighbouring countries who were brought to German territory during the war against their will. They were not made German "by Hitler's decree." See: PRO HO 213/702: Bennett (Immigration Officer, Munster transit camp) to Chief Inspector, 26 November 1948.
their eligibility, as refugees, for the EVW scheme.\textsuperscript{74}

The Home Office, however, was less prepared to play fast and loose with nationality definitions. A Home Office official noted in September 1948 that there were thousands of people in western Europe "who do not really know where they belong and who present a problem to be sorted out internationally and some embarrassment might subsequently arise if the nationality of individuals is anticipated now mainly for the purpose of a labour scheme in this country."\textsuperscript{75} The Ministry of Labour relented in the face of this reasoning, and advised its officers in Germany that borderline cases where it was uncertain if the recruit fit the national parameters of the particular scheme should be rejected.\textsuperscript{76} However, the Ministry also anticipated that the real problem with volunteers of uncertain national status would be with those people who had disguised their origins to avoid repatriation to the east, and not with ethnic Germans who had been brought to the Reich in the course of the war. Such Volksdeutsche -- whether Sudeten, or from the area given to Poland at Potsdam -- would find a place in the German state and feel relatively comfortable there. Belorussians or Balts or Ukrainians, on the other hand, might more readily fall into the category of those who "did not know where they belonged."\textsuperscript{77}

The flexibility of the government's position was illustrated by a case that arose in November 1948. In this

\textsuperscript{74} This process might take up to six months. See: PRO HO 213/702: Bennett to Chief Inspector, Immigration Branch, dated 22 September 1948.

\textsuperscript{75} PRO HO 213/702: Home Office Immigration Branch note to Bennett (Ministry of Labour), dated 28 September 1948.

\textsuperscript{76} PRO HO 213/702: Home Office Immigration Branch memo to Bennett, dated 1 October 1948.

\textsuperscript{77} PRO HO 213/702: Memo by Bennett (Ministry of Labour) to Chief Inspector, Immigration Control Branch, dated 18 October 1948.
instance four North Sea recruits, from a batch of 100, were held up by Immigration Officers because they were not Reichsdeutsche. These four women admitted that they were Volksdeutsche, and that they had only come to the British zone of Germany in 1945 from the east (i.e. presumably from territory given to Poland after the war). After some deliberation it was agreed that these women would be allowed to pass through with a Volksdeutsche designation. This was to apply to subsequent cases of a similar nature as well. However, this decision was accompanied by the proviso that the ratio of Volksdeutsche women in the scheme remain similarly low. If the ratio rose the matter would have to be reconsidered.  

By the summer of 1949, the restriction against recruiting Sudeten women under North Sea had largely been abandoned. A progress report written by the Chief Immigration Officer at Harwich noted that of a total of 132 women recruited in June, 98 were Sudeten. Despite the variety of national classifications that volunteers were claiming, the process of acceptance seemed to have simplified. The Immigration Officer noted, "in view of what I understand to be the insatiable U.K. demand for female labour I have not sought to quibble over national status." The figures for July 1949 show that of 196 women recruited under North Sea, 191 were Sudeten.  

These overall figures were low, as were the number of recruited women under the other schemes. By August 1949, the recruitment of Sudeten women from the American zone of Germany had yielded 411 women, a disappointment considering that

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78 PRO HO 213/702: Hankinson (H.O.) to Ball (Ministry of Labour), 16 December 1948.


initial estimates had hoped for as many as 3,000. An Ministry of Labour memo explained the low recruitment figures in terms of the reluctance of Sudeten women to volunteer given the rise in living standards in Bavaria, and the dull recruiting materials employed by the recruitment teams, which failed to effectively counteract negative reports about British conditions in the Bavarian press. Moreover, because this recruitment was taking place as part of the EVW scheme, volunteers were being repelled by the restrictive remittance clauses inherent in the resettlement scheme. Many of the women intended to return home after a certain period of time, and would have preferred definite period contracts to the EVW procedure. There was a general fear that once out of the country, recruits might not be allowed to return. Sudeten women were therefore adopting a wait and see position, and the Ministry felt that a stronger advertising campaign was needed to sell the scheme, including perhaps testimonials from women who had been recruited. In any event the revised estimation was that recruitment was "likely to spend itself by the end of the year" at a rate of about 30 women per week.

The stepped up advertising campaign did, however, pay some dividends. Recruiting films with such uninspiring titles as "We of the West Riding" and "Once Upon a Sheep", although they were deemed by some to paint too grim a picture of life in British textile towns, seemed to capture the fancy of many potential volunteers. Perhaps more important were letters written by Sudeten recruits, and publicized by the British authorities in Bavaria, attesting to the high wages and good conditions prevailing in the U.K. In addition, volunteers were assured that they should have no trouble returning to Bavaria if they desired. By January 1950 the intake of Sudeten women had risen

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82 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal minute by G.E.D. Ball, 14 July 1949.
to between 40 and 50 a week, which was still considered sluggish, but was a marked improvement over the previous months.  

The domestic politics of placing German women in British industry further complicated questions of nationality status. From the end of 1947 the Ministry of Labour had attempted to get both employers and unions to accept Reichsdeutsche women for industrial employment, and for domestic work in hospitals. Some agreements were reached in the spring of 1948. However this did not mean that trade union or industry acceptance was given across the board. There continued to be variations from industry to industry, and from union to union, regarding the acceptance of Reichsdeutsche women. These variations forced the government into some deft maneuvers, as we have already seen.

The sorts of exceptions and variations that the government was up against were illustrated particularly well in the textile industries. The acceptance of Austrian and Sudeten women in several of the textile industries did not automatically extend to what were described as "pure German" women -- or Reichsdeutsche. The variance in industrial agreements on foreign workers made placement a slow and complex process. So, for example, the spinning side of the industry rejected Italian and German workers in June 1949, but agreed to accept a number of Sudeten workers. The weaving side had agreed to take Italians. The wool and rayon industries were, in mid-1949, not agreeing to any but Austrian foreign workers. Disputes and bottlenecks arose as a result of such distinctions. By the end of May 1950, the Ministry of Labour was winding down both the Blue Danube and American zone Sudeten recruitments, citing a backlog of women that the Labour Supply

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84 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal minute by Veysey, 28 June 1949.
branch was at its wit's end trying to place. Negotiating the acceptance of foreign workers was thus a much trickier task than merely getting the trade unions and employers to accept a general principle.

One incident illustrates the sort of maneuvering the Ministry of Labour was forced to do. In April 1949, at the suggestion of U.S. and Bavarian officials, a proposal to provide Sudeten recruits with German consular representation was floated at the Ministry of Labour. An internal memo noted, in response to this proposal, that such an action would "give the whole game away"; that is, admitting that Sudeten women were represented by the German government would in effect bestow upon them German national status. Such a course of action would violate the industry's ban on "pure German" workers. The Ministry of Labour had spent considerable energy in negotiating the acceptance by the textile industry of Sudeten women recruited from the U.S. zone of Germany. The trade unions involved in the negotiations had to be convinced that although the travel documents of these women stated that they were German, they were in fact Czechoslovakian refugees.

Extending German consular services to the recruited Sudetens

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85 file on Sudeten scheme etc.
86 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal memo, dated 26 April 1949. Negotiations with the several unions involved, in the early months of 1949, revolved around the definition of Sudetens (i.e. were they Germans, and why did the Americans call them German?), their status as EVWs, and the stringency of vetting procedures. The Americans, for their part, were reluctant to distinguish between Sudetens and Germans. In the event the trade unions were sold on the notion that these Sudeten Germans were "Volksdeutsche", the same as had been accepted previously.
87 PRO LAB 13/44: Internal memo to Ball, dated 25 February 1949. The Wool (and Allied) Textile Employers Council approved the Sudeten scheme on 26 February 1949. Also consulted were the Card Room Amalgamation, Operative Spinners Amalgamation, Northern Counties Textile Trades Federation, Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers Association, and the Master Cotton Spinners Federation.
was therefore not considered advisable. These Sudetens, it was noted, would have access to a number of refugee organizations and concerned M.P.s who would be willing to "take up the cudgels" for them if the need arose.\textsuperscript{88}

Another example from the summer of 1950 shows the government's willingness to finesse nationality classifications even in the case of private or "semi-official" schemes.\textsuperscript{89} In the late summer of 1950, the Lancashire Cotton Corporation applied to the Ministry of Labour for a bulk permit to recruit Sudeten women from Germany. The bulk permit system enabled the recruiter to bring a number of workers to the U.K. with one permit, or nominal roll, rather than having to go through the procedure of applying to the Ministry of Labour for individual permits in respect of each specific worker. Ordinarily the Ministry was reluctant to grant bulk permits because of the lack of control in vetting and monitoring individual recruits.\textsuperscript{90} However at this time, with official schemes winding down, it was recognized that the bulk permit worked more efficiently, and more of these were being granted.

In this case, however, the Ministry of Labour noted that the trade unions in the industry were insisting that no "pure" Germans be recruited: "There is objection by the Trade Unions to the employment of 'pukka' Germans in the cotton industry,
but they do not object to Volksdeutsche or Sudeten Germans....If we describe simply as Germans it will give the impression to the employers that we are prepared to issue permits for Germans (as distinct from Volksdeutsche) and there might be trouble with the trade unions." Despite the fact that the West German government was documenting all Sudetens in their territory as German nationals, the Ministry of Labour was willing to issue a bulk permit with the nationality on the forms marked as "Volksdeutsche", in order to circumvent trade union opposition. Thirty women were brought to Lancashire under this Volksdeutsche designation in May 1951, although one was sent back to Germany because she turned out to be "pure" German. In the event this was the only batch of recruited women that was brought to the U.K. by the end of 1951 under the requested bulk permit system, although permits had been issued for a further 86 women. These permits were postponed by the LCC pending trade union approval. 

With the exception of the recruitment schemes outlined above, government policy by the fall of 1949 was to wind down the official recruitment of foreign workers for industrial purposes, and to force the individuals and firms involved to pay the costs of their own labour recruitment. Official recruitment did however have its advantages in terms of control of the selection procedure and of the deployment of workers. As a result several schemes were tried which combined elements of official and unofficial recruitment. These schemes left the government with less administrative responsibility than in official schemes, but with more control than in strictly

91 PRO LAB 8/1677: Internal memo by Crookenden, dated 23 May 1951.

92 PRO LAB 8/1678: "Proposed recruitment of Sudeten Germans for cotton industry."

93 See PRO LAB 13/819: General survey of recruitment schemes, by H.A. Pass, dated 1 September 1949.
private recruitment.

In October 1949, for example, a semi-official scheme was approved whereby Employment Exchanges in the U.K. would liaise with Labour Offices in Germany to match British employers with German domestic workers. This initiative would be called the Private Domestic Worker (PDW) scheme, and would supplement the North Sea scheme for recruiting domestic workers for hospitals and institutions by recruiting for private households. The extension of the North Sea scheme in this way would supplant, to a great extent, the activities of private employment agencies working in Germany. In fact the scheme had been hatched at the behest of the German authorities, who viewed the operation of private agencies with some suspicion.  

Several concerns were raised by the Ministry of Labour over the course of discussion of the PDW scheme throughout the early months of 1949. Direct competition with private agencies working in Germany was one such concern. Such competition might make it difficult for the official scheme to attract sufficient numbers of volunteers. There was already concern that potential North Sea and EVW recruits were being siphoned off by private employment agencies working in Germany. Several proposals had been floated to restrict the activities of such agencies, but it was considered that since the government was at this time in the process of opposing international pressures to ban private employment agencies (see the following chapter), such measures would be difficult to reconcile.

Another concern revolved around the control of recruits in Britain. North Sea recruits were brought in for specific institutional work, and were bound to such work. If the scheme

94 PRO LAB 13/810: Ball to Goddard, dated 1 September 1951. The following chapter will discuss the perceptions of private recruitment agencies in greater detail.

95 PRO LAB 8/2199: Memo by W. Uffindel recapping the PDW scheme, 27 July 1957.

96 Ibid.
were to be extended to private households as well, then recruits could, once in the country, switch from one type of work to another relatively freely. Private domestic work was viewed as considerably more attractive than institutional work, and again the fear that women would be siphoned off into non-essential work was voiced. If this were to happen the government would be paying for the recruitment of inessential private domestic workers. One Ministry of Labour official, for example, questioned the advisability of the government subsidizing "Mrs. X so that she can be free to attend a bridge party." In addition, if the PDW scheme were implemented as an extension of Action North Sea, then a precedent might be set which would force the extension of similar schemes and conditions to other countries of recruitment, such as Italy and Austria.

The last objection was met with the answer that Germany as it currently stood constituted an exceptional case in that an independent government had not fully been installed. The Ministry of Labour argued that if some sort of scheme was set up before an independent government was in place, no awkward precedent would be set. With the installation of a West German government imminent in the early spring of 1949, the urgency to establish some sort of scheme was thus heightened. However other objections regarding control and the additional costs of extending the North Sea scheme, did eventually cause the PDW scheme to be established as a separate initiative, rather than as an extension of the North Sea scheme.

The PDW scheme got under way in West Germany in January 1950. In February it was decided to wind down the North Sea

97 PRO LAB 13/43: Memo by Mrs. A.C.M. Gulland, dated 22 April 1949.

98 PRO LAB 13/43: Internal memo by Veysey, dated 29 April 1949.

scheme. Thus by April, the machinery used to recruit domestics for hospitals and institutions was incorporated into the PDW scheme. Also in April, the PDW scheme was extended to include Austria. In late 1948 Austrian representatives had requested that some sort of official recruitment scheme be launched for domestics, either as an extension of Blue Danube, or as a discrete scheme.\textsuperscript{100} Again, reports of abuses by private agencies had prompted this request, and the fact that some of these reports were founded on Soviet propaganda seemed of little matter.

Concurrent with these extensions of the PDW scheme, the Ministry of Labour undertook the recruitment of nursing trainees and hospital workers. This initiative was entitled the Nursing Employment (N.E.) scheme. This scheme was to apply to student nurses and the lower grades of nursing assistants only, although volunteers were to be told that they might become registered nurses under the right circumstances.\textsuperscript{101} Prospective recruits had to have a certain degree of education (up to Abitur) and had also to show aptitude for nursing, as well as some fluency in English. A compulsory test comprising an essay on "why I want to be a nurse", to be written in English, was meant to screen for these qualifications. There were to be four grades of positions to be recruited for under the N.E. scheme: student nurses, pupil assistant nurses, nursing orderlies, and assistant nurses. Although there was room for advancement within the system, it was to be made clear to the women that no guarantees of advancement opportunities could be given, and much depended on the placement and on relations with the matron in charge. Unlike previous schemes, the German Ministry of Labour would be in complete charge of selection of

\textsuperscript{100} PRO LAB 13/43: Meeting of Ministry of Labour officials and Austrian representatives, 16 December 1948.

\textsuperscript{101} PRO LAB 13/810: See memo following meeting, dated 31 July 1950.
Several weeks after the launch of the N.E. scheme in May 1951, Mrs. B.A. Bennett of the Ministry of Labour visited Germany to brief German recruiting officers about conditions in British hospitals. In her report of this trip, Bennett noted that potential volunteers feared being posted to hospitals where British women refused to go, for reasons of remoteness or unattractive conditions. This fear was not unfounded; the difficulty in staffing such institutions was one of the main reasons behind this recruitment. Still, Bennett recommended that this concern should be cleared up by providing descriptions of the hospitals to which volunteers were to be sent. It seemed that there was little interest in positions that were of lower status, such as nursing assistants and orderlies, particularly if there was no opportunity to move up to the position of student nurse within the program. Bennett noted that the question of social insurance benefits was also raised by the German government. As in the Italian scheme, the concern of the German government was that volunteers be eligible for entitlements they had paid for, either in Germany upon their return, or while in the U.K. These questions had to be cleared up in order for the recruiting officers to be able to reassure potential volunteers.

By mid-summer 1951 these concerns were clearly subverting the scheme considerably. A letter to the Ministry of Labour from the Office of the Manpower Advisor in Germany in mid-July noted the disappointing rate of intake of the scheme thus far. By the end of June only five candidates had come forward for 400 vacancies of all types currently listed. The problem, it seemed, was that most of the offers of employment were in

102 Ibid., discussion of particulars of scheme with German government, dated 28 August 1950, and note on agreement of terms dated 6 September 1950.

103 PRO LAB 13/810: Report of B.A. Bennett, dated 8 June 1951.
mental or tuberculosis hospitals, and there was a natural aversion, the letter noted, to such postings.\textsuperscript{104} Table 1 shows that the scheme did pick up somewhat in the subsequent months. But there were always at least as many permits issued privately as there were under the official scheme.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total # permits</th>
<th># permits in N.E.</th>
<th>N.E. % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The PDW scheme was also proving more sluggish than the government had hoped. In September an internal Ministry of Labour memo blamed the "dead hand of the German official machine which is killing the schemes."\textsuperscript{106} It was probably as much the case that the reputation of official schemes for particularly unsavoury placements in hardship households and institutions made them less palatable than the private agencies, who reputedly arranged more comfortable placements.\textsuperscript{107} The stipulation in the

\textsuperscript{104} PRO LAB 13/810: G.W.J. Cole to Ball, 13 July 1951.
\textsuperscript{105} PRO LAB 13/810: Figures taken from this file are undated.
\textsuperscript{106} PRO LAB 13/810: Ball to Goddard, 1 September 1951.
\textsuperscript{107} PRO LAB 13/43: D.M. Cleary to Blumen, 13 April 1949.
government schemes for single, childless women between the ages of 18-45 also limited the field to a great extent.

The PDW scheme, as Table 2 shows, never accounted for more than a quarter of all domestics recruited in Germany in the two years that it ran during the end of the Labour government's tenure. In Austria the scheme ran even more sluggishly, accounting for a mere 4% of the permits granted to domestic workers there.\textsuperscript{108} The N.E. scheme was slightly more successful in relative terms, accounting for about 45% of the total number of permits granted to German nurses and trainees in the last half of 1951.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Table 2}

Permits Issued to German Domestic Workers Since Start of PDW Scheme\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
Month & Total & Private & PDW & Total & Private & PDW \\
\hline
1 & 622 & 622 & --- & 585 & 461 & 124 & 21.2 \\
2 & 608 & 607 & 1 & 571 & 492 & 79 & 13.8 \\
3 & 721 & 712 & 9 & 575 & 511 & 64 & 11.1 \\
4 & 617 & 577 & 40 & 619 & 549 & 70 & 11.3 \\
5 & 649 & 556 & 93 & 592 & 535 & 57 & 9.6 \\
6 & 674 & 568 & 106 & 597 & 517 & 80 & 13.4 \\
7 & 765 & 583 & 182 & 622 & 547 & 75 & 12.0 \\
8 & 858 & 637 & 221 & 593 & 534 & 59 & 9.9 \\
9 & 797 & 581 & 216 & 554 & 511 & 43 & 7.4 \\
10 & 729 & 545 & 184 & 579 & 524 & 55 & 9.5 \\
11 & 765 & 585 & 180 & 537 & 492 & 45 & 8.4 \\
12 & 485 & 163 & 122 & 349 & 319 & 30 & 8.6 \\
\hline
Year & 8290 & 6936 & 1354 & 19.5 & 6773 & 5992 & 781 & 11.5 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{108} PRO LAB 8/2199: Memo dated 4 March 1954.

\textsuperscript{109} PRO LAB 8/2199: The total number of permits granted to German domestics in the years 1950 and 1951 was 15,063, of which 2,135 were issued under the PDW scheme. In 1951, 159 permits were issued to German women for nursing employment in the U.K., of which 72 were issued under the N.E. scheme.

\textsuperscript{110} Figures taken from PRO LAB 13/811.
Despite the disappointing figures the number of permits granted under these schemes was substantial. These semi-official schemes were also significant in that they departed from procedures followed under the official schemes. In the PDW scheme, for example, the German Ministry of Labour was allowed to select volunteers and to vet their suitability, while the British Ministry of Labour checked out employers. In all of the official schemes the British government had reserved the selection procedure entirely for itself.

Moreover, the German schemes were undertaken at the behest of the German authorities largely as a result of complaints about the poor treatment of some German women in the U.K. As one German official noted when advocating the government scheme in April 1949, there were at the time no German consular services in Britain, and the British government therefore had a "moral responsibility" to ensure that German women "are specifically protected against the special risks" arising from being far from home and "family influences." Under the PDW scheme, the Central Planning Office in Frankfurt acted as a clearing house for complaints and enquiries. In this sense too the scheme differed from the recruitment of Italian women, where although there was some concern expressed for the moral welfare of recruits, the modality for ensuring it was left to unofficial sources, such as the local Italian community, or the Catholic church.

Taken as a whole, official and semi-official schemes to recruit foreign women workers illuminated several important aspects of foreign labour recruitment in general. Because of women's dual role as workers and potential reproducers, issues of nationality -- including racial and socio-cultural stereotypes, and citizenship status -- were particularly highlighted. The re-tooling of British Nationality legislation

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had its effect on the position of foreign women workers in the U.K., and further illustrated the way in which the question of reproduction had an impact on considerations of policy with respect to female recruits. Several conclusions emerge from a closer look at this area of recruitment.

A clear preference for western European workers over those from eastern or southern Europe was displayed in the unfolding of these schemes. German women did not fare badly in this sort of national/racial hierarchy. The Foreign Office, it was noted in a Ministry of Labour memo, was particularly keen "for an official scheme under which German women could continue to emigrate to this country." Much of this had to do with commitments made to the O.E.E.C. to "do something to redress the balance of overpopulation and underemployment in Europe", as one Ministry of Labour official put it. But much also had to do with the estimation of the quality of the workers recruited, which one official described as "as good as anything we have ever recruited."

The government would have liked to recruit ethnic German women in larger numbers, but was constrained by certain social and political prohibitions. Trade union and industrial opposition to German workers had to be considered. So too did the question of returnability of recruits whose national status had not been definitively determined. The Ministry of Labour in particular had to devise some adroit contrivances to circumvent these constraints.

The constraints on the recruitment of female foreign workers were not entirely gender specific. Many of the nationality questions would have been issues in the case of men.

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113 PRO LAB 13/44: Pass to Grabutt, 17 November 1949: more on such international considerations will be said in the final chapter.

114 PRO LAB 13/44: Gabutt to Pass, 23 January 1950.
as well. However, by the fall of 1948 male foreign workers were not being officially recruited to Britain in significant numbers. The schemes discussed in this chapter invite a gendered analysis because they were specifically aimed at addressing the female labour shortage in the U.K. In the case of Italian female workers, stereotypes about social mores and behaviour, as well as logistical details, formed the predominant concerns to be ironed out between the two governments. In the case of German women, the issue of nationality classification absorbed the most attention. In both cases stereotypes of women's political and social role affected the terms, and the course, of recruitment. Rather than worry about the political proclivities of recruited women workers, as was the case for recruited male workers in this period, the government concerned itself with rating the relative degrees of "roughness", and of western bourgeois values of potential recruits. The advent of the semi-official schemes reflected the fact that while the government was anxious to pass on the costs of foreign labour recruitment to employers, it still felt it necessary to maintain some sort of control over the process of recruiting foreign women. The government's concern in this regard was primarily founded on the social implications of recruiting young women to work and live in a foreign environment. This concern, as we shall see in the next chapter, was not a light one.
Chapter Five: Private Recruitment

Not all foreign workers in the U.K. in these years were officially recruited. As many as 170,000 foreign workers were privately recruited either by individual firms or through agencies.¹ Private recruitment was the traditional way of bringing foreign labour to Britain; official schemes, as we have seen, represented an exceptional policy in exceptional circumstances. That is not to say that the two methods of recruitment did not intersect or overlap. Private recruitment had its effect on official schemes (the PDW and N.E. schemes discussed in the last chapter are examples), and vice versa. As with official recruitment, private recruitment raised issues of control and of the role of foreign workers within a capitalist economy.

Before 1939, foreign workers were recruited to the U.K. on individually arranged work permits. Under the private permit system, employers obtained an application form from the Home Office and sent it to the potential recruit, along with a letter indicating that they were prepared to employ that person.² The applicant would then apply directly to the Home Office for a work permit that would entitle them to take up the specified employment for a fixed period of time. In 1939 the Ministry of Labour took over the responsibility for granting work permits from the Home Office, but the procedure remained the same. During the war the issuance of private permits was suspended, and Control of Engagement Orders restricted the right of all workers, foreigners included, to change jobs as

¹ Kay and Miles note that in the period 1945-1951, 173,037 work permits were issued by the Ministry of Labour to foreign workers. See Diana Kay and Robert Miles, Refugees or Migrant Workers? (London: Routledge, 1993), p.37.

² PRO LAB 8/871: "Procedure for regulating entry of foreigners for employment in Great Britain."
they pleased.' After the war proposals to reopen private permit procedures provoked much internal debate and discussion.

At the end of 1945, Ministry of Labour and Home Office officials were discussing the possible relaxation of restrictions on the admission of alien domestic workers. In the pre-war period the majority of private permits had gone to female domestic workers who had been recruited through private employment agencies. In the aftermath of the war this category of workers was in demand again, and a return to the pre-war permit system was seen as one way to supply such workers. A Ministry of Labour memorandum on postwar departmental policy noted:

Numerically the problem is unimportant in relation to the pre-war size of the industry. At the peak of pre-war alien importation, with the great bulk of the women servants coming from Germany and Austria which would now be excluded, the aliens total was a fraction of one percent of the whole. The problem to be resolved is much more a political and psychological one which may have repercussions on the changing status of the industry.

Domestic workers in Britain were organizing themselves in a variety of trade unions in the immediate postwar period. This trend was what was meant by the "changing status of the industry". Organizations such as the National Union of Domestic Workers (NUDW) naturally feared the dilution of their positions if foreign workers were recruited. There were also questions raised about the vetting procedures imposed on privately recruited domestic workers, and again the reputation of domestic workers in general was held to be at stake.

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3 PRO LAB 8/911: "Employment Policy During War and Anticipated in Immediate Postwar." A review of the pre-war policy and the continuation and revision of it in the postwar period can be found in this file.

4 PRO LAB 8/92: Draft note prepared for Minister of Labour, 29 December 1945.
Difficulties also arose over the fairness of relaxing internal restrictions on foreign domestic workers. The Control of Engagement Orders still bound British and Irish women to their jobs at this time. Moreover, there were some 18,000 domestic vacancies of a so-called hardship nature, as well as those in hospitals and institutions, which were difficult to fill.\(^5\) If a relaxation of restrictions on foreign domestic workers was implemented, foreign domestic workers might be in an advantageous position in relation to British women, and might also be expected to gravitate towards the more attractive jobs. Moreover, private recruitment tended to be undertaken by wealthier households with the means to pay the costs of recruitment.\(^6\) A relaxation of restrictions would thus serve the wealthy while not necessarily addressing the so-called hardship cases.

In the ensuing months these points were the subject of a series of internal memos within the Ministry of Labour.\(^7\) The Control of Engagement Order was soon to be lifted, and thus was dispensed with as a point of argument. The hardship household

\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) PRO LAB 8/1683: The British Labour Attache in Rome noted early in 1951 that the employment agency operating there charged the employer L.3/3s. booking fee, and L.8/8s. final fee, plus the cost of the voyage to the U.K. (estimated at L.15). The recruited domestic paid one week's wage to the agency, and the cost of the voyage was deducted from her salary over the course of one year. The Rome representative of the agency received L.3 per head. This was not an atypical arrangement: a survey carried out in the late fall of 1951 showed that in 1000 cases in London and the Southeast (which were taken to be representative), 44% of recruited domestics paid their own passage to the U.K., while 14% more repaid their employers from their wages. Only 39% had their fares paid entirely by their employers. (Information also in the above cited file).

\(^7\) PRO LAB 8/92: File contains correspondence between Sir A. Maxwell (Home Office) and Sir Godfrey Ince (Ministry of Labour) on the question of relaxing controls on alien domestics employed in private households.
dilemma was another matter. This was another aspect of the "changing status of the industry." In the more egalitarian climate of the postwar years, the Ministry of Labour was determined to allocate domestic labour on the basis of need rather than of ability to pay. There thus arose the definition of "hardship household", which was to signify those households that were truly in need of domestic help, rather than those that merely found it a convenience. The Ministry's guidelines for hardship households included farmers, families with two or more children, or with elderly and invalid relatives, professional couples who both worked, and households where there were a large number of rooms. On the surface this seemed a fairly elastic definition of hardship. The main point however was that there were clearly some domestic jobs that were considered less attractive than others, by virtue of their remoteness, or the amount of work that they entailed. Many of these unattractive positions were considered essential work, and vitally important to fill.

The problem of staffing these hardship households, of making sure that foreign workers went to these difficult placings first, was to be tackled through the mechanism of the labour permit system. Some officials argued that an "open door" policy allowing foreign domestics to take any job they wished, or to which they might be recruited by a private agency, would not be problematic. Increasing the supply of domestic workers available in the U.K. would eventually filter down to the benefit of even the hardship cases.

The possibility of flooding the market with foreign domestics to the detriment of British workers was dismissed: "...there is far more domestic work available at good wages than there are women available and willing to take it in this country. The position can always be safeguarded by watching the numbers and tightening up the permit system if it should become
necessary."¹⁹ Moreover, as another official noted: "On the status point I believe that the admission of foreign girls is likely to raise the status of domestic service rather than lower it as in most cases the foreign girls are of a superior type to those normally engaged in domestic work here."¹⁰

According to some Ministry of Labour officials then, the solution to the problem of allocating domestic workers fairly was to bind them to 12 month contracts under Article I(3)(b) of the Aliens Order of 1920, which made it necessary for them to obtain Ministry of Labour permission to change jobs.¹¹ A proposal to grant permits only to households where there was no previous domestic employed was shot down as involving the Ministry in "an enormous amount of unpleasant work."¹² The Ministry of Labour's check on changing jobs would suffice to direct foreign labour into the proper channels. It was pointed out that the personal nature of the domestic/mistress relationship made it difficult for the Local Office of the Ministry to pass judgement on individual requests for permission to change jobs. Still, the Local Office could issue strong warnings to foreign domestics which might curb their behaviour to some extent, and in extreme cases there was always recourse to deportation, which the Home Office was willing to undertake. In general it was agreed that the Local Office would not judge cases, but rather would refer the worker to another position that qualified as hardship under the Ministry guidelines. Thus the permit system was agreed, and it was, incidentally, also advised that a similar procedure be

¹⁹ PRO LAB 8/92: Minute by G. Myrddin Evans, 17 January 1946.

¹⁰ PRO LAB 8/92: Internal memo by Ince, 28 January 1946.

¹¹ Details of Article 1(3)(b) of Aliens Order 1920 can be read in PRO LAB 8/871.

¹² PRO LAB 8/92: Internal memorandum by Ince, 28 January 1946.
implemented in respect of displaced persons recruited for
domestic work. The relaxation of restrictions on foreign
domestics was announced publicly in the House of Commons on 11
April 1946, after consultations had been completed with the
Women's Consultative Committee (WCC), the NUDW, and several
other interested groups.

One question that arose in respect of the relaxed permit
procedure was the Home Office position regarding the granting
of visas to children of foreign domestic workers. When the
Minister of Labour had announced the new permit policy in the
House of Commons he had specifically noted that "We are not
proposing to import families. I am not quite sure whether, if a
woman has a family to look after, she could do domestic
duty." This statement was raised by the Ministry of Labour in
a correspondence with the Home Office in the early months of
1947. The Ministry of Labour's position was that it would be
more difficult to place women with children in subsequent
appointments. Given the nature of domestic work, with its
frequent turnover, this handicap was significant, and Local
offices were apparently reporting such difficulties already.
The Ministry of Labour therefore advised that women not be
granted the right to bring over small children with them. In
contrast, male permit holders coming for a period of not less
than one year were allowed to bring over wives and dependent
children. The Home Office reply to this request was that it had
not been their practice to "ban" dependents in the past, and it
may not be possible to do so indefinitely. They proposed a

13 Ibid.

14 PRO LAB 8/92: Instructions regarding this new policy
were contained in M.L. Circular 8/49, sent out to Regional and
Local Offices on 2 May 1946.

15 PRO LAB 8/92: M.A. Bevan (Ministry of Labour) to H.H.C.
Prestige, (Home Office), 3 January 1947.

16 PRO LAB 8/92: H.H.C. Prestige (Home Office) to M.A.
Bevan (Ministry of Labour), dated 31 January 1947.
compromise whereby individual cases would be considered after a period of six months had passed, and only where the Ministry of Labour had approved an extension of the permit, and the employer had found accommodation for the dependent. This was the policy which the Ministry finally announced in the late summer of 1947, in response to questions posed in the House of Commons.\textsuperscript{17}

Concurrent with this policy, the government moved to liberalize restrictive war-time legislation on aliens and refugees in Britain in order to allow for the exploitation of their labour. As with foreign domestics the issues of control and of heading off indigenous resentment of foreign workers came to the fore here. On 7 November 1946 the Foreign Labour Committee decided to amend Article I of S.R.&O. 1660 in order to release pre-war refugees from restrictive employment conditions.\textsuperscript{18} The revocation order came into effect on 23 July 1947 and freed all aliens resident in the U.K. "immediately" prior to 3 September 1939, as well as those who were married to women of "British stock". However there were two conditions which mitigated the effect of this release for hitherto bound aliens. In a circular to L.O.s dated 8 September 1947, the Ministry of Labour qualified the terms by stating that all aliens who had employment restrictions re-imposed on them after 23 July were not subject to the amendment. Another circular dated 29 November 1947 noted that:

\begin{quote}
It is not intended to make any announcement regarding this decision but opportunities will be taken to cancel employment conditions as and when the cases of foreigners in the two categories come to notice.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Hansard}, 10 July 1947, col. 238.

\textsuperscript{18} PRO LAB 8/1267: See Aliens (Employment )Order, 1947, No. 1581.

\textsuperscript{19} PRO LAB 8/1267: See M.L. Circ. 8/64 (8 September 1947) and M.L. Circ. 8/68 (29 November 1947).
In other words bound workers would not be informed of their freedom to change jobs until they attended at the local employment exchange with the intention of changing their job! This policy served to hold bound workers in place for as long as possible, while also avoiding the publicity that might stir jealousy on the part of British workers, particularly those employed in undesirable work themselves.

The easing of restrictions on the recruitment of foreign domestic workers and on pre-war refugees were ostensibly a response to postwar labour shortages. But they were clearly undertaken with reticence. At the end of January 1947 an internal Ministry of Labour memo noted the number of work permit requests from foreigners in the U.K. that were being denied. From May to December 1946 the number of permit applications refused in the "Industrial and Commercial" group was 727.\footnote{PRO LAB 8/1670: Crookenden to Bevan and Yates, 31 January 1947.} Interestingly, of this number 432 were applications made by Italian ex-POW, most of whom sought to return to farms where they had worked as prisoners. Temporary visitors to the U.K. were applying for work permits at the rate of about 25 per week, and half of these were being refused. As a memo responding to these figures noted, the numbers needed to shore up labour shortages would not be redressed by such a small quantity of additional workers.\footnote{PRO LAB 8/1670: Yates to Bevan, 3 February 1947.} Analysts in the press and in parliament were calling for an additional 100,000 workers, while the number of workers that might be gained by easing permit restrictions would at most be two to three thousand. Against that figure, it was noted, one had to weigh the potential antipathy of the trade unions, who would want to be consulted on a case by case basis.

Nevertheless public pressure in the press and in
parliament, and a Cabinet directive to facilitate the employment of more foreign workers in the U.K. led the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office to relax criteria for the granting of entry permits in order to allow foreigners to come to the U.K. to look for work. This measure did not sit entirely comfortably with the Ministry Of Labour. In the opinion of a senior civil servant in the department at least, the prospect of solving Britain's immediate labour shortages with temporary foreign workers who could be gotten rid of once times changed was not a desirable policy. In a minute commenting on the Home Office initiative, M.A. Bevan noted:

It may be true that the foreigner who comes here for employment has no definite guarantee that he will be allowed to stay here indefinitely, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that the foreigner who comes to this country for manual work will often do so in the hope of being able to settle here and that so long as he behaves himself as a good citizen and wishes to remain, he should be allowed to do so. The idea of using powers of deportation to get rid of him simply because our employment position has changed and he has served our immediate purpose is hardly in accord with British traditions.

Foreign workers, thought Bevan, should be allowed only where there were prospects for long-term employment. The easing of permit procedures would, in his opinion, have little effect on productivity. Moreover, allowing foreigners into the U.K. to look for work would be "sure to lead to much trouble from the Trade Unions and might lead to an influx of foreigners many of whom might not be wholly desirable."

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22 Kathleen Paul, Whitewashing Britain, op.cit., p.67, cites the appointment in February 1946 of a Foreign Labour Committee to "examine...the possibility of making increased use of foreign labor" as a turning point in the policy on utilizing foreign labour.

23 PRO LAB 8/1670: Minute by M.A. Bevan, 31 March 1947.
Bevan's comments were made at the same time that the Westward Ho scheme was announced to the public in March 1947. As the official scheme was set in motion, the Ministry of Labour continued to wrangle with the Home Office over the exact outlines of private permit policy. In August 1947 the Ministry finally agreed to the Home Office proposals to grant permits more readily to foreigners with special skills, and to unskilled workers in areas which were undermanned. It was also agreed that trade unions need not be consulted in the case of private recruitment of foreign workers. Applications for permits would have to be referred to the Local Office of the Ministry of Labour to confirm the shortage of workers there. In borderline cases the policy would be to grant the permit. In common with the policy regarding the easing of restrictions on pre-war refugees, this change of policy would not be announced publicly, nor would a special report be given to the Cabinet.

The liberalization of the permit issuance procedures extended also to visitors and students in the U.K. who sought permission to work subsequent to their arrival. In these cases too the Home Office pushed for liberalization while the Ministry of Labour had to be pulled along. An internal Ministry of Labour memo noted in September 1947: "Broadly speaking the Home Office has become immigration minded and if an alien looks like being a useful addition to the population they are now tending to welcome him; and in effect they will put the onus for his not being able to settle here entirely on his merits as

24 The industries where unskilled workers were needed were outlined by the Ministry of Labour, and the list is contained in: PRO LAB 8/2200. The industries for whom EVWs were to be recruited formed a rough guide. A list compiled by M.A. Bevan and dated 13 August 1947 showed that for men the industries were: coalmining, agriculture, iron founding, railway workshops, sheet metal manufacture, china clay, tinplate manufacture; for women: cotton, woolen and worsted, wholesale clothing, hosiery, boot and shoe manufacture, silk, textile bleaching, dyeing and finishing, pottery, laundries.

Thus the Home Office proposed that where the visitor or student was able to find work, he should be granted a permit by the Ministry of Labour to do so.

The Ministry of Labour reluctantly went along with this request, with the proviso that the Home Office take responsibility for the conduct, and if necessary the deportation, of the student/visitor. Ministry of Labour circular 8/70, issued on 8 April 1948, laid out the new permit application procedures, and stipulated that applications from student/visitors must be made through a prospective employer rather than by the student/visitor directly. In this way the application procedure would be the same as for those applying from outside the country; that is, it would be an application in respect of a specific job. Applications had to be referred by the Local Offices to the Foreign Labour Division (FLD) of the Ministry, except in the case of domestic workers, who could be placed directly by the Local Office. Permits issued in this way were good for an indefinite period, and did not need to be renewed by either the Local Office or the FLD. The only exceptions to these liberalized procedures were for students of dance, theatre and music, and stateless persons. These would still have their visas stamped "no employment".

In April 1950 the indefinite period of the student/visitor permits was amended to one year in the first instance, with subsequent renewals of 18 months. The time limit forced permit holders to report regularly to their Local Office, and in this way allowed the Ministry to keep tabs on foreigners resident in the U.K. This revision came in concert with a reversion to the pre-war policy of removing landing conditions on foreigners after four years of continuous residence. Thus

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28 This reversion went into effect in April 1951.
student/visitors would have to renew their work permits twice before being freed entirely from Ministry of Labour restrictions. In addition to allowing the Ministry to keep tabs on them, the new time limit provisions also made it possible to let student/visitors know when their status had changed, i.e. when they were freed from restrictions. This was important since it was not intended to make a public announcement regarding the removal of restrictions.\(^{29}\) Instead foreigners would be informed of their freedom when attending their Local Offices. In November 1950 a Ministry of Labour memo to the Home Office noted that student/visitors granted indefinite permits might not be made aware of the changed rules since they had no reason to attend at their Local Offices.\(^ {30}\) The Home Office however, maintained that no public announcement was desirable, and instructed Police and Immigration Officers to make such people aware of the changed policy.\(^ {31}\) Once again the easing of permit restrictions was mitigated by secrecy.

Labour shortages were not the only factor in the trend towards easing postwar restrictions on the recruitment of foreign workers. By the beginning of 1950 official government schemes were being wound down. Yet there remained numbers of refugees in Displaced Persons camps who had still to be resettled. In January 1950 the Ministry of Labour wrote the Foreign Office suggesting that, in keeping with proposals made by the IRO, Britain could facilitate greater absorption of Displaced Persons by easing the permit procedure in respect of

\(^{29}\) PRO LAB 8/2104: MLC 8/84, dated 30 April 1951, contained instructions and details for Local Offices of Ministry of Labour.

\(^{30}\) PRO LAB 8/2104: Crookenden (Ministry of Labour) to Weiler (Home Office), 27 November 1950.

\(^{31}\) PRO LAB 8/2104: Weiler (Home Office) to Crookenden (Ministry of Labour), 22 January 1951.
workers with special skills. The IRO was set to wind up its operations in July 1950, and there remained a hard core of Displaced Persons still to be settled. The permit procedure could be made more liberal by limiting the vetting of applicants by the Home Office. One of the difficulties with such a proposal, the Foreign Office noted, was that it might make it difficult to maintain the employment restrictions on EVWs if privately recruited Displaced Persons were given preferential treatment (i.e. allowed to work in their areas of expertise rather than in unattractive essential industries). Trade union opposition and the increased potential for undesirable elements -- defined mainly in terms of poor health and lack of skills -- to slip through, were other anticipated troubles.

Despite these trepidations the IRO was given the function of liaising between the employers, Displaced Persons and the Ministry of Labour. Applications from employers were received by the IRO, who would then match them up with Displaced Persons and forward them to the Ministry of Labour for approval. The permits would then be passed to the Displaced Person by the IRO. By August 1950 the Home Office was expressing dissatisfaction with this procedure. In a memo to the Foreign Office it was noted that neither the IRO nor employers were vetting recruits closely enough. The IRO, anxious to get Displaced Persons off its hands, was paying their fares to the U.K., while employers were therefore less concerned than they might be about vetting recruits. The memo called for closer

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32 PRO LAB 8/1678: Ministry of Labour memo to Foreign Office, 10 January 1950.

33 Ibid., Boothby (Foreign Office) to Hughes (Home Office), 21 January 1950.

34 PRO LAB 8/1678: J.B. Howard (Home Office) memo to Passport Control Office (Foreign Office), dated 17 August 1950. This memo noted that the IRO was anxious to get Displaced Persons settled and so were paying the fares for recruits. As a result employers were not vetting recruits stringently enough.
vetting by Passport Control Officers at the point of entry to the U.K., including discretionary assessments of the recruit's level of English.

Control over the process of foreign labour recruitment and over the deployment and behaviour of foreign workers in the U.K. was obviously the predominant concern in respect of private permit foreign labour recruitment. As an internal Ministry of Labour memo noted in the winter of 1947/8, restrictions imposed on individually recruited workers were bound to be less strenuous than those recruited on bulk permits: "We can accept the position that bulk recruitment needs to be formally regulated....[but] certain details of regulation quite acceptable in regard to bulk recruitment are inappropriate for individual contracts."35 This fact left open important questions, particularly in the context of continuing restrictions on British and officially recruited foreign workers. Another internal memo at the Ministry of Labour expressed the problems related to private recruitment as follows:

35 PRO LAB 8/1440: Bevan to Yates, 16 February 1948.
Where would direction come in? Possibly a form of compulsion would be the stoppage of benefit, when there was unreasonable refusal of offer of work but presumably not on a stern basis than for our own work people. Meanwhile we are embarking upon a series of treaty negotiations with other countries and the drafts almost invariably contain an article undertaking not to compel their nationals to perform manual work.... There is also the new type of labour control on our own nationals which requires persons of certain ages who do not work to register with this Department, presumably to be put to work. It does not apply at present to persons not ordinarily resident in this country. I would therefore assume that, in the case of migrants intending to settle here (apart from the D.P. refugee type) they would be for the first few years able to avoid work if they could maintain themselves by some means or other that did not bring them up against the police; and they would only fall into the net spread to catch the "work shy" after they had been here for four years - the usual H.O. period before foreigners are regarded as residents. This may seem an academic point but it does bear on "assimilation" problems.\(^{16}\)

The international complications hinted at in this memo will be elaborated in the following chapter. Suffice it to note here that the Ministry of Labour felt itself to be constrained by a variety of factors from exercising the sort of control over privately recruited foreign workers that it would have liked.

Recruiting in bulk, or in official schemes, allowed for a greater measure of control over foreign workers, as was noted by the Ministry of Labour's Bevan. But at times the concurrent recruitment of individual workers on private permits created anomalies which forced the government to liberalize the terms imposed on workers recruited officially or on bulk permits (i.e. as a group). One example of this involved German women recruited to work as domestics for another set of "recruited" workers.

German POW scientists -- the SCIRE recruits mentioned in a previous chapter -- had been allowed to import German domestics

\(^{16}\) PRO LAB 8/1440: Yates to Bevan, 14 November 1947.
to work exclusively for them. The women were identified by the same SCIRE code in their documents as was used for the scientists. Their terms of employment were far more restrictive, however, than were the terms usually applied in respect of Ministry of Labour private permits. For example, as has been shown, permission to change domestic employment was generally conferred without much fuss by the Local Office of the Ministry. But in the case of SCIRE domestics, Local Officers were to refer all requests for permission to change employment back to headquarters. In this way the women were effectively tied to their original employers much more stringently than were ordinarily recruited foreign domestics. Furthermore SCIRE domestics were paid at less than the standard rate, a violation of one of the most important principles set out by the unions for recruited foreign labour. The tight restrictions placed on their mobility made this possible.

The decision to allow the recruitment of female German domestic workers in the spring of 1948 made these conditions anomalous in the sense that there would now be two separate classes of female German workers in the U.K. Late in 1948 the position of SCIRE domestics was discussed within the Ministry of Labour. A Ministry of Labour memo of November 1948, inquiring about several cases of SCIRE domestics wanting to change to higher paying jobs, noted that the restrictive terms for SCIRE domestics "suggests that the concession [for SCIRE scientists] was regarded as in the nature of a perquisite to make the prospect of settling in an alien land more attractive". Now that the stage of active recruitment of SCIRE

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37 PRO LAB 8/1450: Internal memo from Yates to Crookenden, dated 28 August 1947.

38 Ibid. In this memo Miss Yates noted: "I should add that wages do not need to be tested by our prevailing standards. You will note that the girls are only being paid 3 pounds per month. They will however be tied to the single regional household for whose service they are allowed to enter this country."
scientists had passed, the memo noted, it was not necessary to continue this concession, nor to put the SCIRE domestics on a less advantageous footing than their countrywomen. In December it was agreed that future requests by SCIRE domestics to transfer jobs would be handled in the usual way, that is, by the Local Offices of the Ministry of Labour. In practice this meant a more liberal handling of these requests than if they were referred back to headquarters (FLD). In this way the SCIRE domestics were put on the same footing as privately recruited domestic workers.

Government policy on the issue of control of foreign domestic workers was thus quite liberal in practice. Foreign domestics were controlled through restrictive contracts, but the enforcement of these contracts allowed for personal considerations to be weighed into the balance. The Ministry of Labour held that the personal nature of the mistress/servant relationship meant that a certain amount of moving around was inevitable, and Local Offices were instructed to be lenient in allowing requests for change of employment. A poll done in the late summer of 1951 on the movement of foreign domestic workers in the U.K. seemed to bear out the government reasoning for policy.

In August 1951 a series of articles in the Daily Telegraph and the Evening Standard reported that many domestics were leaving their initial permit placings fairly quickly, and that the Local Offices of the Ministry of Labour were allowing them to do so without much fuss. These articles prompted the

39 PRO LAB 8/1451: Internal memo from Keith to Crookenden, dated 26 November 1948.

40 PRO LAB 8/1451: Correspondence between Keith and Thorne, 11 December 1948. The liberalization of terms is reflected in instructions issued by Keith (8 December 1948) that until the official institution of this policy by the Darwin Panel, "any pending requests for permission to change employment can be allowed."
Ministry of Labour to launch an investigation, and a survey was carried out in the London and Southeast region, where about half of the households employing domestics were situated.\(^41\) The survey looked at statistics for the three months from 1 October to 31 December 1951. Nearly one thousand cases were reviewed. Of this number, roughly 35% of the foreign domestics left their initial placings in the first three months. Twenty eight percent of these found their new jobs through private agents, while 12% went through the Local Office of the Ministry of Labour. These figures did not alarm Ministry civil servants, who interpreted them as an indication that nearly 70% were staying in their initial placings for a considerable period of time.

The survey also revealed some interesting figures about the behaviour and motivations of foreign domestics. Because a certain amount of job changing was deemed inevitable, the tightening of restrictions made by M.L. Circular 8/67 in the spring of 1947 had concentrated only on restricting the subsequent placing, and not on refusing the domestic the right to leave her employ if she found it unsatisfactory.\(^42\) The survey showed that in only 3% of the cases where a domestic had changed jobs was the reason "higher wage was needed" given. The reasons most often given for leaving initial postings were: unhappy (20%), overworked (15%), desired change of district or duties (24%), and services no longer required (20%).\(^43\) The official assumption that domestic service was personal and therefore not easy to regulate was seemingly borne out.

Control measures on privately recruited domestics were

\(^{41}\) PRO LAB 8/1683: The survey results in this file are undated, but the survey itself was requested by Myrddin-Evans in a note dated 1 August 1951.


\(^{43}\) LAB 8/1683: Survey undated.
thus not entirely satisfactory to the Ministry of Labour. One of the main concerns of the Ministry in this regard were the abuses perpetrated by some private employment agencies. The PDW and N.E. schemes mentioned in the last chapter were one attempt to supplant such agencies with more rigorously regulated semi-official mechanisms. The operation of private agencies was a special concern of the Women's Consultative Committee (WCC), who saw private agencies as wont to unfairly exploit women workers. The Ministry of Labour was also not favourably disposed towards private agencies because of the often destabilizing role they played in the labour market, and the fact that they could not be adequately supervised. Their operations, it was noted by one civil servant, served no "national purpose", a strong condemnation under the prevailing bureaucratic mind set of the postwar period.44

The official position with respect to private employment agencies was, however, necessarily ambiguous; while condemning them in private, the government was bound to accept their right to do business in a capitalist society. This ambiguity was demonstrated by the response to a questionnaire contained in the report of the 30th ILO Conference held in Geneva in the summer of 1947. The conference had debated the question of revising the 1933 Convention (#34) in order to abolish fee charging employment agencies.45 The questionnaire sought a summary of the prevailing policy with respect to such agencies. British policy was somewhat murky at this time. With the reimposition of the Control of Engagement Order coming into effect on 6 October 1947, the activities of private agencies were severely curtailed. Employers were compelled to advertise vacancies and recruit workers solely through either the Local Labour Exchanges or an approved employment agency. However the

44 PRO LAB 8/92: Memorandum by Wiles, 26 February 1946.

45 PRO LAB 13/265: Committee on Periodical Reports (103rd session, 5th meeting, 10 December 1947, Geneva).
Ministry of Labour was loath to give the impression that this was a permanent policy. Prior to the Control of Engagement Order, employment agencies were sometimes controlled by local authorities through health and sanitary regulations, but there was no general legislation. As the Order was a temporary measure, there was thought to be no need to state on the questionnaire that there was any national legislation regarding fee charging agencies.

The United States delegation had predictably opposed the ban on private agencies, arguing that they filled a need, and that their abolition would not be tolerated in a free enterprise system. The British position was that these agencies were legitimate businesses operating in a field which perhaps required regulation. Thus despite repeated TUC requests to successive governments to abolish such agencies, the response to the ILO proposal to revise Convention 34 was guarded. In a note to the Director General of the ILO laying out the British position for the upcoming ILO Conference in San Francisco in early 1948, the Ministry of Labour stated that the U.K. would be unable to ratify even a watered down version of the abolition proposal, and in general did not feel that this matter was one in which the British delegates should take much interest. Although Britain was much more willing to accept

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46 Ibid.: Section 85 of the 1907 Public Health Acts Amendment Act held that any person who carries on "for the purpose of private gain" a female domestic servants registry must register with the Local Authority his name and place of abode and business address. The Local Authority could then regulate the working of the agency. In London all agencies had to be licensed by the LCC under the LCC (General Powers) Act 1921.

47 Ibid., A.M. Morgan to Director General, ILO, dated 5 December 1947.


49 Ibid., Morgan to Director-General, ILO, 5 December 1947.
the desirability of regulation than were the Americans, it was not prepared to bind itself to an international Convention. Nor clearly was the Labour government in a great hurry to supplant the private sector entirely in this particular field.\textsuperscript{50}

Late in 1948 the Ministry of Labour did discuss the possibility of restricting the activities of private agencies in areas where they were in direct competition with official recruitment schemes. There were also suggestions to formally restrict agencies from recruiting professionals -- such as nurses -- and those without visas, who could not easily be repatriated.\textsuperscript{51} Although it was decided that the difficulties involved in restricting private agencies outweighed the advantages, it was acknowledged that "a new range for misconduct" was opening up in the field of foreign recruitment.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, for example, domestics who were recruited for one post could, upon arrival, quit and take up another, more desirable post. The recruiting agencies would often take a cut at both ends, and in this way circumvent the government policy of staffing so-called hardship households first.

\textsuperscript{50} As this question was being discussed, the government of Ceylon was drafting a Bill which would, in keeping with the Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention (#50), make private employment agencies illegal in that country unless they were recruiting on behalf of the Ceylon government or an approved country or specified employer. The Bill was being drafted in September 1947 at a time when the status of the country was also in the process of changing. The important question was what this would mean for British agencies recruiting domestics in countries of the Commonwealth, and in countries outside of it. In the event it was decided by the Colonial Office and the Ministry of Labour that the matter was not an urgent one, and that nothing need be done. Clearly there was not going to be much call, from the British point of view, to be interfering in the policy of an independent Ceylon in this matter. This episode says as much about the government's indifferent attitude towards the rights and role of private agencies, as it does about the loosening of imperial ties. See: PRO LAB 13/68.

\textsuperscript{51} PRO LAB 8/1683: Gulland to Reisner, 16 November 1948.

\textsuperscript{52} PRO LAB 8/1683: Internal memo: Keith to Bevan, 18 November 1948.
Ministry of Labour's frustration at dealing with such abuses was illustrated when the issue of misleading information being given out by private agencies was publicly broached in a series of articles in the press in early 1949. An internal Ministry memo commented that it was "a pity that these agencies ... cannot be more closely controlled."\(^{53}\)

At the same time the Ministry deemed that its control of the issuance of permits, and the Local Office monitoring and regulation of job changing, gave it sufficient powers to control private agencies and recruited workers. In October 1947, for example, the Ministry issued circular M.L.8/67 to all Local Offices, instructing officers to permit foreign domestics seeking to change their jobs to take work only in institutions, or in hardship households.\(^{54}\) This instruction was issued at a time when the Control of Engagement Order was being imposed on all British workers, and made conditions for foreign domestics commensurately restrictive. The tightening of restrictions was communicated to all Labour Attaches abroad so that they could make the policy known to all potential recruits. It was anticipated that the policy would make it less desirable for some women to accept certain kinds of work, and that the activities of private agencies would be subverted.\(^{55}\)

Thus, although the Ministry of Labour stopped short of advocating the complete restriction of private employment agencies in areas where the government was running official schemes, such agencies were regarded with suspicion and some degree of hostility. Certainly the Ministry did not want to take responsibility for the actions of private agencies, particularly in respect of their treatment of young women in

\(^{53}\) PRO LAB 8/1443: Internal memo by Crookenden, dated 26 April 1949.


\(^{55}\) Ibid., Veysey minute to Parliamentary Secretary, 11 September 1947.
the U.K. The German and Italian Ministries of Labour, on the other hand, did take very active roles in monitoring the recruitment of their citizens for work abroad, and insisted on guarantees in respect of certain conditions. The British government's reluctance to give such assurances for private British agencies did hinder private recruitment abroad. Some agencies attempted to portray themselves as officially approved in some sense, but this was strictly frowned upon by the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry was concerned that alleged misdeeds by private agencies would jeopardize the legitimacy of official schemes, and there were indications that this was indeed happening. In December 1948, for example, a Ministry of Labour correspondence to the Foreign Office noted that adverse reports regarding private agencies were subverting the North Sea recruitment, as parents were forbidding their daughters to go to Britain even under official schemes.56

One private agency which gave the Ministry of Labour repeated trouble was the Compton James agency of Taunton. This agency's attempts to circumvent government procedures and to portray themselves as officially sanctioned were a fairly constant source of irritation to the department, and illustrate the sorts of problems that the confluence of private and official recruitment could present. The case of Compton James also showed the particularly delicate nature of recruiting young women for work abroad in this period.

The Compton James agency first came to the attention of the Ministry of Labour in the fall of 1947, when letters by the agency were sent to several Local Offices of the Ministry suggesting that the name of the agency be given to employers seeking workers. The letters tactfully noted that of course there could be no question of recommending their services, but in the past their name had been mentioned to employers, and perhaps this could be continued. This solicitation prompted the

56 PRO LAB 13/43: H.A. Pass (Ministry of Labour) to P. Nicholls (Foreign Office), dated 16 December 1948.
Ministry to circularize all Local Offices with instructions not to recommend or forward the names of any private employment agencies to employers. In no way did the Ministry wish to appear to be endorsing any private agency.

Early in 1949 the activities of Compton James were once again being considered by the Ministry. A Ministry of Labour memo to the Home Office noted that the agency had been encouraging young women to come to the U.K. without a labour permit in hand, and then to apply for one once in the country. As has been noted, the procedure for granting permits to foreigners already in the U.K. had been liberalized, but the Ministry of Labour still did not wish to encourage foreigners to arrive without the prior screening of the permit procedure. Apparently Compton James had been getting employers to sign form letters to prospective recruits inviting them to come for a visit, and offering to pay their expenses. The letter would be forwarded by Compton James to prospective employees abroad. Compton James argued that this procedure was meant to enable recruits to get their visa arrangements under way and thus expedite the permit procedure, which took three to four weeks. The Home Office failed to see merit in this reasoning. At their behest police visited the offices of Compton James and extracted a promise to discontinue this practice.

Throughout this period Compton James had tried various methods of pressuring the government to expedite the permit granting procedure. One such method was to circulate a stenciled letter of complaint to M.P.s, to be filed with the government in the event that permits were not granted within 10

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58 PRO LAB 8/2110: Crookenden (Ministry of Labour) to Hankinson (Aliens Department, Home Office), 30 May 1949.

59 Ibid., Home Office to Crookenden, 24 October 1949.
days. This caused considerable irritation at the Ministry of Labour. Another method was to use application forms for permits which looked very much like the official forms, but which were printed up by Compton James. These counterfeit forms were printed after Compton James had tried to obtain a quantity of official forms in advance from the Ministry in order to save time, but had been refused. An internal memo noted that the reason for refusing this request was that it would look as though the department was sanctioning the agency. Needless to say such pressure tactics did not endear the agency to the Ministry of Labour.

In the summer of 1949, Mr. D. Compton James wrote the Ministry of Labour complaining of slanderous articles in the German press which implied that he was running some sort of white slavery racket. The articles also implied that the Ministry of Labour had warned the German Labour Administration against his agency. This warning turned out to have been a Control Commission for Germany statement issued in July 1948 which, in reply to the German Labour Administration's request for a guarantee of private agencies such as Compton James, had said that the British government was not prepared to give such assurances and took no responsibility for such agencies. The German administration subsequently banned advertisements for

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60 PRO LAB 8/2110: The planting of questions in the House of Commons was contemplated as a means of refuting the validity of these forms, and of explaining the procedure for granting permits. See internal memo, dated 13 January 1949.

61 PRO LAB 8/2110: See correspondence of Compton James and Crookenden, dated 17 and 20 May 1950; and internal memo dated 12 May 1950.


private agencies. The articles in the German press came out in February 1949, and alleged that the British government was in the process of investigating Compton James in conjunction with the police. A Sunday Pictorial article which ran on 13 February 1949 was Headlined: "He Supplies German Maids - Says: I'm no White Slaver", and repeated the accusations made by Compton James. All of these articles implied that the private employment agency business was sleazy.

Internal Ministry of Labour memos regarding this complaint noted that Compton James was a "tough" and "litigious" character, and that it was therefore necessary to assure him that there was no investigation of his actions taking place, and that the department was not releasing slanderous material to the press. Yet although the Ministry of Labour was anxious to placate Compton James in this instance, they were at this same time monitoring his various machinations. The culmination of their attentions was the visit to Compton James paid by the police in the late summer of 1949, alluded to above. In fairness it should be noted that this visit had nothing to do with the accusations of white slavery. But these accusations contributed to the distasteful impression Compton James made on the Ministry.

Problems with Compton James continued despite the Ministry of Labour's halfhearted attempt to placate him. In June 1950 for example, the agency was once again in the spotlight because of an Evening Standard story in which Compton James was quoted as saying that the U.K. could take thousands of secretarial workers. The Ministry of Labour had subsequently had numerous inquiries from people who assumed that they were sponsoring the idea. Again this necessitated a public disavowal, and in the aftermath press officers of the Ministry were put on special

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64 PRO LAB 8/1672: See letter sent to Compton James by Keith, dated 12 May 1950.
alert to watch for such statements in future.65

One year later, in July 1951, the British Labour Attache in Rome wrote the Ministry of Labour about the possibility of getting an official guarantee for Compton James!66 The Italian Ministries of Labour and of Foreign Affairs had asked for an official guarantee, and Compton James, apparently undeterred by the repeated statements of Ministry policy, was once again seeking the Ministry's imprimatur. The reply from the Ministry again reiterated that they did not guarantee such operations, although it was noted that in some large towns the Local Authorities did issue licenses to private agencies, and that this might serve as some sort of indication of legitimacy.67

The Ministry of Labour's reluctance to work co-operatively with private employment agencies was not mirrored by a reluctance to work with private firms recruiting workers abroad. Several examples of government co-operation appear in the Ministry of Labour files. One example came in the fall of 1949, when the official scheme to recruit Italian women for the textile industries (detailed in the last chapter) was getting under way. On 4 October 1949 Ministry of Labour officials met with representatives of Courtaulds Ltd., a rayon manufacturing company that had been employing Italian women on private permits.68 The Courtaulds people said they had already recruited 92 Italian women, and were interested in acquiring the services of 100 more. They wanted to nominate specific workers for the government scheme. The Ministry of Labour position was that official recruitment was done for the benefit of the industry as a whole, and not for any specific company.

65 PRO LAB 8/1672: Internal memo from J.E. Herbert to Morarity, dated 26 May 1950.
66 PRO LAB 8/2110: Braine to Crookenden, 30 July 1951.
67 PRO LAB 8/2110: Crookenden to Braine, 20 August 1951.
68 PRO LAB 13/822: Meeting of 4 October 1949.
The workers were pooled, and specific nominees could not be guaranteed where they might be placed. Still, the Ministry did promise to try to provide fifty workers to Courtaulds by the end of the year. Courtaulds in return offered to use their contacts in Italy to stimulate recruitment to the government scheme, while at the same time instructing volunteers that they were not guaranteed placement at Courtaulds. The Labour Attache in Rome was subsequently instructed that the official scheme was now to include 100 workers for Courtaulds in addition to the 150 already agreed for cotton.\(^{69}\)

Another example of government co-operation in unofficial recruitment came in the spring of 1950, when machinists were sought in Italy by the Whaley Bridge company. One of the advantages of "unofficial" recruitment, as has been mentioned, was that trade unions did not need to be consulted. Under official recruitment schemes the Ministry of Labour had to negotiate the acceptance of the foreign workers by all sides of industry. In practice this meant having to deal with trade union opposition to foreign workers, and restrictions that were imposed as a result. Unofficial schemes had no such restrictions since the government was supposedly not involved. Yet often the government was quite involved in the recruiting process. In the case of Whaley Bridge -- a non-union employer -- though the Ministry of Labour disavowed involvement, it instructed the Labour Attache in Rome to give the firm the names of potential volunteers so that Whaley Bridge might apply for private permits in the usual fashion. In this note the Ministry of Labour stated that in order to avoid trouble with the trade unions, the Ministry of Labour was dissociating itself entirely from the Whaley Bridge recruitment, but that "there would be no objection to someone at your end giving them necessary contacts and easing the way with the Italian

\(^{69}\) PRO LAB 13/822: Ball to Braine, 11 October 1949.
authorities."

But the Ministry of Labour was not always as co-operative as some private firms would have liked. One case in point involved the Anglo Italian Silk Importing Company (AISIC). AISIC first requested a group permit from the Ministry of Labour in May 1946. The director of the company, a Mr. Ineichen, claimed that a shortage of skilled throwsters was creating a bottleneck which prevented the company from working at full capacity. In several letters to the FLD over the ensuing months, Ineichen stressed the number of British women that could be put to work if these bottlenecks could be alleviated, as well as the importance of the industry to the export drive. He proposed to send an agent of the company, one E. De Fillipis, to Italy to recruit the women personally, and he intimated that a house had been purchased in Colchester and preparations had been made to turn it into a hostel for approximately twenty women. In a Ministry of Labour report on the request dated 15 June 1946, it was noted that the positions to be filled by the permit workers would be in odd hour shifts which British women generally found undesirable. Further, the work was considered to be skilled and "peculiar to the female labour requiring great dexterity of the fingers." The company thought that it would take some twelve months to suitably train British women for the task. The wages to be paid were L.2 and 12 shillings for a 40 hour week. On the basis of this report the Board of Trade supported the AISIC application, noting the favourable consequences of addressing the bottlenecks in the

70 PRO LAB 13/822: Keith to Braine, 10 January 1950.


72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., Ministry of Labour report of labour position for AISIC, dated 15 June 1946.
industry.  

The Ministry of Labour however did not wish to grant a bulk permit, preferring to issue individual permits at the employer's request. Through the fall of 1946 AISIC repeatedly importuned the Ministry to "expedite the recruitment by issuing bulk permits, claiming that delays, and competition from Switzerland and France, were causing some attrition in the number of women that had agreed to come." The exchange of letters at this stage, while cordial, betrayed signs of testiness as both sides stuck firmly to their position, and AISIC was forced to send back permits that were not going to be used, and then request and fill out application forms for every individual recruited.

By late June 1947, the Ministry of Labour was getting impatient with the repeated requests for permits. In a note accompanying the issuance of the latest set of stamped permits the Overseas Department stated that "they have been issued on the understanding that advantage has been taken of the opportunity afforded to train British subjects in the work for which foreigners have been engaged, thus obviating the necessity of importing foreign labour of this type in the future." What would soon become apparent was that the skill necessary to do the work was a less important factor in AISIC's desire to recruit Italian women than was the ability to hold them for some time to shift hours that were unpleasant. The women being recruited were quite young -- between the ages of 18 and 25 -- and clearly any skills that they may have acquired

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74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., AISIC letters to Ministry of Labour, dated 28 August, 4 and 17 September 1946.

76 Ibid., letter from Thorne (Ministry of Labour) to AISIC, dated 19 September 1946.

77 PRO LAB 8/1439: Foreign Labour Division, Overseas Department, to AISIC, 28 June 1947.
were neither extensive nor exclusive. This motivation was made evident when AISIC wrote the Ministry of Labour in February 1948 about the possibility of obtaining a permit for an 18 year old Italian woman who was visiting her sister in Colchester and wished to stay on and work as a throwster. Clearly all that was needed from AISIC's point of view was a willingness to work the hours.

By late 1949, AISIC's motivations were laid bare. In a letter to the Ministry of Labour, the director of AISIC noted that a Miss G. Crespi had left AISIC employ, for which she had obtained a renewed permit on 31 January 1949, for another job in a nearby factory. The letter noted that the renewal had attached the condition that Miss Crespi not take employment other than that approved by the Ministry of Labour. "It is not only that Miss Crespi is thus causing serious shortage by being absent from the shift", Ineichen noted, "but it does create a precedent for almost any of the workers employed; in particular those which we imported from Italy at our own expense, and if she does get away with it, ... we are absolutely unprotected and shall no doubt have to face that other Italian workers will follow her example." Ineichen wanted the Ministry of Labour to help AISIC "maintain the discipline" of their workforce by forcing the woman in question to either return to AISIC, or else face deportation. The reply from the Ministry, dated 5 October 1949, was that Miss Crespi's case didn't seem to be the tip of the iceberg that AISIC implied it was, and therefore they would approve the change of employment, while keeping an eye on the situation.

Toward the end of 1951 a similar AISIC entreaty was again


79 PRO LAB 8/1439: AISIC to Ministry of Labour, 23 August 1949.

80 PRO LAB 8/1439: Ministry of Labour, FLD, OD. to AISIC, dated 5 October 1949.
made. This time it was with respect to three Italian workers who sought to change employers. Ineichen's letter to the Ministry of Labour regarding this situation was even more blunt than the previous one:

...it is practically impossible to find English girls who like to work from 6 am. till 2 pm and 2pm till 10 pm on alternative weeks. ... We have another fourteen of these foreign workers who, if they see there is a way out in an easy job they will certainly not miss the opportunity to take it....it is imperative that we should have protection against these workers moving where they like for the simple reason of finding an easy job for which they have not been brought into this country to do (sic).  

The Ministry of Labour's response was that a Ministry permit was not "a contract of employment" but merely an authorization allowing the foreigner to be employed by the employer. The employer was at liberty to dismiss the worker, and the worker free to leave the employment in the same way as any British worker. This argument was rather disingenuous on the part of the Ministry since it certainly was in their power to deny the Italian women permission to work at another job. Perhaps more telling was the mention in the reply of the fact that the workers in question had been in AISIC's employ since 1948. AISIC's reply, clearly agitated, was that they had paid the workers' passage to the U.K. and that they alone should benefit from their labour. They pointed to paragraph 5 of the permit, which stated that the permit was only valid for the

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81 Ibid., Ineichen (AISIC) letter to Ministry of Labour, dated 10 September 1951.

82 Ibid. Ministry of Labour to AISIC, dated 4 October 1951.

83 Ibid., AISIC to Ministry of Labour, dated 5 October 1951.
employment for which it was issued. The Ministry of Labour reply to this was again rather disingenuous; the purpose of paragraph 5 was to ensure that the foreigner proceeded to the work for which they were recruited, not to ensure that they stayed there. Under the Aliens Order of 1920 there was no power given to the government to require a foreigner to remain in any employ. 84

The exchange continued along these lines to the end of 1951, descending on the part of the AISIC director to the level of implying that the women in question wanted more time to "roam the streets" and "search for adventure", and asserting the exclusive rights of AISIC to their labour. 85 While the attitudes of AISIC were offensive, there was a certain logic to their argumentation, based on Ministry of Labour permit policy and the application of controls elsewhere. The steadfast refusal of the Ministry to take action on behalf of AISIC is therefore noteworthy. It seems that permission to recruit foreign workers in this case was given on the supposition that the need for their work would be temporary, and would eventually be obviated by the fruition of a training program that would produce skilled British workers. By 1951 it seemed clear that the training of British workers was less a concern for AISIC than was the maintenance of a servile labour force. In these circumstances the Ministry of Labour was not prepared to act in concert with AISIC.

Timing was also a factor. When the permits were originally requested and issued, throughout 1947 and early 1948, government control over labour was at its zenith. The Control of Engagement Order went into effect in the fall of 1947, and Local Employment Exchanges were instructed to take special care that the control specified under Article I(3)(b) of the Aliens

84 Ibid., Ministry of Labour to AISIC, dated 31 October 1951.

85 Ibid., AISIC to Ministry of Labour, dated 1 November 1951.
Act was judiciously applied.\(^{86}\) The Ministry of Labour was particularly concerned to maintain the public perception that foreign workers were not getting better terms than were British workers. By 1951, with the Control of Engagement Order lapsed and many EVWs being released from official control, this concern with public opinion became less of a factor in government policy with respect to aliens under permit employment.

Some of the issues evident in the AISIC case were also apparent in another private recruitment undertaken at about the same time. In the middle of 1948 the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (AUBTW) were considering a proposal to import a substantial number of Italian masons to help in the construction of the Claerwen water dam near Birmingham. At a meeting in July it was agreed that the Council were not prepared to agree to the importation of foreign labour until they were satisfied that a sufficient supply of stone would be available to carry out the work. It was also noted that if the contractors were willing to pick up the charge of recruiting foreign labour, then they were in a position to "make the conditions such as would attract British labour to the site."\(^{87}\)

The National Joint Council (NJC) for the industry had hitherto been adamantly opposed to the recruitment of foreign labour. Their reasoning had been that the recruitment of foreign labour would set back the goal of developing British masons to meet the domestic demands. At an NJC meeting in July 1948 it was resolved that recruitment of Italian masons would

\(^{86}\) See for example LAB 8/1441: re: the Control of Engagement Order in regard to the employment of aliens in the U.K.

\(^{87}\) PRO LAB 8/1444: See extract from meeting of the Executive Council of the AUBTW, dated 29 July 1948.
"imperil the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship schemes." The NJC noted that the presence of Italian masons might cause frictions in the workplace which would "ill-effect the British Labour scheme." They also spoke ominously about the possibility that "pseudo-monumentalists" might enter the U.K. under the guise of recruitment, and then open businesses in which they would be agents for foreign made goods. According to the NJC this situation was rampant before the war, and had detrimental effects on the development of the British industry.

By September 1948 the Executive Council of the AUBTW had reconsidered their position and were relenting to the importation of Italians, provided that British workers be directed to the project as far as possible, and that training schemes be scoured for as many suitable British recruits as could be found. The numbers involved, it was noted, would be approximately 40 on site, and another 120 or so at the quarries. Foreign labour was clearly vital to the completion of this project, and the consent of the Executive Council was an acknowledgment of this fact. With their pressure the NJC agreed to the recruitment in October.

In January of 1950 the General Secretary of the AUBTW queried the Ministry of Labour about their position on Italian masons wishing to leave their employment at the termination of their contracts for work elsewhere in the same industry. The

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88 Ibid., letter from NJC to Ministry of Labour, dated 3 August 1948.

89 Ibid., Luke Fawcett (General Secretary of AUBTW) to Mr. Helby (Works Department), 28 September 1948.

90 Ibid., NJC meeting minutes, 19 October 1948. Italian masons and cutters were recruited at the following rates of pay: masons earned L.6/2/0, cutters L.5/15/0 per 44 hour week. The contract allowed for a remittance of L.15 per month for married men, L.7/10 for single men. These were quite good rates of pay for the time, comparing favourably with wages for experienced miners at the coal face, for example.
response came in February from Mr. Isaacs himself.\textsuperscript{91} Isaacs noted that the Ministry of Labour had no general rule in such cases; applications by prospective employers would be assessed on their merits. However, given the NJC's cooperation in the recruitment of these workers in the original scheme, Isaacs pledged to consult with them the next time an application to change work came along. In this instance the Ministry looked to be more amenable to pressure from organized labour than they were to the importations of AISIC. But in both instances the statement that no general rule existed allowed the Ministry some flexibility in its response to individual cases as they arose.

The AISIC and Italian masons cases illustrated that issues of control were not the only ones that pertained to private recruitment. The question of the function that foreign workers served in the British economy was also integral. As the previous chapters have shown, the official recruitment of foreign workers was undertaken primarily to offer temporary relief to essential industries that were difficult to staff in the conditions of the immediate postwar years. For the most part foreign workers were recruited for unskilled labour in these unattractive industries. Conversely the pre-war pattern of labour recruitment in the U.K. had been to recruit skilled workers where the skill they possessed was in demand and could not be filled domestically. In the postwar years this sort of recruitment continued, but with the proviso that skilled workers would not replace British workers but rather would create the environment for the training and "anglicization" of the trades in which their particular skill was needed. Several examples of this sort of recruitment have already been noted. German scientists and technicians, for example, were recruited partly in the hope that they could establish new industries and

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., Isaacs to Fawcett, dated 6 February 1950.
skills in Britain that might help economic recovery. The AISIC recruitment was at least partially justified in similar terms. Several other recruitments were justified in this way as well, with varying degrees of legitimacy. Yet balanced against this justification of skilled foreign workers was the fear that importing such workers would discourage employers from bothering to "anglicize" these trades.

In January 1949, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture minuted the Ministry of Labour regarding the inadvisability of granting permits to Japanese chick sexers for work in Britain. Prior to the war this skill had been the almost exclusive domain of Japanese workers. There had been considerable public furor over the presence in Britain of these Japanese once the war had begun. The Ministry of Agriculture now held that the agricultural industry as a whole would be "inconvenienced" rather than "injured" by the absence of these sexers, and that the long term consequences of allowing them to continue to work in the industry would be deleterious:

The knowledge that Japanese sexers were again available would, we think, lead producers to lose interest in the development of sexing by British workers, and if Japanese were admitted, there would be a danger of reversion to the pre-war position in which the Japanese had a virtual monopoly of this particular trade.  

This relatively minor episode was an example of the determination to "anglicize" certain trades that had been traditionally performed by foreign workers. The same sort of concerns were evident in larger scale schemes undertaken with the approval of the Ministry of Labour. One such scheme involved the importation of terrazzo and mosaic tile workers

93 Ibid.
from Italy. Before the war the laying and polishing of terrazzo and mosaic tile were jobs done almost exclusively by Italians. Immediately after the war the training of workers in the more established building trades was the main preoccupation of the government, and as a result nothing was done about setting up training programs for the "anglicization" of the somewhat marginal terrazzo industry. However when the demand for skilled layers and polishers became heavier in 1946-7, and firms began clamouring for the importation of Italian workers (which the Ministry of Works had led them to believe were available), the government responded by setting up a Vocational Training Scheme for the terrazzo trade.

The training scheme had limited success. Schools were set up in the London area and in the northwestern region in August 1947. The first trainees emerged from these schools in February/March of 1948. The trade associations had advised that layers and polishers be trained at a ratio of 1 to 2, but the Ministry of Labour was never able to turn out enough trainees to meet labour requirements. There was generally more difficulty filling the places for polishers, which took only six months to train but which were then considered only semi-skilled, than for layers, who were considered skilled workers. But in either case there was a shortage of willing trainees from the English population, and the classes were never filled. One of the London classes closed as a result in mid-1949, and one in the northwest also closed at the end of 1949.

The history of this training program is summarized in PRO LAB 18/500.

It took roughly 20 months of training and a two year apprenticeship to become a skilled layer. See: PRO LAB 18/500.

The potential output of the London Training Centres was 36 layers and 72 polishers; By May 1948, 27 trainees had been placed, mostly in large firms in big towns. See: PRO LAB 18/500.
1949.97

The industry was far from happy with this scheme. Indeed many firms claimed that the training process hindered production by diverting the attention of skilled workers to training and instruction on the job. It emerged at a meeting of the National Joint Council for the industry in May 1948 that many firms did not engage English trainees because of the availability of Italian workers.98 Although the labour side of the industry objected to the employment of foreign workers, both employers and potential English recruits to the industry seemed to concur in the belief that the nature of the terrazzo trade was essentially Italian. In a further tri-partite meeting in November 1948, the President of the National Federation of Terrazzo Mosaic Specialists (NFTMS), who was also managing director of a very large firm that had taken substantial numbers of trainees, claimed that British workers had been found "generally unsuited to the trade by reason of temperament and personality". The scheme to train British workers had been, it was noted, in the nature of an experiment, against the advice of "practical tradesmen, who considered the trade essentially Italian."99 Representatives of both workers and employers agreed, however, that the prejudice against British workers in this industry might be overcome if the Ministry of Labour stated outright that no more permits would be granted for Italian workers.

However the urgent demand for skilled layers militated against such a policy. In February 1949 the NFTMS, with "reluctant support" from the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (AUBTW), approached the Ministry of Labour for

97 PRO LAB 18/500: There were three classes set up in the London area and two in the northwest region originally.


99 Ibid.
permission to import Italian workers. In June 1949 the Training Department of the Ministry of Labour agreed to the importation of 100 Italian tile layers, provided that firms agree to take on one trainee for every four skilled workers employed. Although this stipulation was meant to foster the training of an indigenous workforce in the industry, and to ensure that the importation of skilled Italian labour was a temporary expedient in order to allow such training, the policy ended up backfiring. The Training Department could not produce enough trainees to force compliance with the one to four stipulation, and the agreement merely facilitated the importation of trained Italian layers by firms who had no intention of training British workers.

As a result of the shortage of British trainees, particularly polishers, the government opened the recruitment agreements up to polishers as well as layers, in July 1949. This was a departure in that it had previously been thought that it would only be necessary to import skilled layers. Broadening the scheme in this fashion seemed a further acknowledgment of the reluctance of British workers to take up any part of the trade. The first permits were issued in November 1949. By July 1950, the number of Italian workers in the industry was at 150, fifty percent above the estimated figure agreed upon in June of the previous year.

The agreement to recruit Italian terrazzo workers had been made on the supposition that they would provide a stop gap in the drive to increase productivity, until such time as they could be replaced by a native workforce. Foreign workers were to be employed on production while British craftsmen cared for trainees. In this way the "theory of building up a British

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
labour force (in the industry) was not abandoned." And yet the Ministry of Labour's inability to provide the requisite number of trainees, coupled with the unevenness in the size of firms and the subsequent differential abilities to comply with the criteria for the use of foreign labour, made the scheme inoperative from the outset. Some small firms, for example, employed only one skilled worker. Obviously these firms were inappropriate training agents. This fact seemed to place a heavier burden on larger firms. In the summer of 1950 two of these large firms, both located in London, complained of the delay in their permit applications, and rather disingenuously argued that the training stipulations of the scheme be abandoned since some small firms were having difficulty complying with the criteria. The response of the Ministry of Labour indicated that Ministry officials felt a little put upon by the industry:

We are inclined to think that the present approach is an attempt to exploit the Department. This industry has been endeavouring to secure the admission of Italians for a long time and finally gained their point, mainly on the ground of the advantage which would be secured for the training scheme.... In the circumstances it would clearly be unreasonable for either side to complain at this early date of the Department's alleged inability to enable firms to comply with what is in any event only a conditional obligation, and to endeavour to use this argument to get rid of the training scheme, while retaining the Italian labour originally introduced for the furtherance of the scheme. 103

The Ministry of Labour was alarmed at the number of foreign workers being brought into the industry under the scheme, and since it was not in a position to press compliance

102 PRO LAB 18/500: Internal memo by A.M. Murray-Harris to Lodge, dated 9 June 1952.

103 PRO LAB 18/500: Note by A.M. Murray-Harris, 14 June 1950.
with the training agreements, rightly surmised that the firms involved were less interested in anglicizing the industry than in exploiting Italian labour. The fatal blow to the scheme was the lack of success in getting British workers interested in the industry. The arrangement for the importation of foreign workers ceased to operate at the end of February 1951. Any permits that had been granted were subject to review every six months.

Several issues about the role of foreign labour were manifest in this scheme. Firstly, the demand for this trade was artificially boosted in the immediate postwar years by the scarcity of building materials, which made more conventional building practices difficult, and necessitated "foreign" building practices such as the laying of terrazzo and mosaic tile. In these circumstances imported Italian workers were not only temporary because they would eventually be replaced by British workers; they were also temporary in the sense that the trade itself was expected to decline as conditions became more normalized. This circumstance seemed to exemplify the classic Marxist construction of the use of foreign workers as a convenient reserve of labour which could be drawn upon and discarded as circumstances dictated.104 The argument that the terrazzo trade was inherently Italian, taken in this context, was not entirely disingenuous. It was convenient for employers to fill temporary gaps in what was considered a marginal industry with foreign workers.

Another issue that emerges in the terrazzo schemes is the division of skilled and semi-skilled designations within the trade. One of the main difficulties with the training centres' inability to furnish enough trainees was the unwillingness of British workers to train as polishers, the less skilled of the terrazzo occupations. As long as the trade was dominated by

Italian layers, one might expect a reluctance on the part of British workers to fill positions which would place them in a subordinate relation to the foreign workers. The stereotype of the terrazzo trade as essentially Italian thus influenced potential British recruits, whose subsequent lack of enthusiasm for the trade reinforced the stereotype.

In an essay on the iron foundry industry in the Midlands after the war, Mark Duffield has written about the way in which the purposeful division of a trade into skilled and semi-skilled designations could work to define the position of foreign labour within the production process. Duffield showed that tripartite agreements between the state and both sides of the industry worked to redefine a hierarchy of labour which reserved the highest positions for British workers, and defined the context in which foreign (and subsequently black) labour was introduced into the foundry industry.

Duffield's essay dealt with an industry which had experienced a great deal of dilution during the war. Mechanization had helped this process along, and after the war the recruitment of foreign labour had continued the trend. In 1946 the foundry workers union, the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers (AUFW), reluctantly agreed to the importation of Italian foundry workers. The Ministry of Supply had taken charge of this recruitment and, along with employers and trade union representatives, had sent out agents to Italy to oversee the recruitment. In the spring of 1947 the Ministry of Labour replaced the Supply man with their own Technical Officer, but trade union protests made the intake of Italian recruits sporadic. A trade union request to revise the Italian Foundry

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106 PRO LAB 12/624: S. Price to F. McHugh (Treasury), dated 10 April 1947.
Workers' Agreement effectively suspended the scheme in August 1947. Representations were made to the union and the scheme was re-opened in January 1948, and continued until September 1948. The stop and go nature of this scheme was typical of the recruiting process in Italy. While it was hoped that 2800 foundry workers could be recruited from Italy, in the event only several hundred mainly skilled foundry workers were recruited on government permits.\textsuperscript{107}

The union, opposed to the recruitment of foreign workers from the start, argued that instead of recruiting skilled workers the industry should reorganize the production process in order that the skilled workers already in the trade could function more efficiently. As it was, skilled workers spent much of their time doing labouring and ancillary tasks. The union argued that if these skilled workers could be serviced by a greater number of unskilled workers, they could make better use of their time. This arrangement would have to be accompanied by a differential wage rate to recognize the differences between the skill grades. Duffield argued that the new definition of a skill hierarchy within the industry defined "the space that black workers would be deemed fit to occupy within the hierarchy."\textsuperscript{108}

For Italian workers in the foundry industry the road was made difficult by the strength of the established unions, which restrictively defined their position within the skill hierarchy, and effectively limited the number of Italians brought into the industry. The government joined with employers in pushing recruitment of Italians for the foundries, against the opposition of the unions in the industry. The situation for terrazzo workers was somewhat different. Within the terrazzo industry Italians occupied the positions of skill, and were presumably better treated than if they were unskilled workers.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} Duffield, op. cit., p.148.
In fact the idea that the trade was somehow inherently Italian created a niche for Italian workers which seemed to play the stereotype in their favour. In the case of the terrazzo industry the employers were in the position of pushing for more foreign recruitment, while the government joined with the unions in objecting to the recruitment of Italian labour.

These differences were largely the result of the different position each of the industries held within the British economy. The more established foundry industry in turn had more established unions and played a more central role in the overall performance of the economy. The terrazzo trade was considered a foreign industry, and a somewhat marginal one, and efforts to anglicize it after the war were soon abandoned in the face of the combined indifference of employers and British would-be recruits. In consequence the importation of Italian labour into the foundries took on a much different complexion than did the recruitment of Italian terrazzo workers.

The differences in these two uses of foreign labour point out the various roles that migrant labour can play in a capitalist economy. In the most familiar scenario, unskilled labour can be used as a temporary expedient in times of labour shortage. Once the labour situation stabilizes, foreign labour can be repatriated. This use of foreign labour represents the classic Marxist conception of foreign labour as a reserve army, used to redress a market imbalance favouring labour. In this interpretation manpower shortages in certain industries -- invariably those where the work was least pleasant and well paid -- would be filled by importing foreign workers rather than by improving conditions of work in the industry. In the process the bargaining power of workers in the industry would be weakened, although as the foundries recruitment shows, foreign labour could also benefit the indigenous workforce by allowing them to be buoyed up within a revised skill hierarchy.

This Marxist paradigm fit the recruitment and use of POW and EVWs more so than it fit the Italian recruitments. EVWs and
POW were recruited for unskilled work, and both constituted large enough groups to make an impact on the labour market. The numbers involved in the terrazzo and foundry recruitments were too small to make an appreciable impact on the labour market imbalance of the postwar years. But the Italian recruitments illustrate another function of foreign labour. Skilled labour can also be imported to maintain or establish an industry not considered indigenous to the host country. In such cases the use of foreign labour is also a temporary expedient, although if the trade is not picked up by the indigenous workforce, the need for the particular skill will remain indefinitely. Moreover, the presence of a ready foreign labour supply may discourage employers from improving conditions in the industry in order to lure indigenous workers.

Throughout the tenure of the Attlee governments the private recruitment of foreign labour took place parallel to official recruitment schemes. Not surprisingly the relative merits of each method were constantly being weighed. Such assessments were particularly evident towards the end of the government's tenure. At a Ministry of Labour meeting in February 1951 the future of foreign labour recruitment schemes was discussed by a panel of civil servants. At this meeting it was decided to recommend that official recruitment schemes -- i.e. those undertaken and paid for entirely by the government -- should be discontinued. The scheme to import Italian women for the textile industry should be wound up as soon as the women currently in the pipeline had cleared. Henceforth employers wishing to recruit foreign workers would do so at

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109 PRO LAB 13/813: Meeting of 22 February 1951; see also Wiles to Parker, 2 March 1951.

110 The one exception was to be a scheme to recruit Italian men for coal mining work, which was in the process of negotiation at this time. This scheme will be detailed in the next chapter.
their own expense, with the Ministry of Labour granting permits and assisting in the recruitment process where necessary. No further hostel accommodation would be provided, and only the existing accommodation would be made available. The reasons for these recommendations had mainly to do with the relative cost to the government of official recruitment schemes, as well as the track record of official recruits as opposed to privately recruited workers.

Official recruitment was estimated to cost L.14 per head in transport, repatriation and other charges. The EVW schemes -- including Balt Cygnet -- had cost the government a little over L.3.5 million for 84,000 EVWs. This translated to a per capita cost of about L.44. By contrast the Blue Danube and Sudeten recruitments cost around L.20 per head, and the North Sea scheme about L.14/8s. The cost of recruiting Italian women was about L.14/7s.111 The interest in obtaining foreign workers shown by firms such as Courtaulds indicated that such individual firms were benefitting from foreign workers and would be willing to shoulder most of the costs themselves. Given that recruitment was now taking place mainly for individual firms and not on a pool basis for industry as a whole, it was thought only proper that firms pay for the recruitment themselves. Having firms pay for the recruitment "was regarded as providing a useful test of the employer's real need for foreign workers."112

Moreover, it was pointed out that workers who were privately recruited tended to be more reliable. In the tinplate industry, for example, of 1200 Poles and EVWs placed between 1947 and 1950, less than 400 remained at the end of 1950. By contrast, of 317 Italians arriving in south Wales between


112 PRO LAB 13/813: Keith to Lloyd Davies, 4 July 1951.
August and November 1950, 275 were still employed in the industry as of February 1951. The rate of wastage was clearly much lower in the so-called "unofficial" recruitment.\(^{113}\)

There were, however, objections to the proposed curtailment of official schemes as well. In an internal Ministry of Labour memo in June the timing of such a curtailment was questioned:

...I should have thought that this was just the wrong time to come to any decision to close down official recruitment schemes. Unemployment is lower than it has been at any time since 1945 and the numbers are still going down. This indicates increasing pressure on manpower and it may well be that in the next two or three years we shall have to endeavour to get substantial numbers of foreign workers to come over to help us on rearmament and export work.\(^{114}\)

The Home Office, for its part, was concerned with the question of control of foreign workers in the U.K. if they were recruited privately. In a May memo to the Ministry of Labour the Home Office noted that recruits should not be allowed to drift away from their contracted jobs without notification, to come to Britain without medical exams, or to present a problem with respect to repatriation or deportation, such as might be the case with stateless persons.\(^{115}\)

The Home Office concern regarding control of privately recruited workers was certainly one that the Ministry of Labour shared. In an internal memo dated 21 May, the point was made that any change of employment by a foreign worker required the approval of the Ministry of Labour's Overseas Labour division.

\(^{113}\) PRO LAB 13/813: Figures provided by Lloyd Davies to Parker, 29 May 1951.

\(^{114}\) PRO LAB 13/813: Ince to Veysey, 30 June 1951.

\(^{115}\) PRO LAB 13/813: Parker (H/O) to Lloyd Davies, 15 May 1951.
It was stressed that such approval should be given stintingly as "our actions in this respect will be watched by the foreigners employed by a particular firm, and if we appear to be adopting a weak attitude this will only serve to encourage the foreigners to look around for jobs more to their liking."\(^{116}\)

In a memo from the Ministry of Labour to the Home Office on future policy regarding foreign workers, assurances were given that medical exams would be mandatory, that stateless persons would not be granted permits, that permission to change jobs would be given only in exceptional circumstances and only after reference to headquarters, and that employers would be required to notify the Ministry of Labour as soon as a foreign worker left their job, with the information to be passed on to the Home Office "for such action as may be thought necessary."\(^{117}\)

Such precautions indicated that the pre-eminent concern of the government with respect to private recruitment was the control and vetting of foreign workers. The desire to pass on the costs of recruitment to private employers, on the other hand, showed the government's suspicion that some employers were taking advantage of government subsidies to employ foreign workers rather than to foster conditions for the filling of positions by British labour. These were the two issues that were brought most clearly into relief by the various private recruitment schemes.

Despite government reticence to subsidize foreign labour recruitment, the argument that possible future needs made the unequivocal revocation of official recruitment inadvisable was compelling. It was finally decided that no recommendation to close the door on official recruitment would be given to the Cabinet. Instead, it was considered "wiser not to close the door to the old type of 'official' scheme at this stage but to

\(^{116}\) PRO LAB 13/813: Crookenden to Keith, 21 May 1951.

\(^{117}\) PRO LAB 13/813: O.D.P. 185/1951: Memo on Future Policy with Regard to Recruitment of Foreign Workers.
decide that in the present conditions of the labour market" only sponsored unofficial recruitment should take place.\textsuperscript{118} In August, Regional Controllers of the Ministry of Labour were circularized with the updated policy: "official" recruitment of foreign labour was now in abeyance, but the government was willing to help firms in obtaining larger quantities of foreign workers "in certain cases of difficulty in finding labour for important work."\textsuperscript{119}

It was also noted in the above circular that the main field of recruitment in 1951 was of unskilled Italian male labour. The recruitment of this labour was, as shall be seen in the following chapter, as much a diplomatic as an economic endeavour. This fact points out another aspect of private labour recruitment. As compared with official schemes, private labour recruitment was much less politicized an undertaking. Although the government often helped to facilitate it, private recruitment left the trade unions and private industry to work out their own accommodations. Moreover private recruitment did not involve the same sorts of international guarantees and visibility as did the official schemes. It is to these international questions concerning foreign labour recruitment that we must now turn.

\textsuperscript{118} PRO LAB 13/813: Lloyd Davies to H.M.D. Parker, 9 July 1951.

\textsuperscript{119} PRO LAB 13/813: Letter to Regional Controllers, 22 August 1951. Regional Controllers were to assist firms in filing requests for bulk permits; the process of granting such permits could take up to 6 weeks. It was estimated that the expense of recruiting abroad would be prohibitive if less than 25 workers were sought.
Chapter Six: International Considerations

The British government's recruitment of foreign workers in Italy raised important issues about the nature and purpose of foreign labour recruitment in the immediate postwar period. In previous chapters the recruitment of Italian ex-prisoners of war, and of Italian women, has been investigated. In both cases it emerged that one of the main features of labour recruitment from Italy was the preponderance of international considerations in the process. This chapter will focus primarily on the foreign policy dimension of foreign labour recruitment, looking at the Italian case in particular. Of course the recruitment of east European Displaced Persons, German men and women, prisoners of war, and Polish servicemen all had important foreign policy dimensions, and these have been hinted at earlier in this dissertation, and explored at some length in the works of Michael Marrus, Diana Kay, Jerzy Zubrzycki, Kathleen Paul and others.¹ The articulation of foreign policy objectives in the Italian recruitment was, however, the most pronounced, perhaps because in the other cases such considerations were so obvious as to not require stating. The absolute number of Italians recruited by the British government was negligible; the symbolic nature of recruitment from Italy was the most significant motivating factor in undertaking these schemes. Only towards the end of the Labour government's tenure, when the surplus labour force of Displaced Persons and Polish refugees had been more or less absorbed into the British economy, did the recruitment and use of Italian labour become an economic, as well as a political exigency.

In the case of Displaced Persons, Polish servicemen, and even colonial migrants, the British government did not have to

¹ See Michael Marrus, The Unwanted, op.cit.; Diana Kay and Robert Miles, Refugees or Migrant Workers?, op.cit.; Jerzy Zubrzycki, Soldiers and Peasants, op.cit.; Kathleen Paul, Whitewashing Britain, op.cit., and others.
deal directly with an independent foreign government. The only other European government, aside from Italy, with which the government dealt on matters of official labour recruitment policy was Belgium. In December 1948, the Belgian government offered Britain the opportunity to recruit up to 1,000 unemployed Belgian women for work in the British textile industry.\(^2\) The offer was later broadened to include men as well, but in the event these talks stalled because of trade union opposition.\(^1\) The two governments had in the meantime worked out mutually satisfactory documentation procedures in a fairly co-operative fashion. The same sort of co-operation was evident in talks between the two governments early in 1950, over the issue of co-ordinating labour permit procedures for each other's nationals. British labour permit holders in Belgium were subject to more stringent renewal procedures than were Belgian permit holders in the U.K. The Belgian government offered to reduce the criteria for automatic renewal to a period of residence of four years -- in line with the British qualification -- from the existing ten years.\(^4\) These talks were carried on through private correspondence at a bureaucratic level, and mainly hinged on the need to announce the agreement in the form of a treaty. The British government was reluctant to make an announcement because it did not want to formally commit itself to such a policy. Ministry of Labour officials argued that since the agreement did not entail Britain changing its policy, there was no question of a treaty. This was merely a unilateral action by the Belgians. Thus all that was required was a British letter accepting the position.\(^5\) In the event this

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\(^2\) PRO HO 213/703: A.W. Rouse to Heron, dated 8 November 1948. The topic arose at an OEEC Manpower Committee meeting.

\(^3\) Ibid., Note by Wellstead, dated 10 January 1949.

\(^4\) PRO LAB 13/667: C.F. Heron to Robertson, 22 February 1950.

\(^5\) Ibid., Keith to Rossetti, dated 20 March 1951.
line of reasoning won the day and no formal agreement was adopted.

In both these instances a co-operative relationship was evident. The relationship between the Italian and British bureaucracies was not so co-operative. Throughout this period Italy pressed for increased British recruitment of unemployed Italian workers. The British Foreign Office was eager to oblige in order to bolster the centrist Italian government against a destabilizing challenge from the left. However, despite the Cold War imperatives preached by the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Labour was pre-occupied with the task of integrating Displaced Persons and Polish ex-servicemen into industry, and the Home Office objected to Italians on the grounds that their "national temperament" and lifestyle ill suited them for easy integration into British industry and society. Trade union opposition also stood in the way of official recruitment in Italy. For these reasons, official recruitment in Italy was not pursued with vigour until the fall of 1949, and not until the spring of 1951 was an agreement reached between the National Coal Board (NCB) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to allow several thousand Italian men to work in British mines. There were thus a number of domestic and foreign policy considerations involved in setting up official recruitment schemes in Italy. Recruitment of Italian labour must be viewed in the context of Cold War

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6 See for example, PRO HO 213/1130: Memo by H. Prestige, dated 18 May 1945, regarding the possibility of Italian prisoners staying on in the U.K. for agricultural work: "I cannot imagine that anybody, except a few of their girl friends, would view favourably a suggestion that any of them should be allowed to stay here."

7 On 17 January 1951, the Yorkshire Post led with the headline: "Miners: Yes to NCB - And A Promise for Attlee: Coalfields Will Take Foreign Workers". This announcement followed several weeks of speculation regarding the state of negotiations between the NCB and the NUM on various issues, including pensions and wages. Acceptance of foreign labour was negotiated as part of the general package.
tensions and the shifting British relationship to Europe, as well as to developments in the British economic and industrial landscape.

Prior to the 1951 recruitment of Italians for the mines, Italian workers had been recruited in relatively small numbers where it was thought their particular skills were needed. There were certain industries where Italian labour had traditionally been used, and in the postwar years these industries again looked to fill vacancies by recruiting Italians. The notion of a national predilection, whether of temperament or otherwise, for particular types of work held great sway in industrial circles. The terrazzo scheme outlined in the previous chapter was one example of this sort of thinking. The recruitment of skilled workers in small numbers was the usual way that foreign labour had been utilized in Britain. This sort of recruitment was the least contentious with the trade unions and the working classes. Skilled workers did not affect wage levels in the same way that large numbers of unskilled workers might. Their small numbers, and the unique economic niches that they filled, ensured that foreign, skilled workers would remain on the fringes of British society, a quaint and non-threatening additive.

The recruitment of unskilled workers in large numbers after the war was a departure which, as we have seen, was the result of extraordinary circumstances. In the case of Displaced Persons and Polish servicemen, the government's main concern was with the control of these workers in the labour market, and the various restrictions placed on these foreign workers addressed that concern. Such control was also an issue with colonial migrant labour in the U.K., as it was for recruited migrant workers from Europe. The British government's conception of labour migration within Europe was that it should follow the economic imperatives of the host country. As an October 1949 Ministry of Labour memo on the free movement of
labour within Europe made clear, free migration was viewed with trepidation. Unskilled migrant workers were viewed with suspicion; on the one hand, workers from poorer countries (such as Italy) might flock to the U.K. to take advantage of the social service state; on the other, migrants would either be losers in their own country and therefore undesirable, or else ambitious and therefore not willing to take nasty work in essential industries. The British government thus preferred the influx of foreign migrant labour to be controlled through formal schemes and the selective issuance of labour permits.

Ideally the Ministry of Labour would have liked to restrict labour permits to specifically required, skilled workers only, and to issue such permits on an individual basis to employers who would have to make formal requests. General recruitment schemes involving pools of labour for undermanned industries were to be limited to Displaced Persons and Poles. Their motives and social standing were not called into question by their desire to migrate, since their migration was involuntary. The conceived dichotomy between politically and economically motivated migrations -- which Zubrzycki has highlighted with reference to Polish migrations, and which Kay and Miles disparage as overly simplistic -- thus informed bureaucratic attitudes in the immediate postwar years.

There was also a racial dimension at work in bureaucratic considerations of foreign labour recruitment and migration. We have established that race was defined in terms of an immutable set of inherited physical characteristics. Skin colour was by far the most important characteristic in this definition. But it was not the only racial difference that was identified in these years. Thus Home Office pronouncements that Poles were "a peculiarly difficult race" to assimilate could be reconciled

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9 See: Jerzy Zubrzycki, Soldiers and Peasants, op.cit., and Kay and Miles, Refugees or Migrant Workers? op.cit.
with the notion that Poles were of the right "racial stock" to assimilate into British society.\textsuperscript{10} A racial hierarchy prevailed (discussed elsewhere in this thesis) that assumed that elements of personality and temperament were biologically inherited, just as skin tone was.

The opposition of trade unions, suspicion of free migration, and racial prejudice were all general impediments to the recruitment of Italian workers. However, other factors also impeded the recruitment of Italians. The uncertainty of Anglo-Italian relations in the immediate aftermath of the war made access to Italian workers problematic. For example, in early April 1946 the Foreign Labour Committee of the Cabinet, at their second meeting, discussed the possibility of recruiting Italians for work in foundries.\textsuperscript{11} Aneurin Bevan, then Minister of Health and Housing, was particularly keen on boosting castings production in the interests of facilitating more construction. However the Parliamentary Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Hector McNeil, pointed out that no formal peace treaty existed between the U.K. and Italy, and therefore Italians could not legally be brought to Britain, except as enemy aliens.

The status of Italian workers in the U.K. was an important consideration of British foreign policy. This status improved somewhat with the decision in the fall of 1946 to recruit foreign labour from Displaced Persons camps, as well as with the signing of a peace treaty with Italy in February 1947.\textsuperscript{12} In that month the Ministry of Agriculture suggested that the one

\textsuperscript{10} See Chapter Two on Poles and EVWs.

\textsuperscript{11} PRO CAB 134/301: FLC(46) second meeting, dated 3 April 1946, minutes.

\textsuperscript{12} Martin Clark, Modern Italy 1871-1995, (second edition), (London: Longman, 1996), Chapter Fifteen, has details of the peace treaty. A draft of the treaty, with comments on the implications of British policy regarding prisoners in the U.K., is contained in PRO LAB 13/190.
year contracts offered Italian ex-prisoners in the spring of 1946 be extended to the end of 1948, and that these Italians be treated "as other friendly aliens permitted in this country for work." As a result, the Ministry of Labour took over the enforcement of employment restrictions from the County Agricultural Executive Committees in the spring of 1947, and Italian ex-prisoners were allowed to summon their families to the U.K.14 The small number of Italian workers in the U.K. at this time -- there were approximately 1,400 ex-prisoners working in agriculture and a further 400 or so in industry -- suited the Home Office. Their opinion of Italian workers was generally unfavourable. In August 1948 for example, a Ministry of Labour memo noted: "The Home Office experience suggests that Italian immigrants do not, generally speaking, make any valuable contribution to the economy of the country." It seems from a Ministry of Labour memo of the same time that the Departments of Agriculture in England and in Scotland agreed with the Home Office assessment of Italian workers, and preferred Displaced Persons to Italians.16 Although several non-official schemes were being negotiated, official recruitment of Italian civilians in large numbers was not being contemplated by the Ministry of Labour at this time. However the memo went on to point out: "In the negotiations with the Italian government the Ministry of Labour have temporized and endeavoured to avoid refusing to consider Italian labour because to do so would have embarrassed the Italian Government."

Although the domestic departments were wary of recruiting

15 PRO LAB 8/102: Maxwell to Ince, 12 August 1948.
16 PRO LAB 8/102: Ministry of Labour internal memo, 16 August 1948.
Italian workers, the Foreign Office wanted to make a gesture towards helping Italy solve its most urgent social problem of the postwar period: a high rate of unemployment. In June 1946, elections to the Italian Constituent Assembly had yielded a Coalition government headed by the Christian Democrats, and including both the Communist (PCI) and the Socialist (PSI) parties. But the alliance between the centrist government led by de Gasperi and the left wing parties was uneasy, and it was clear that de Gasperi would need to show the advantages of a western orientation if he was to keep the country from slipping leftwards. The number of unemployed in Italy in these years hovered between 1.5 and 2.5 million, much of it in the south, where this government held a tenuous grip on power. If Britain, along with other western countries, could appear to be taking an interest in helping de Gasperi with this problem by facilitating Italian emigration, western prestige would be bolstered. The recruitment of Italian labour to the U.K. must therefore be viewed within this Cold War context. Italian internal politics weighed as heavily on the minds of Foreign Office officials as did labour shortages, union sensitivities, and national stereotypes on the minds of Home Office and Ministry of Labour officials.

The British Labour Attache in Rome, W. Braine, noted in a despatch sent at the time of the 1946 election that the Communists had chosen the field of labour to discredit the coalition Italian government. The Communists under Togliatti were fomenting trouble for this government by calling strikes and drawing attention to the large numbers of unemployed. One month later Braine reported that the Italian General Confederation of Labour could start trouble over the treatment

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17 See Martin Clark, op.cit., Chapter Fifteen.

18 Ibid.

of Italian nationals abroad, particularly if Communist members of the Confederation quit the government. Another Braine despatch in September 1947 summarized: "Emigration or foreign employment of Italian labour is a political issue here."21

Despite Braine's analysis, the government initially took the position that no help could be given to the Italian government by Britain directly. In August 1946 Braine met with the new Italian Minister of Labour, Ludovico D'Aragna, and warned him that "we can take no Italian labour in Great Britain, nor in the Dominions."22 Subsequent considerations -- the lack of a peace treaty with Italy, and then the integration of large numbers of Poles and EWVs -- relegated official Italian recruitment to a back burner. A small number of Italian men and women were recruited privately in the following two years -- in the foundries, for domestic work, in terrazzo and mosaic tile laying, and in several other industries -- but there were no official schemes undertaken to recruit Italian labour.

In the early months of 1948, however, the importance of boosting the image of the Italian Government took on a greater sense of urgency. Elections for the Italian Constituent Assembly were scheduled for April 1948. The Communist seizure of Czechoslovakia in February brought Cold War tensions to a fever pitch, and the Italian election was played out in this context. In early March the Foreign Office suggested to the Ministry of Labour that Italian labour be recruited for help with the upcoming harvest: "Although the numbers might not be very great a gesture of this sort announced before the elections might have some effect."23 A draft minute from the

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20 PRO LAB 13/247: Dispatch by Braine, 14 August 1946.

21 PRO LAB 13/247: Dispatch from Labour attache in Rome, 14 September 1947.

22 PRO LAB 13/247: Dispatch from Braine, 14 August 1946.

23 PRO FO 371/73150: Note by F.D.W. Brown, 2 March 1948.
Foreign Office files went further on this theme of rendering assistance to the Italian Government:

So far as the U.K. is concerned HMG are, for reasons which seem unanswerable, giving preference [in foreign labour recruitment] to DPs, Volksdeutsche and German women .... if the Secretary of State is making a speech on foreign affairs before the Italian elections he might mention the question of the surplus manpower in Italy as one of the big problems in Europe requiring a solution, and express our willingness to help to the utmost of our ability.²⁴

The Ministry of Labour reply was that shortage of accommodation and the expense of such a scheme made it untenable.²⁵

In early April, Ministry of Labour officials met with the Italian Labour attache in London, Mr. Spinelli, to discuss the recruitment of Italian women for various industries.²⁶ Spinelli, as the previous chapter outlined, was confident that a requisite number of suitable women could be found. Recruitment of Italian men for the coal mines and agriculture was also discussed. Spinelli took the British terms for consultation with his government, and in the meantime the Foreign Office inquired whether these discussions "could possibly be used in Italy for political purposes to show what we are doing about Italy's surplus manpower."²⁷ The Ministry of Labour concluded that this was inadvisable as: "the Italians would make much more than was justified of any vague announcement, and a factual announcement would show up how

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²⁴ PRO FO 371/73150: Draft minute on Italian elections, ref.# 71916/65/22.

²⁵ PRO FO 371/73150: Note dated 5 March 1948, containing comments by Rouse (Ministry of Labour).

²⁶ Ibid., Note by Rouse dated 2 April 1948.

²⁷ PRO FO 371/73150: Note by F.D.W. Brown, 8 April 1948.
small the numbers involved were." 28

The insignificance of the numbers that Britain was willing to take meant that British initiatives were purely symbolic. But proposals to absorb larger numbers throughout the Commonwealth were mooted by both sides. In the wake of the Christian Democrats' victory at the polls in April 1948, a Foreign Office memo noted: "this will represent a transient advantage unless the Italian people are given proof that the new administration is able to lead the country on the road to prosperity." 29 Britain's role in this, the memo stated, was to help Italian emigration to the Middle East and overseas. However, as the empire contracted, so too did Britain's direct influence overseas. While some Italian labour was used in various development construction projects in Africa, overseas emigration to the Commonwealth was not really a matter for the U.K. to decide, although pressure could be brought to bear. 30 But increasingly this pressure amounted to a lobbying effort, in conjunction with, and on behalf of, an integrated western Europe seeking economic and political stability.

British participation in the various international bodies that dealt with European manpower issues was thus an important element of foreign policy. Here too the dichotomy in British policy towards Italian labour recruitment was manifest. The cardinal rule of British policy with respect to international agencies was generally to keep clear of any binding commitments. Bi-lateral agreements, individually negotiated, were preferred to universal Conventions. International agencies were seen as advisory bodies and clearing houses for information. Italy, on the other hand, sought to use

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28 Ibid.

29 PRO FO 371/73151: Spears to F. Roberts, 6 May 1948.

30 PRO FO 371/73152: This file has mainly to do with schemes to employ Italian men in colonial development projects in Africa and South America. See also Clark, op. cit. chapter 15.
international bodies to obtain commitments to promote freer labour migration. Thus Britain found itself opposing the Italian agenda in various international forums, while trying at the same time to seem co-operative.

There were three main international bodies concerned with European manpower questions during this period. They were the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Each of these bodies established manpower committees in the postwar years to deal with various aspects of labour mobility in Europe. The OEEC went as far as establishing a Permanent Manpower Committee in Rome in February of 1948 (henceforth the Rome Committee). Britain felt that these agencies represented a considerable duplication of work, and efforts were made to pare them back and to keep their terms limited.

Until the beginning of 1948 the main international manpower considerations had revolved around the issue of refugee settlement, and the agreement of certain standards with respect to forced labour and working conditions in member countries. With the founding of both the OEEC, which evolved from the Committee of European Economic Cooperation (CEEC), and the ECE in early 1948, migration issues came to the fore in conjunction with other questions of closer European integration. Partly this reflected the onset of the Cold War, with western Europe banding together to reconstruct and stabilize their capitalist economies. But this proliferation of international European agencies also indicated a desire on the part of some countries in Europe to find pan-European solutions to some of their most urgent social and economic problems.

A draft report by the Ministry of Labour's A.L. Rouse from

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the OEEC Manpower Conference in Rome in February 1948 noted, for example, that the Italians were anxious to turn the conference into a forum on sponsoring emigration from Italy to alleviate their overpopulation problem.32 The Italians had reacted with "antagonism" to British and Norwegian calls to "mobilize" fuller segments of their own domestic workforce (women and the elderly) for key production. The Italians had also made a "dangerous" proposal to utilize Italian surplus manpower for overseas colonial agriculture. Rouse had quashed this notion by stating that "British colonial policy had now evolved long past the exploitation aspect of such territories." This was not entirely accurate, and in fact there were small numbers of Italian migrants working on such schemes as growing groundnuts in Kenya.33 But Rouse's main point was that the numbers involved would always be small, and that the Commonwealth was developing upon rather looser lines than the Italians imagined. A Belgian proposal to decrease working hours was also discussed at length. Rouse noted that he and the American delegate managed to bring enough pressure to bear to have this initiative "suitably modified." He noted that American opinion "firmly believes that many workers in Europe are taking it easy", and that the Belgian proposals might have had a disastrous impact had they been adopted by the Conference.

On the whole Rouse felt that the Conference showed the advantages of a neutral meeting place like Geneva. The Italians were able to bring more pressure to bear on the conferees in Rome than they could have elsewhere. The British delegation had fought hard to refer manpower questions to existing agencies, and had succeeded on most points. The ILO was charged with

32 PRO LAB 8/1440: Draft report by Rouse, 18 February 1948.

33 See PRO FO 371/73151: File mainly concerned with the recruitment of Italian labour for various African development projects.
defining a model agreement, collecting data on manpower requirements, and drawing up a uniform terminology of occupational classifications. However the Italians did manage to procure the setting up of the Rome Manpower Committee to expedite the movement of manpower within existing bilateral frameworks, and without prejudice to the work of existing agencies such as the ILO.  

At the February conference the Italians had also pressed for the setting up of an ECE Manpower Committee, in addition to the already existing committees. In early March of 1948 the Foreign Office instructed British delegates in Rome to oppose the setting up of the ECE Committee as superfluous to the ILO Manpower Committee. It was also noted, however, that the Italians were pressing hard for the chair of this proposed Committee, and that the Foreign Office did not wish to oppose the Italian Government publicly. The British case should therefore be put privately, "at whatever level you think appropriate". Similarly, British delegates were also instructed in March to keep discussions focussed on movements of Italian nationals and the specific workings of bilateral agreements, and to avoid general questions which were better left to the ILO and ECE.  

Several memos regarding this policy passed from the Ministry of Labour to the Foreign Office in April 1948. The Ministry of Labour was pitching hard for the chair of the OEEC Manpower Committee because they felt it important to control

34 Ibid.

35 PRO FO 371/71748: FO telegram #562 to Rome, 7 March 1948.

36 PRO FO 371/71850: memo by Gore-Booth, 27 April 1948. The Ministry of Labour's desire for these Committees was that the ILO should register surpluses and shortages and provide information to other bodies; the Rome Committee should monitor bilateral agreements; and the OEEC should review information and tackle policy questions to do with manpower and the ERP. The ECE should do nothing.
the direction that these meetings were taking. It was noted that at both the recent Paris and Rome Manpower Conferences in February and March, the U.K. had tried to put the view that the main problem to be addressed was "the maximum deployment of manpower on to key production", whereas the Italians had put constant pressure "to use the OEEC machinery mainly as a means to get steps taken to reduce the Italian surplus population by emigration." The Italians had introduced "unworkable" proposals such as the shortening of working hours so that surplus labour could be absorbed, and the utilization of Italian labour in colonial agriculture. In order to thwart such proposals in future the chair of the committee must be in British hands. In May, at the Rome Committee meetings in Paris, the Italian attempt to expand the role of the Committee was resisted by the British delegation, which managed to restrict the conference to declaring that the Rome Committee should maintain a close liaison with the OEEC. Nonetheless, the chair of the OEEC Manpower Committee did fall into Italian hands.

Given the small numbers involved at that time in migration from Italy to the U.K., and given also the general British reluctance to commit to any sort of binding agreements on manpower questions, it might be expected that the British government would want to have little to do with the Rome Committee. And yet at the Committee meetings in April 1948, the U.K. pledged a hefty 35/150ths of the annual operating expenses. This seemed out of all proportion to their utilization of European migrant labour, but the contribution was meant to reflect the general British interest in migration

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37 PRO FO 371/71850: Vesey (MLNS) to R.M. Makins (FO), 9 April 1948.


39 PRO FO 371/71746: Braine to Rouse, 13 April 1948.
movements. A memo from Braine explained that the size of the contribution was intended to give the impression that the Committee was of general interest to Western Europe, and not just to certain special interests. The large sum was pledged in order not to "frighten off the smaller countries. If too close a relationship to the use of Italian labour were introduced Portugal, Ireland, Greece, etc. would have reduced their contribution to a token figure of little real value. The position of the U.K. is that of a general beneficiary from the success of any ERP or OEEC organization in general." Here the delicate balancing of British interests with respect to labour migration questions was manifest. The appearance of taking an interest in migration questions, and indeed the real interest that the U.K. had in such questions, necessitated a rather large outlay to fund an international body that the British government did not really approve of in the first place.

At other times the British government's desire to assist the Italians in putting a good face on the work of these agencies was less costly. In February 1948, for example, the Foreign Office gave its approval to an Italian request to publish the report of the recent Manpower Conference in Rome in advance of its being approved at the OEEC meeting in March. The Italian Government were keen to publish the report because they felt it would help them in the upcoming elections. The Foreign Office was quite willing to oblige.

The Manpower Committee of the OEEC had been set up by the Executive Committee on 1 July 1948. It was meant to be a clearing house for information on employment policies and statistics in the various countries involved. By the fall of 1950 however the varying agendas of the member states had created some friction. In a note prepared by the Belgian

40 Ibid.

41 PRO FO 371/71746: Note by J.V. Rob, dated 24 February 1948.
delegation for the forthcoming meeting of the committee in December 1950, the complaint was made that too much attention was being paid to migration issues, and not enough to other matters such as wage rates and standards. While the Ministry of Labour representatives did not necessarily agree with this assessment, they did note that the U.K. had not participated in matters which, under the rubric "Plan of Action for the Absorption of Surplus Manpower in Europe", were to be negotiated bilaterally. The work of the committee, and its Labour Group, had hitherto concentrated on compiling statistics regarding manpower and unemployment, and studying various methods of comparing the data. However, the Italian chairman of the Committee, Signor Malagodi, continuously exerted pressure to expand the role of the Committee.

At the 9th session of the Committee in Paris in December 1950, the main item on the agenda was the conclusion reached by the Council the previous week regarding the necessity of studying the economic problems posed by defence programs. Here was a possible boon to the Italian desire to spur the movement of surplus manpower. On the general question of emigration, it was also determined that each country should send copies of bilateral agreements on the recruitment of foreign labour to the secretariat, in order to extract some general rules.

In the event there was a fair bit of foot dragging on the part of Committee members who were less interested than the Italians in the question of redistributing surplus manpower. At the 11th session, in April 1951, the findings of a special Working Party on the defence requirements of member states was discussed. The main thrust of this report was the Italian

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42 PRO LAB 13/52: "Note by Belgian delegation to OEEC Manpower Committee", ca. September 1950 (no specific date given).

43 PRO LAB 13/52: Internal memo dated 17 August 1950.

44 PRO LAB 13/53: Council conclusions contained in C(50)340 Final.
proposal that the transfer of surplus manpower from one region of Europe to another in the event of an emergency should be discussed. The British delegate, Rossetti, described the Italian proposal as "rather grandiose", and indeed these proposals were shelved for the time being. It was agreed at the main session that a quarterly report of the manpower situation in each country should be submitted so that shortages arising from re-armament programs could be monitored.\textsuperscript{45}

At the next session in May a dispute arose regarding the Italian proposal, with the British and Belgians arguing that the Working Party should not have to consider hypothetical situations, and the Italian and German delegates, headed by Malagodi, countering that as the proposal had to do with defence expenditure and manpower questions, it was a matter for the Working Party. The British representative at this time, M. Lloyd Davies, noted in a despatch that it might be easier to "smother" this proposal in the Working Party, where the formidable Malagodi would not have to be contended with.\textsuperscript{46}

At the next session in July 1951, the Committee considered two papers summarizing reports of the quarters ending 31 December 1950 and 31 March 1951. Neither report showed any serious manpower problems being encountered. The Italians however argued that a European coal shortfall was being experienced as a result of labour shortages, and that this situation was bound to worsen in the future. The U.K. delegate had to resist the Italian proposal to establish a series of working parties to study individual countries. Further, it was decided by the committee that the Italian proposal for an "as if" study should only be undertaken if bi-annual reports indicated a need for large scale movements of manpower. However, it was also noted that defence preparations were only

\textsuperscript{45} PRO LAB 13/54: Report by Rossetti on 11th session of OEEC Manpower Committee (April 1951), undated.

\textsuperscript{46} PRO LAB 13/55: Lloyd Davies to Veysey, 15 May 1951.
now getting under way in earnest, and that with the aging of the population in certain countries, there was still a chance that manpower shortages would develop in future.\textsuperscript{47} In this way a compromise was struck, and the British delegation was able to avoid any sort of commitment on manpower questions.

At the 14th session of the Manpower Committee in September 1951, the Italians continued to press for a firmer commitment. The quarterly reports had by this time been reduced to six-monthly reports; Italy now proposed that in the reports each country should venture a five year forecast of its manpower needs in order that emigration countries could plan their training of would-be emigrants. Both the British and the Belgian delegations resisted this proposal, and in the end a compromise was struck whereby each country would endeavour to give as long term a forecast as possible.\textsuperscript{48}

Also discussed at this conference was the upcoming meeting of the Council of Europe Experts on Refugees and Surplus Population, meeting in Strasbourg later in the month, and the ILO proposal for setting up a Migration Administration to fill the gap created by the termination of the IRO. The ILO document setting out the proposal called for expenditures of roughly \$36m.\textsuperscript{49} in the first year, of which some \$25m. would go to a Migration Aid fund to defray migrants' transportation and setting up costs. Over an 8 year span the budget would run to some \$130m., to be contributed by the member states. The British attitude toward this proposal was somewhat ambivalent, betraying the reluctance to commit resources to such an international body, and to compromise their autonomy. Latching

\textsuperscript{47} PRO LAB 13/56: The two papers on the quarterly reports were referenced MO(51)24 and MO(51)28. For the summary report of the conference see draft to Executive Committee, dated 20 July 1951, finally issued as CE(51)90.

\textsuperscript{48} PRO LAB 13/63: Telegram #656 to Foreign Office, dated 9 September 1951.

\textsuperscript{49} PRO LAB 13/63: See ILO document (c/Mig/I/6/1951).
on to a point made in the ILO proposal, the British delegates insisted that the question of migration be treated in strictly utilitarian terms: "The movement [of migrants] must, if it were to result in permanent resettlement, be directed to satisfying manpower and economic needs." In addition, the U.K. would be reluctant to contribute to the Migration Aid fund unless it was found that "self-help" and bilateral agreements were insufficient. The Migration Administration proposal was to be discussed in Naples in October, and the advice being prepared for British delegates was, not surprisingly, that they should be non-committal.

Despite stating that migration movements should be "directed to satisfying utilitarian needs", the British government stymied Italian initiatives to co-ordinate migrant labour training to address potential labour shortfalls caused by increased defence production. This was the general shape of British policy in the realm of European manpower questions. At this level the relationship between the Italian and British governments can only be described as adversarial. Britain was simply unwilling to relinquish autonomy to a pan-European body. On a bilateral level, however, the British government was more willing to work with the Italian government. But such bilateral agreements did not always run smoothly, as was evidenced by the British recruitment of coalmining workers in Italy in 1951.

The NCB scheme to recruit Italians for the coal mines was worked out by the beginning of 1951. The process had begun in late 1949, when the question of recruiting Displaced Persons and Italians who had worked in Belgian mines was entertained by the Wiles Committee on manpower in coalmining. In December 1949 the Labour Attache in Belgium, C.F. Heron, was asked to

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50 PRO LAB 13/63: See Telegram #656 to Foreign Office, 9 September 1951.

51 PRO LAB 13/833: Minutes of 38th meeting of Wiles committee, dated 13 December 1949.
evaluate the performance and availability of both Displaced Person and Italian labour in the Belgian mines. Heron reported little likelihood that significant numbers of Displaced Persons would be willing to come to the U.K. Many of them were looking to get out of the mines, while others felt fairly contented where they were or had families, which from the British point of view disqualified them from consideration, since family units were less flexible, and involved an added strain on resources such as housing and food. Heron reiterated an oft stated point about the Italian propensity for heavy work, namely that the preferred Italian diet of "macaroni and tomatoes" was insufficiently sustaining, and that there was difficulty in "weaning" them away from it. This seemingly trivial bias against Italian labour was one reason why NCB members of the Wiles Committee initially considered the track record of the Italians in Belgian mines to be "unsatisfactory."

Another, and perhaps related reason, was that Italians were considered "temperamentally unsuited" for mining work, a preconception that was repeated time and again throughout these files.

Yet despite the prejudice against Italian miners, the British government was by this time committed to a policy of foreign labour recruitment that was "biassed in favour of

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52 PRO LAB 13/833: Note from G. Ball to C.F. Heron, dated 16 December 1949.

53 Ibid., Heron to Ball, 20 December 1949.

54 PRO LAB 13/833: Minutes of 38th meeting of Wiles Committee.

55 An example of this sort of stereotyping can be seen in an internal Ministry of Labour memo dated 29 June 1948, from a Mr. Flindall to a Miss Tavener: "The NCB considered the employment of Italians but came to the conclusion that people of Latin countries are not temperamentally suitable for coalmining." PRO LAB 13/261.
Italians" for the foreign policy reasons listed above. Moreover available Displaced Persons in Austria and Germany were evaluated as "not the right type of people for mining; although they would come up to the physical standard." This appraisal may have referred to temperamental unsuitability as well, although it could also have been a reference to trade union resistance to east European workers. Thus Italy was ranked as the best source for foreign labour. The good performance of previously recruited female Italian textile workers was taken "as a pointer to the likelihood of Italian men settling down here if they were recruited." Settling down in this instance was not the same thing as settling in the U.K. The term was meant to signify contentedness in the work, and social quiescence, rather than propensity to assimilate.

By the spring of 1950 then, the Labour Attache in Italy was being asked to sound out the Italian government about the terms of possible recruitment of miners from Italy. The Ministry of Labour wanted to know how many Italians might volunteer for such a scheme, what sorts of screening procedures could be worked out, and whether or not the Italian government would be willing to pay for the teaching of English to recruits in Italy before they were brought to the U.K. Braine's optimistic reply was that at least thirty thousand Italians could be expected to volunteer for the scheme, and that the Italian government would be willing to pay for the English teaching. Clearly the Italian government was keen to have


57 PRO LAB 17/1729: See minutes of 38th meeting of interdepartmental committee on manpower in Coalmining, (known also as the Wiles Committee, after its chair), 13 December 1949.

58 PRO LAB 13/833: Ball to Braine, dated 23 June 1950.

59 Ibid., Braine to Ball, dated 26 June 1950.
their surplus labour problems addressed in this way, as their position in the OEEC Manpower Committee had shown. As the Labour attache in Italy, Braine too was keen to promote recruitment in Italy, and his figure of thirty thousand potential volunteers was a generous over-estimate.

The NUM however, had to be talked into acceptance of foreign labour. At a conference in Stockholm in August 1950, the NUM President, Arthur Horner, indicated that no more foreigners would be accepted into British mines. The Ministry of Labour at this point regarded the recruitment of Italian miners as dead.60 A telegram to the Ministry of Labour from the Italian ambassador, a few days after Mr. Horner's statement, informing the Ministry of the availability of Italian miners who had worked in Belgium, seemed to have come just a little late in the day.61 However talks between the NCB and the NUM continued through September 1950, with the issue of foreign labour remaining on the agenda. In October a piece appeared in the Times claiming that manpower in British mines was diminishing by 1,000 men per week, and that the figure of 689,900 miners currently employed was the lowest total this century.62 The article also suggested that tentative agreement had been reached with the NUM to allow for the recruitment of Italian men. This was true, although all the details had not

60 PRO LAB 13/833: See Ball to Miss Hanson, 4 August 1950.

61 PRO LAB 13/833: Letter from Italian ambassador to Isaacs, dated 22 August 1950.

62 See Times, 11 October 1950, as cited in PRO LAB 13/833. This article was cited by Braine in a memo to Ball, dated 12 October 1950. Braine thought that this news would make a great splash in Italy, and requested more details. The wastage figures were particularly high after the removal of the Control of Engagement Order and the ring fence around mining, in March 1950. In addition there were some 7,000 EVWs then working in the mines, and many of these were expected to leave the mines when they were freed from restrictions by the end of 1951. Thus official prognostications estimated a shortfall of manpower for the mines for 1951 and beyond.
yet been ironed out. The main stumbling block, the Ministry of Labour noted, was the objection of local lodges.\textsuperscript{63}

As these negotiations dragged on the Labour Attaches in both Belgium and Italy were again asked to appraise the available Italian labour. In April 1950 Braine delivered a report on the "general record of the Italian for arduous physical work." He noted that Italian workers had performed well on various tunnelling and construction mega projects, and that in several regions of the country there were unemployed labourers "who are accustomed to a hard life for a low wage."\textsuperscript{64} In November, Braine estimated that there were some 10,000 experienced miners available, and another 5,000 experienced general workmen.\textsuperscript{65} He could not estimate how many of these miners had been employed as face workers. Heron's response, a few days later, noted that the Italians were not being dismissed from the Belgian mines but were themselves choosing to leave after saving money or reaching the end of their rope.\textsuperscript{66} The Belgians were recruiting them back if they could. By September 1950 there were 22,000 Italian miners left in Belgium, from a peak figure of 47,000 at the end of 1948. Most of the Italians were face workers, although many of those that had left had been employed on the surface. Most of the Italians, noted Heron, did not like to live in hostel accommodation, preferring to live in the French region "for reasons of language and temperament."

Although both Braine and Heron had given a good report of the Italians, Ball at the Ministry of Labour was a little

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{PRO LAB} 13/833: Memo by Ball, dated 17 October 1950. \textsuperscript{64} \textit{PRO LAB} 8/1729: See E.A. Ferguson (Ministry of Labour) to Armstrong (Ministry of Fuel and Power), 17 May 1950. \textsuperscript{65} \textit{PRO LAB} 13/833: Braine to Rossetti, dated 9 November 1950. \textsuperscript{66} \textit{PRO LAB} 13/833: Braine to Rossetti (Ministry of Labour), 9 November 1950; and Heron to Rossetti, 13 November 1950.
sceptical about the departure of the Italians from Belgium, and from France, where a number had also been recruited. There was a difference, he noted in an internal memo, between being made redundant and leaving employment when you were still wanted.\(^{67}\) If the Italians were primarily in the latter category then he doubted their suitability for recruitment to the U.K. Moreover, at this time the Wiles Committee received a report from the Ministry of Fuel and Power outlining the difficulties of Italian recruitment -- teaching them English, the time necessary to get a stream of recruitment going, opposition of local lodges -- and the unsatisfactory experience of Irish recruitment, which had been discontinued in 1949.\(^{68}\)

The discussion of the performance of Italian mining recruits in Belgium and France brought out some telling ethno-national stereotypes. Firstly there was the implied notion that Italian men were not up to the demands of an arduous labouring job. Their diet and temperament were discussed in this regard. Further on the question of temperament, relations between Italian recruits and the Belgian trade unions was also brought up. There had been accusations flying back and forth between the two sides, with the Italians maintaining that they had been hounded out of Belgium by the unions. In counselling that such talk should be taken lightly, Braine minuted: "You will not need to be reminded that the Latin races bring into most discussions a certain amount of malicious comment of the sort we are accustomed to call feminine, although here it is the men who indulge in it."\(^{69}\) In the coal industry, which under the NCB was advertising itself to recruits as "a well paid man's job", the "feminine Latin races" were definitely miscast.

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\(^{67}\) PRO LAB 13/833: Ball to Braine, 16 November 1950.

\(^{68}\) PRO LAB 13/833: Memo from Sir Laurence Watkinson to Wiles Committee for meeting on 21 November 1950.

\(^{69}\) PRO LAB 13/833: Braine to Ball, 21 November 1950, and 16 December 1950.
The question of whether to recruit skilled or unskilled labour further complicated the matter. The availability of experienced Italian miners in Belgium and Italy had intrigued the Ministry of Labour. It was thought that experience in mining was a good indication of propensity to stay on in the work. The NCB manpower department, on the other hand, preferred raw recruits to experienced miners as the jobs they had in mind for them were mainly unskilled haulage work on the surface. The notion that Italian workers would be used in ancillary tasks to allow British workers to be boosted up to the coal face was part of the ongoing negotiation between the NCB and the NUM. In this negotiation the acceptance of Italian miners was one bargaining chip on the table; in a memo from the Prime Minister's office dated 8 January 1951 it was noted that "...admission ... without delay, of skilled Italian coalminers should be a condition of the completion of negotiations for some increase in the pay of the lower-paid workers and the initiation of negotiations for a supplementary pensions scheme for underground workers." As can be seen from that statement, the final dispensation of Italian recruits was still a matter for negotiation at the local level. Regardless of where they were ultimately placed however, Braine advised that the skill level of the Italians be played down: "... if an Italian worker included in a squad brings down the average output of that squad, he will be unpopular with his British fellows if they were led to believe that he was skilled."

Landing conditions for recruited workers were another important consideration in this scheme. The Ministry of Labour wanted the Home Office to design conditions that would make it

70 PRO LAB 13/833: Ball to MacDonald (NCB), dated 29 December 1950.

71 PRO PREM 8/1338: C.M.(51)2nd, Conclusions, dated 8 January 1951.

72 Ibid., Braine to Ball, dated 16 December 1950.
easier to forcibly repatriate recruits who sought work outside of the mines.\textsuperscript{73} The Aliens Order was still considered an appropriate vehicle for this sort of restriction, but it was noted that the landing conditions imposed on EVWs had proven unsatisfactory in tying recruited labour to a first placing. Landing conditions for this scheme were therefore made stricter than they had been in the past. Not only did the foreign worker have to register with the police upon arrival, but Ministry of Labour permission was needed to leave one's job, as opposed to earlier conditions which stated only that Ministry of Labour permission was necessary to take another job.\textsuperscript{74}

Other than this modification the agreements used in the previous recruitment of Italian women for the textile industry were used as models for this scheme. As in that recruitment, a formal agreement with the Italian government was eschewed. Recruits were offered two year contracts in the first instance, but it was recognized informally that "a lifetime of employment" would probably be available to all who wanted it.\textsuperscript{75} About three thousand recruits were initially projected, although again the Ministry of Labour and the NCB were anxious that this figure not be quoted "... since it is open to two sided attack from different quarters as being both too large and too small."\textsuperscript{76} This figure, it was hoped, could be added to later if the three thousand were successfully integrated into the workforce.

Interest in the British press regarding the scheme was keen, particularly in those coalmining areas, such as Yorkshire, where Italian men were to be placed. The British attache in Milan wrote the Ministry of Labour at the end of

\textsuperscript{73} PRO LAB 13/833: J.B. Howard (Ministry of Labour) to Sir Leslie Brass (Home Office), 20 January 1951.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., Ball to Braine, dated 25 January 1951.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
March 1951 to request information about the scheme, and noted that both the *Times* and *Picture Post* correspondents were pestering him for details. The Ministry instructed him to be vague as to the numbers to be recruited and the period of time that the scheme would run. This advice reflected the fact that details of the scheme had yet to be fully worked out, particularly with respect to the local lodges' acceptance of the Italians. Moreover the Home Office was not yet satisfied that adequate screening procedures were being implemented, and the NCB worried that sub-standard recruits would be sent. Speculation in the British press was also regretted by the Ministry of Labour on the ground that final negotiation of the scheme might be jeopardized by a public reaction. An internal memo noted that the strategy the Ministry hoped to employ was one of "filtering in Italians wherever possible," in a quiet and somewhat secretive fashion, presumably to avoid public resistance.

The press coverage subverted this process. In several memos to the Ministry of Labour in January 1951, Braine included clippings from the Italian press giving misleading information about the relative wages in Belgium and the U.K. (the latter came off as poorer), and inflating the number of recruits that had actually been agreed for the scheme to a figure of ten thousand. Braine suggested a counter propaganda leaflet campaign in Italy, in order to sell the scheme, which was competing with a Belgian recruitment of previously contracted Italian miners. The Ministry of Labour, for its part, thought that the figure of ten thousand recruits seemed to put the British in the role of supplicants, whereas it was a

77 PRO LAB 13/57: M.J. Starritt to Preston, 3 April 1951.


79 PRO LAB 13/833: See Ball to Braine, 23 January 1951.

80 PRO LAB 13/833: Braine to Ball, dated 29 January 1951.
foundation of British policy that the scheme be presented as an attempt by the U.K. to help out Italy with its surplus manpower difficulties.\textsuperscript{81}

The press speculation also contributed to the raising of questions in the House of Commons. On 12 February 1951 the government was asked why they had dragged their feet on the Italian recruitment. One response to this challenge, from a Labour backbencher, emphasized the notion that coalmining was work which required the close integration of work fellows, and so was unsuited to the recruitment of foreigners: "... the objection to employing Italian labour is not on the grounds of nationality but on the grounds of language .... in a coal mine it is necessary that each man should understand the language of the man with whom he is working."\textsuperscript{82} Although it is true that language difficulties were often cited by civil servants as a stumbling block to foreign recruitment for the mines, the files reveal that ethnic stereotypes were in fact a major concern.

Shortly after these questions were raised in the House of Commons, the press impinged upon the scheme in another way. In late February 1951 Arthur Street of the NCB wrote the Ministry of Fuel and Power about an accident that had just happened in the Belgian mine of Fontaine-l'Eveque.\textsuperscript{83} According to a French report of the incident, the Italian miners had behaved poorly during the crisis. Street wanted the British Labour Attache in Brussels to clarify details of the incident. Here again the notion of the temperamental unsuitability of Italians for the dangerous work of mining was raised. Heron's report from Belgium was that five miners had been walled up for 10 hours after a cave in.\textsuperscript{84} One of the miners was Italian, and

\textsuperscript{81} PRO LAB 13/833: Ball to Veysey, 27 January 1951.

\textsuperscript{82} See Hansard, 12 February 1951, v.484, col.8.

\textsuperscript{83} PRO LAB 13/834: Arthur Street to Sir Donald Ferguson, dated 22 February 1951.

\textsuperscript{84} PRO LAB 13/834: Memo by Heron, dated 6 March 1951.
apparently he had acted "a little panicky." Heron continued: "... this strikes me as hardly surprising in the circumstances, and may be nothing more than a difference of national temperament." Heron also noted that the Inspector he had spoken to reckoned that the Italians were slightly more susceptible to accidents due to ignorance or "deliberate imprudence." This was mentioned "as it might be wise to bear it in mind as an overriding qualification if anything is done to counteract rumours about the accident."

Apparently the government was able to assuage NUM concerns about the safety of having Italian men working in the mines. By April of 1951 the British and Italian recruitment machinery was in motion in both the north and the south of Italy. The terms on which the men would be recruited included an age limit of 18 to 31, a pledge to work only in coalmining, and a proviso that no dependents would be allowed initially, although subsequent application could be made to bring over a wife and children under the age of 21. The Italian government was responsible for paying the transport of the men to Folkestone, as well as for the cost of their medical examination and their travel within Italy to the interview sites. The British government was to pay for their travel within England to the hostels and English Training Centres, and would moreover pay a lump sum of two pounds per annum per recruit to the Italian government as a social security contribution.  

Language training and subsequent costs, including the cost of repatriation, would be

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65 PRO LAB 13/834: The Anglo-Italian Convention on reciprocity of Social Insurance was initialled in Rome on 20 March 1951. The negotiations over the question of social security arrangements were conducted in the context of the working out of this agreement, and in fact played an instrumental role in its final drafting. The Convention stated that "in certain cases, the benefits of social insurance schemes of each contracting Party shall be granted to persons in the territory of the other." This arrangement was fairly flexible, as suited the British government.
borne by the NCB. This sort of three way splitting of the cost reflected the fact that the scheme served all three bodies to some extent.

Recruitment and vetting procedures in Italy also reflected the involvement of the various bodies involved in the scheme. The Italians were anxious that the scheme run smoothly, and that none of their recruits behaved in a way which would jeopardize future schemes of this sort. The British Home Office was also concerned about the political proclivities of recruits. The Italians therefore ran security checks on potential recruits which included referring back to the man's local area in Italy for the details of his police and political record. This local check was time consuming, and yet it was an essential prerequisite to the issuance of an Italian passport. Once the passport was approved, the volunteer's name could be passed on to the British selection team. This sort of preliminary check spared the British selectors from having to ask too many delicate political questions. A note from a member of the selection teams in August 1951 showed that this security net was catching a substantial number of "undesirables": "We are throwing out as many as 20% of men selected from certain areas, and always on the grounds of a record of either serious penal offences or real political undesirability."

However the possible Communist political affiliation of recruits was very important to the British government, and a

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86 The teaching of English would be undertaken by the NCB at their own expense, and the men would be paid full surface wages -- anywhere from 77/- to 110/- per week depending on age -- while they were at the English Training Centres. The length of the English language course would be approximately thirteen weeks. See PRO LAB 13/834.


88 PRO LAB 13/834: K.C. Benton to Ball, dated 1 August 1951. "of the 300 men whom we have so far rejected, a large number are Communist agitators or armed bravos."
proviso for following up the Italian checks was also implemented:

The possibility that those who are selected will be got at by subversive elements before call forward has been thought of, and a 'pep' talk to selected volunteers by the Director of the Emigration Centre will endeavour to counter this. If it comes to the knowledge of the Italian Security authorities that an accepted volunteer is becoming a doubtful risk, steps will be taken to see that he does not go forward: where it is appropriate to hint at the reason for his failure to emigrate some good may result.\textsuperscript{89}

The selection teams -- one in Milan and one in Naples -- comprised representatives of both the Ministry of Labour and the NCB. Once a man had cleared the Italian security check and had been approved by the interview team, he proceeded to a physical examination administered by an Italian doctor. By this time the Home Office had deputed to the Ministry of Labour representatives in Italy the task of making sure that recruits were bona fide.\textsuperscript{90} There were several considerations here: firstly, care was to be taken that Italian recruits not use this scheme as a means of getting to the U.K. to join relatives and friends. Interviewers were to ascertain whether the volunteer seemed more interested in coming to the U.K. than in mining work specifically. If so he was to be rejected.\textsuperscript{91} Secondly, recruits for the British mines should be checked to see that they had not left their contracts in Belgium to work in Britain. This proviso showed the co-operation between Belgium and the U.K. in order that no "poaching" of foreign labour would occur.

It was thought at first that it would be necessary to have

\textsuperscript{89} PRO LAB 13/833: Ball to Rosetti, 19 February 1951.

\textsuperscript{90} PRO LAB 13/834: Weiler to Keith, dated 17 August 1951.

\textsuperscript{91} PRO LAB 13/834: See Staff Instruction Number 2.
special endorsements for the scheme placed on the recruits' passports, in order to alert British Immigration Officers. However the Home Office was so impressed by the thoroughness of the Italian security checks that they dropped the endorsement provision. As in the previous Italian women's scheme, recruits were brought forward under nominal rolls -- that is to say as a group -- as opposed to under individual passports.\(^{92}\) Rather than a lengthy interrogation at the port of entry, a "post-report" of the recruits was suggested, to be compiled several months after their arrival in the U.K.

There were three separate checks in the Italian security procedure: against the PCO records in Rome; the central records of the Italian Security Service; and the records of the provincial police.\(^{93}\) By May 1951 it was seen that the last of these checks was taking too long and was slowing the scheme down. In late May, Braine wrote G. Ball at the Ministry of Labour that local elections were then taking place, and that these were a testing ground of Communist strength.\(^{94}\) The local police and security agencies were therefore busy keeping order, and the security checks of recruits at the local level were being slowed down as a result. In addition, Braine noted that the NCB man in Milan, a Mr. Ansell, was quite tough on the Italian volunteers, rejecting quite a few arbitrarily. It was hoped that his imminent replacement would facilitate a quicker recruitment.\(^{95}\) This speeding up of the intake of Italians was

\(^{92}\) With nominal rolls, the recruits arriving at a port of entry in the U.K. would be identified on a list which would be checked and passed as a whole. This sped up the process of intake.

\(^{93}\) PRO LAB 13/834: Benton to Ball, dated 1 August 1951.

\(^{94}\) PRO LAB 13/57: Braine to Ball, 29 May 1951.

\(^{95}\) PRO LAB 13/834: It should be noted that Staff Instruction Number One to all recruitment officers was that they should be very selective, and should not be swayed by pressure to admit a certain number of recruits. The standards should be kept very high: "If it should transpire that the
important, as the agreement with the NUM was subject to change at any moment, and it was felt that if the stream of recruits was not kept at a steady rate, the whole process could fall through. In June, Ball wrote to Braine that the acceptance of the scheme by the local NUM locals hinged upon the ability to deliver a steady stream of 60 men a week. To that point this stream had not been forthcoming.

In order to speed up the process the Home Office, in consultation with MI5 and the Ministry of Labour, agreed that recruits should be allowed to come to the U.K. after the first two of the security checks had been completed. The provincial checks could be sent along as soon as possible. The provincial checks comprised local penal and political records, as well as "enquiries into subject's current activities." It was the latter of these two, -- which involved tapping into local grapevines -- that was especially time consuming. However, dispensing with these provincial checks turned out to be impossible, as they were a pre-requisite for the issuance of an Italian passport. Still the Home Office willingness to dispense with the local checks reveals their confidence in the Italian security procedures, which they estimated would give "90% security coverage." The Home Office was quite satisfied with the Italian security procedures, as could be seen in an October 1951 memo on the number of Italian men that had been sent back as "bad hats". See: PRO LAB 13/57: K.C. Benton, British Embassy, Visa Section, Rome, to P.L. Rex, Foreign Office Passport Control Department, dated 6 October 1951.

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In addition to these procedures, the post-checks would keep track of recruits while they were in the U.K. The NCB was proportion of rejections is unduly high it was better to adjust this in Italy later on than to face the risks inherent in faulty selection."

96 PRO LAB 13/57: Ball to Braine, 10 June 1951.

97 PRO LAB 13/833: See Hughes (Home Office) to Ball (Ministry of Labour), 16 May 1951.

98 The Home Office was quite satisfied with the Italian security procedures, as could be seen in an October 1951 memo on the number of Italian men that had been sent back as "bad hats". See: PRO LAB 13/57: K.C. Benton, British Embassy, Visa Section, Rome, to P.L. Rex, Foreign Office Passport Control Department, dated 6 October 1951.
asked to notify the Ministry of Labour of any "defections from the Italian labour force." Local Offices of the Ministry of Labour were also to be on the lookout for Italian workers seeking work other than that they had been contracted for. "Perhaps we are being nervous", minuted a Home Office civil servant, "but we think a double check through Ministry of Labour and the local police will be advisable."\(^{99}\) Despite the attempt to speed up the process of checks in order to maintain a steady stream of recruits, security procedures continued to be a drag on the scheme. A dispatch by Braine in early July 1951 again blamed delays on the slowness of the Italian security procedures, and spoke of expediting the process by getting the Italian provincial authorities to provide records more quickly.\(^{100}\) At this point some 900 Italian men had been accepted by the interview board, and were awaiting final clearance.\(^{101}\) As a result of this backlog, the interview process was put on hold until these numbers could be cleared.

The difficulty in maintaining a steady flow of Italian recruits seemed at this point to have shifted to the British side. In August Braine wrote Ball asking if the interview process should be re-started.\(^{102}\) He noted that it would take six weeks from the time of the interview until the time when the security and medical clearances came through, and that at the current intake of 60 to 90 men a week, the present pool of recruits would dry up by October. Ball's reply was that the current intake of Italians was taxing the capacities of the English Training Centres (ETCs), and thus it was not necessary to resume the interviews yet.\(^{103}\) Braine then replied with a

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\(^{99}\) Ibid.

\(^{100}\) PRO LAB 13/834: Braine to Ball, dated 14 July 1951.

\(^{101}\) PRO LAB 13/57: Ball to W.C. Gordon, 13 June 1951.

\(^{102}\) PRO LAB 13/57: Braine to Ball, 2 August 1951.

\(^{103}\) PRO LAB 13/57: Ball to Braine, 10 August 1951.
suggestion that Italian men continue to be interviewed and sent as part of a general pool of labour which could be made available to the several industries that were then expressing interest in tapping into this supply of labour. Although this suggestion elicited a favourable response in some quarters of the Ministry of Labour, it was not carried through.\footnote{PRO LAB 13/460: Braine to Keith, dated 10 September 1951.}

The take up of Italian recruits had by now hit a snag. The machinery for selecting recruits in Italy had been put on hold in July, and it was not to be revived until mid September. The reason for this was a reluctance on the part of the NUM lodges to accept the Italians. In July, the NCB had given assurances that it had enough miners for the time being, and this had led to the selection machinery being frozen. At mid July, the number of Italians chosen and approved for the scheme had reached 1660.\footnote{PRO LAB 13/460.} At this point the number of pits that had accepted the Italians had dried up, and the NCB had been busily trying to get more pits to accept the recruits. By October, having pressed them to do so successfully, the NCB and the Ministry of Labour were anxious that as many of the Italians as possible get into the pits while the acceptance was open. The Ministry worried that a gap in arrivals would sour the scheme. At the Italian end the British representatives wanted the NCB to be more forthcoming in their assessments of future needs, so that the interviews and advertisement for the scheme could be more tightly coordinated. Apparently the stop and go nature of the interviews had caused the number of volunteers for the scheme to drop considerably since July.\footnote{PRO LAB 13/834: Braine to Ball, dated 14 August 1951.}

In order to keep up with the demand for Italian recruits at this point, the selection teams in Italy, and particularly the NCB representatives, who seemed throughout to be the
pickier of the two British agents, agreed to accept more southern Italians. This had been a sticking point throughout the process. The NCB in particular was desirous of recruiting northern Italians, who they deemed more able workers and better bets to smoothly integrate into British society. But the rate of unemployment was much lower in the north of Italy than in the south, and competition in northern Italy from other recruiting countries such as Belgium and France meant that the numbers of available workers in the south far outnumbered those in the north.

Indeed the year end official evaluations noted that the majority of the volunteers for the NCB scheme had come from the south. By the end of December the numbers given by the British consulate in Milan were as follows: 5,327 men had been interviewed, of whom 2,932 had been accepted; the number in the U.K. was given as 1,490, and the number awaiting dispatch was 857. Of the men recruited, some two thirds were from the south. In a note accompanying these figures a request was made for an assessment of the performance of the southern Italian recruits as opposed to the northerners: "From this side it is obvious that the northerners have a higher educational standard and generally speaking are much better dressed."

A clipping from the Manchester Guardian, dated 8 December 1951, seemed to be the Ministry of Labour's reply to this query. The Ministry was clearly as concerned about the public perception of the scheme as they were about the actual performance of the recruits. The Guardian, attempting to sound sympathetic, nevertheless was critical of the Italian recruits: in the southerners the Italians had "initially sent the wrong type of ambassadors .... [the southerners] through no fault of their own are in the main illiterate and undisciplined ... a

\[107\] PRO LAB 13/57: Internal memo from Starritt, dated 11 January 1952.

difficult force to introduce into communities whose very lives sometimes depend on acceptance of a strict code of discipline." The article finished with the suggestion that the selection process be more stringent.\(^{109}\)

The stereotype of the southern Italian was one which had plagued both official and popular perceptions of this scheme from the outset. The *Yorkshire Post* of 24 May 1951, for example, ran a story about the acculturation process which the Italians would have to undergo. Italian recruits were pictured as quaintly primitive: "The Italians will also be told such things as how to behave on a bus, how to shop, how to use the Post Office, and that they must drink up when a landlord calls 'time'."\(^{110}\) But while the article may have treated the Italians as if they were coming from a much less civilized society, there was a lightness to the condescension which bespoke a desire to have them accepted as harmless and useful. The Ministry of Labour kept close track of such press reports of the scheme, and were quite sensitive to the perception of the Italians by the mining communities in which they were placed.

In June the *Manchester Guardian* ran an article which depicted a fairly smooth integration of Italian recruits thus far. Again the article contained rather a light hearted stereotyping of the men: "Italians are friendly people .... Natural Italian exuberance also helps. Within two days the first arrivals were using phrases in the first few pages of their English lesson books in conversations with local girls employed in a neighbouring factory."\(^{111}\) The article went on to paint a picture of the Italians as basically jolly, if undisciplined and somewhat childish. Their prowess at games

\(^{109}\) PRO LAB 13/57: clipping from Manchester Guardian 8 December 1951.

\(^{110}\) PRO LAB 13/57: clipping in file.

\(^{111}\) PRO LAB 13/57: clipping from Manchester Guardian 20 June 1951.
such as football was noted, as was the tendency to illiteracy among many of them. It should be remembered that while this somewhat light picture of the Italians was non-threatening, it was also not entirely favourable, particularly in the Yorkshire region where most of the recruits were situated. Aside from the political complexion of the men, which of course had been exhaustively checked, the two other concerns of miners with respect to the recruits were their level of literacy and their temperament. Time and again the NUM and the NCB had stressed that a strong facility with the English language was necessary to ensure safety underground. If the men could not learn English adequately their presence in the mines might pose a danger to themselves and their workmates. Similarly, a mature and calm temperament and a willingness to accept discipline were thought to be crucial to safety. Thus the picture of the happy go lucky Italians, chatting up the local girls, was likely to have a mixed response from the Yorkshire locals. Reluctance to allow the Italian workers underground probably stemmed from this sort of debilitating image as much as from trade union insistence that British workers should be the first to be promoted to face work. This in turn led to a sense of grievance on the part of Italian workers relegated to lower paid surface work.\[112\]

The number of recruits at year end was far lower than the five thousand or so that had been projected in the press. The number of volunteers rejected by the selection committees reflected the stringency both of the NCB selectors, and of the security vetting procedure. It also reflected the reluctance of the Yorkshire NUM lodges to accept the Italians into the mines. Acceptance of the Italians was, from the outset, a part of the

\[112\] Daily Telegraph, 10 January 1952, p.2: Article reporting on the progress of Italian workers thus far, and lamenting the hard conditions that the small number of Italians brought over so far had to face.
bargaining procedure regarding the pay and benefits packages of the miners. In this sense the Italian recruits were never really wanted in Yorkshire, but were foisted upon the miners after having been used as leverage in negotiations. Furthermore, the portrayal of the Italians in the press, while seemingly sympathetic, actually highlighted stereotypical traits which put the Italians in a bad light with the locals.

Several points about the terms of this recruitment are noteworthy. One is the weight that was put on the recruit's past political activity. The main fear that the British government seems to have had with respect to Italian recruits was that they might be active Communists. Aside from all the considerations as to the ethnic suitability of Italians for mining work, the concern with the politics of recruits reflects the nascent Cold War mentality in official circles, as well as the centrist political coloration of this particular Labour government. There is also a gendered dimension to this concern in that security checks in the scheme to recruit Italian women had not been as stringently political, emphasizing instead pregnancy and "character" (moral virtue) checks. Moreover, as the Italian men were not meant to settle in the U.K. but rather to be a temporary pool of reserve labour, there was official concern that they perform the tasks they were specifically contracted to perform. Thus the control mechanism placed on these recruits was much more stringent than had been the case in previous schemes; these recruits could not leave their job without Ministry of Labour permission.

The NUM acceptance of the scheme to recruit Italians in the early spring of 1951 came at a time when recruitment in Italy was being stepped up in general. In March and April of 1951, for example, Braine travelled from Naples (brickmaking) to Milan (coal mining) to Sardinia (iron ore) assisting various
recruiting missions. From March to August 1951 there were fifteen different recruiting missions in Italy. Most of the recruiting missions were seeking unskilled male labour. These missions were sponsored by private firms, with the Ministry of Labour offering liaison services in Italy. They were therefore called "employers' schemes", and differed from official recruitment schemes in the degree of government involvement. Selection teams comprised representatives of the industry, and the costs of the scheme were borne entirely by the recruiting firms. But while employers' schemes were not official, the government was very much involved in facilitating this recruitment. The government thus also referred to these as "assisted" schemes.

There was great concern that these schemes work smoothly, and not only for industrial reasons. As a Ministry of Labour memo of August 1951 noted: "The political and international consequences of any failure of the Italian recruitment schemes caused by deficiencies on our part would be disproportionately serious." Moreover, manpower shortages continued to plague British industry, and pools of labour, to be dispersed according to need, were now being considered as alternatives to the specific, firm by firm, private recruitment mechanisms which the Ministry of Labour had hitherto insisted upon. Schemes to recruit for the railways and for the building industry in particular were being discussed. In a memo to Braine in September 1951, Mr. Keith of the Ministry of Labour


114 Ibid., Keith to Lloyd Davies, dated 19 August 1951.

115 Ibid.: In a note from Keith to Braine, dated 24 May 1951, Keith refers to the various "schemes of group recruitment by employers of Italian workers under Ministry of Labour permits." He also calls these "employers schemes" in quotation marks, as well as "assisted schemes."

116 PRO LAB 13/460: Keith to Sellar, 11 August 1951.
wrote: "We regard Italian recruitment of this 'unofficial' sort as an important help to our manpower where help is most needed, and we are, indeed, offering it as, in some sort, a substitute for the official EVW recruitment which was so useful to us up to 1949."  

It would seem then that by 1951, the recruitment of Italian labour was being driven by a happy confluence of foreign and domestic policy imperatives. But this was not the case, as the Report on Economic Prospects for 1952 indicated. This report was presented to the Cabinet by the Economic Steering Committee in October 1951. The Ministry of Labour prepared the Manpower section. It noted that during the past year there had been a sharp increase in the demand for labour. The number of jobs which were notified to Employment Exchanges and which were not filled at any one time had increased by about 80,000. Most of this demand was in the manufacturing sector. Particular shortages were identified in the mines and in the railways, and it was also noted that workers had found it easier to get their wages increased as a result of the demand for their services. It was estimated that a further 200,000 workers would be needed by industry to meet increased defence demands as well as civil production. Most of these workers would be needed by early 1953. The Ministry of Labour concluded that even with efficiencies, and the release of under-utilized workers in industries that retained them against the day when they could expand production, the shortage of workers could not be met by domestic reserves. The possible remedies outlined did not, however, stress the recruitment of foreign labour.

Under the heading "General Lines of Action", the first sentence stated: "The chief weapons for reducing the strain on

117 PRO LAB 13/460: Keith to Braine, 5 September 1951.

118 PRO CAB 130/71: See E.S.(51)57, 22 October 1951.
the economy as a whole are budgetary and monetary policy." Higher interest rates and direct control over credit would discourage the "hoarding of stocks and labour", releasing the under-employed for more efficient utilization. At the same time, the paper noted the "wage danger" from the situation of full employment meant that any attempt to curb demand through increased taxation might be offset by wage increases. Thus the general policy outline sketched the difficulties posed by full employment as major inhibitors of successful economic reconstruction.

In coalmining, which was identified as crucial to economic policy, the manpower shortage was identified as the main short term problem. The paper suggested that wage increases in the industry, especially if they were maintained relative to other industries through fiscal and monetary policies that reduced consequential rises in those industries, would attract more men into the mines. Moreover, such improved conditions would "make it easier to persuade [miners], especially by pressure of public opinion, to accept Italian and other foreign miners in the pits." Manpower shortages were also identified in transport, and again the recruitment of "6,000 Italians" was mentioned as a partial solution, along with wage increases. General suggestions to address the manpower shortage in the U.K. included the re-application of the Control of Engagement Order, and increased pressure by the Ministry of Labour on firms that were seen to be hoarding labour. The gist of the policy seemed to be to rein in domestic demand, rather than to increase the amount produced in Britain for domestic consumption by utilizing foreign labour.

The reluctance to recruit Italian workers to the U.K. in significant numbers was the result of several factors. As has been seen from the low evaluation of Italian prisoners in the aftermath of the war, there was first and foremost a debilitating racial stereotype attached to Italians in general which worked against their acceptance in the U.K. This official
prejudice against Italians was mirrored by public perceptions, particularly in regions such as Yorkshire, where an ideal of reserved stoicism seemed to stand in bold contrast to the Latin mercuriality and conviviality of the Italian stereotype. Moreover, the stereotype that attended Italians meant that the type of work for which they were suited was strictly delineated in both the official and the public mind. In coalmining the notion that Italians were too effeminate, frivolous, weak, and temperamental to be strictly trusted underground worked against their acceptance, particularly at the local level. Coalmining, it was repeatedly argued, was the sort of work that required camaraderie, trust and communication of a very personal nature. This sort of attitude seemed to excuse the sort of prejudice that kept Italians out of the industry.

The Home Office was also concerned about the political tendencies of the Italians, and more specifically any communist affiliation that they might have. The Aliens Act of 1920, still in force in these years and still the mechanism by which foreign workers were controlled in the U.K., specified that aliens who fomented any sort of industrial trouble could be deported.\(^{119}\) Clearly a Labour government would not wish to be seen deporting any worker for the sorts of activities that trade unions regularly engaged in. And yet this Labour government was attuned to the imperatives and beliefs of the Cold War, as well as to the difficulties posed by obstreperous trade unions. For this reason the vetting of Italian volunteers and the weeding out of potential communist "troublemakers" was another important consideration of these schemes. Such vetting caused a slowing down of the recruitment process, which in turn adversely affected the numbers that were recruited.

Yet Cold War anti-communism also did, conversely, work in favour of recruiting Italians. The desire of the Foreign Office to help the de Gasperi government to thwart the opposition of

\(^{119}\) PRO LAB 8/1441: Internal memo re: Aliens Act, undated.
the Italian Communist and Socialist parties led to the espousal of a policy which at the very least paid lip service to the need to recruit surplus Italian labour. Italian emigration was a political issue in these years, and the British government was anxious to do all it could to stabilize a pro-western regime in Italy. In this sense foreign labour recruitment in Italy was motivated by British foreign policy considerations as much as it was by domestic, economic considerations. Until 1950, the use of Italian workers as a reserve army of labour in the Marxist sense does not really apply. Even after this time, the number of Italian workers brought to the U.K. was so small as to belie this sort of paradigm of foreign labour. The Marxist paradigm fits the EVW schemes, with their greater numbers, somewhat better than it does the Italian recruitments. The most salient feature of British labour recruitment policy in Italy in these years is therefore the degree to which foreign policy considerations created a duplicity of rhetoric and purpose. While the British government spent most of this period trying to dodge Italian pressure to accept Italian migrant workers in the U.K., the Foreign Office was simultaneously attempting to present itself as sympathetic to the cause of Italian emigration, and willing to do all in its power to facilitate it. By 1951 Italians were first on the priority list of potential foreign labour recruits. And yet, while the government gave priority to Italians, it had by 1951 largely ceased recruiting labour in large numbers from abroad. The number of Italian recruits in this period was exceedingly small, and remained a token gesture rather than a real attempt to redress the labour shortages in the U.K., or the surplus in

Italy.

This fact points out that foreign labour recruitment was not always simply a matter of addressing crises in the capitalist economy of postwar Britain. It could also be, and was, used as a means of conducting foreign policy. Moreover the case of recruitment from Italy also illustrates some well established aspects of British foreign policy with respect to Europe in these years. On the one hand, a greater commitment to the continent is shown, the result of war-time involvement, the decline of empire, and the onset of the Cold War. On the other hand, there is the traditional reluctance to surrender autonomy to a fully integrated Europe, or to blur national lines. The total number of Italian workers recruited under official schemes in this period could not have been more than 3,000. This figure is negligible next to the three hundred thousand or so east Europeans recruited during the same period. But the volume of discourse surrounding this tiny number was disproportionate, and illuminating.
Conclusion

On the 15th of November 1948, British newspapers announced the birth of the Prince of Wales. For a nation shouldering the load of reconstruction in highly regulated and drearily austere times, royal pageantry provided colour. It also reinforced conservative notions of tradition and Britishness, of the continuity of ancient institutions amid the reform and modernism of the new social service state. The following day the newspapers turned their attention to another bit of colourful news: the opening of the Lynskey tribunal into corruption in government. This tribunal would tie up the better part of newspaper attention for the following five weeks, and would in its way also reveal much about popular conceptions of British citizenship and national identity under the new order.

The Lynskey tribunal took its name from the principal presiding magistrate. Its main subject was the sort of tinkering with licensing restrictions and government favours to which the highly controlled and bureaucratic postwar state was susceptible.¹ The tribunal became a cause celebre because of the ascent to the public eye of a "stateless Polish alien" named Sidney Stanley. His testimony rivetted a British public ever hungry for an exotic and risque news story. Stanley was the quintessential spiv, a shadowy businessman who allegedly bribed influential government officials in exchange for import licenses. He had never bothered to take up formal British citizenship, though he had come to Britain as a teenager. He got his initial break selling dresses during the first World War, and continued as a player in the East End rag trade throughout the interwar period, despite claiming bankruptcy several times. In 1933 a deportation order was issued to him,

which he managed to avoid, as he did his creditors at various times, by using "five or six" aliases. His most frequently used name was Solomon Wulkan (Stanley was his latest, and preferred, affectation). His brother, Marcus Wulkan, was an influential Zionist based in New York, a fact which, when it emerged, added to the international intrigue of the tribunal.

Details of outrageous things that Stanley had done and said, in his "rapid fire, charming foreign accent", were lingered over in the press. Expensive gifts and parties, posh addresses in Park Lane, and the names of the rich and famous all provided a colourful contrast to the drab postwar world of rations and ring fences. When Stanley finally took the stand to testify, "covering his head with a cloth in the Jewish fashion to take the oath", (Evening Standard, among others), the press and public were infatuated with this man. He was shown buying fruit from barrow boys. His cheeky responses to questions were verbatim leads and headlines that wrote themselves. He was, in the words of Rebecca West, who covered the tribunal in a series of articles for the Evening Standard, "the amazing Mr. Stanley" (2 December 1948).

That is not to say that reports were entirely kind to him. The conservative Daily Express described his "olive tinted face" as "bland and impassive." (2 December 1948), and was openly contemptuous. When Marcus Wulkan was brought into the trial, the pair's Zionist connections were emphasized by a picture of Marcus kissing Zionist leader Dr. Abe Silver (Daily Express, Daily Mail, and others, 8 December 1948). At a time of heavy fighting between Zionists and British troops in Palestine, this picture was not calculated to make the brothers popular in Britain. The Communist Daily Worker, on the other hand, did not emphasize Stanley's foreignness very much, but did dwell on his connections with right wing trade union leaders, and his career as a "financier" (4 December 1948).

Ultimately Stanley was portrayed as a farcical figure; the papers often remarked on his small size, on the funny way he
spoke, and on his outrageous boastfulness. As the wife of John Belcher, the Board of Trade man accused of taking bribes, told the tribunal: "He was funny and I felt sorry because you always feel sorry for Jews, don't you." (Daily Mirror, 11 December 1948). But behind this caricature was a quite serious subtext; Stanley the spiv was an anti-social character, a "drone", to use the term then employed by the Home Office, and not to be tolerated by a people's government and a close knit, collectivist society. The attitude towards sharp operators that permeated the tabloid press was typified by a Daily Mirror editorial on government attempts to regulate the dealings of shady landlords, which appeared several weeks before the opening of the Lysnkey tribunal. "Let us hear no more" it ran, "about the difficulties of cleaning up rackets. It is the duty of authority to clean them up....Let the government dish out more of this weed killer and poison all the other evil growths within our midst." (Daily Mirror, 27 October 1948).

Much was made of Stanley's questionable right to be in Britain; for example, the Attorney General, Hartley Shawcross, pressed him on the fact that he had evaded several deportation orders: "You have made many mistakes during your stay in this country haven't you?", the Daily Express quoted Shawcross as asking. Here Shawcross attempted to point out the seriousness of Stanley's shenanigans by drawing out his alien status. This alien status made Stanley's ill-gotten wealth all the more galling. The humble Enfield semi-detached house that John Belcher shared with his family of five was contrasted with the Park Lane flat that Stanley shared with his "tall, blonde" wife (Star, 3 December 1948). The spectre of the alien Stanley living exorbitantly well while the hardworking English civil servant made do on his humble salary was played for all the outraged pathos it was worth.

Although the Lysnkey tribunal did not in the end have any lasting consequences -- John Belcher was forced to resign, but
for reasons of indiscretion rather than corruption -- the portrayal of Stanley was significant. As David Hughes' vintage essay on spivery has noted, there was an ambiguous public feeling about these fancy dressing dandies; on the one hand contempt for their anti-social behaviour, which the government and the press obviously tried to play up; and on the other a sort of admiration at their ability to tweek the nose of an often oppressive authority.\(^2\) There was certainly an element of this ambiguity about public feeling toward Stanley. As an alien (though not, significantly, a foreigner: the Daily Mail noted that "His English was slightly bent, but certainly not broken." 2 December 1948, p.3) Stanley made the bridge between aliens and spivery. As we have seen in the chapter on EVWs and Polish servicemen, this was a bridge that the government had made privately from the outset, with their worries about the social disruption and criminal propensities of east European men. As a Jew and as a long time resident of the U.K. Stanley was not a direct example of recruited east European workers. But many of the same degeneracies that were identified in Stanley were ascribed in a general sense to east Europeans. Nor was the Stanley case the only portrayal of east European criminality in these years. From the celebrated Max Intrator confidence scandal, to the Zborowski case detailed in an earlier chapter, to single column blurbs about marital rows and pub brawls in which Polish or EVW men figured prominently, the press inculcated a stereotype of east Europeans as struggling with the civilities of British life, or rejecting them completely.\(^3\) The attempts made to correct these impressions, also detailed in the aforementioned chapter, only

\(^2\) David Hughes, "The Spivs" in Michael Sissons and Philip French (eds.), \textit{Age of Austerity}, op. cit.

\(^3\) Peter Hennessy, \textit{Never Again}, op.cit., pp.445-6, discusses the perception of criminality, spivery and the connection with foreigners in general, and in the Max Intrator case in particular.
highlighted the very nature of the stereotype. The Yorkshire Post series on EVWs in the summer of 1951, by emphasizing the cleanliness, thrift and honesty of EVWs, held a mirror to public concerns that were stoked by stories such as Stanley's and Zborowski's.

East Europeans were therefore problematised in terms of their inability to assume British social and political mores. This process of defining the characteristics of east Europeans in terms of their assimilability with British cultural norms was also part of the process of defining those norms themselves. As Chris Waters points out in a recent Journal of British Studies article on the reimagination of British national identity in the postwar period, it has by now become a given in this area of social historiography that national identity is defined in terms of opposition to a foreign other.  

Waters also points out that the definition of Britishness had by the early postwar years been laid out in fairly rigid and monolithic terms. The mapping of Britishness around domestic images -- the Sunday roast, the cup of tea, the family -- allowed for the sort of unifying identity that was expressed in the myth of "all England as one parish" that even class conscious socialists like Orwell and Priestly bought into. Orwell's meditations on the English character in The Lion and the Unicorn are examples of the domestication of English identity that pervaded the 1930's and continued in the postwar

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period. Paul Rich's observations of the Baldwinitic myth of rusticity are in keeping with Waters' notion that British identity was defined in these years more by "home and hearth than by sword and sceptre." In this context, the cultural distinctness of migrants was seen as a potential threat to the very essence of the nation. As Tony Mason writes:

...difference, particularly ethnic difference, has typically been seen as a problem in Britain. This is in part because of the tendency to assume that there was some primordial norm of Britishness from which newcomers, such as migrants, diverged but towards which they could ultimately be expected to change. The result ... is that social policy in Britain had been consistently informed by assimilationist assumptions.

Waters is more concerned in his article with the implications for black migrants of this definition of the national community. He argues that even in the race relations scholarship of the 1950's and 1960's the migrant of colour is constructed as a "stranger" to a British culture and character that is rigidly and "scientifically" defined. Inability to conform to accepted cultural norms was, says Waters, posited by these scholars as the source of race relations problems. I will return to the implications of his argument for migrants of colour below. For European migrants, as has been argued,

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5 Martin Wiener, The Decline of the Industrial Spirit (?), has argued that this sort of rural mythology was pervasive in the late 19th century.

6 Waters, op.cit., p.212.


8 Waters, op.cit. He notes the work of Kenneth Little, and his disciples Michael Banton, Sheila Patterson, and Anthony Richmond in particular, as influential in the construction of a race relations paradigm that in itself defined the parameters within which "strangers" could be assimilated into British life.
assimilation was possible, but in the meantime their 'strangeness' was viewed as socially divisive in much the same way as it was in the case of migrants of colour. The most prominent example of this similarity is the picture painted in the popular, and as we have seen in the official imagination, of the east European male as sexual predator. Caroline Steedman's recent article, "Weekend with Electra", highlights this stereotype in a short story written by E.P. Thompson in the mid 1960's and set in the immediate postwar period. Thompson's story features a married woman who has had an affair, and a child, by a Polish alien who has subsequently been imprisoned for some sort of petty crime. Never actually making an appearance in the story, the "Pole" is symbolic of the disruption made to the familiar and repressive bourgeois life of the female protagonist. While Thompson shows no sentimentality for the homey English life of the lower middle class, he does utilize the obviously standing image of the Polish alien as disrupter of it. As Waters points out, the danger of the black man to a national community defined in terms of the traditional sphere of women -- the family, the home -- would be constructed in much the same terms.

Concomitant with this image of the alien man as potential danger to British womanhood is the implied significance of female chastity. Recent scholarship has pointed out that the trope of nation as woman "depends for its representational efficacy on a particular image of woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly, or maternal." This image of the role of women within the national community was typified in the immediate postwar years by the emphasis on chastity and "moral character" in the vetting and selection procedures established for the

9 Caroline Steedman, "A Weekend With Electra" etc..

10 The quotation is from Waters, op.cit., p.229. For a sampling of the work of several scholars on this theme see Andrew Parker et al., eds., Nationalisms and Sexuality (New York: Routledge, 1992).
schemes to recruit female workers, and in the evaluation of the quality of workers that the government was getting. The importance placed on recruiting the right "type" of women also reflected the demographic preoccupations that played into this particular trope. Since the interwar period, and arguably since the turn of the century, the future strength and vitality of the nation was discursively predicated on the breeding capacity of British women. Female foreign workers and settlers were meant to add to the racial stock of the nation and so had to fit the mould cast for British womanhood in general. With east European women, as with their male counterparts, racialized hierarchies and stereotypes impinged on official and public attitudes and assumptions.

Waters also asserts that the myth of social cohesion, of the existence of a unified English culture must be viewed in the context of the exigencies of war and of the social service state. In this context, race replaced class "in debates about national cohesiveness." The threat of social disruption in the postwar came not from class division but from "dark strangers." Sexual predation and criminal behaviour were only two of the ways in which this threat was imagined. As important was the perceived threat to the social service state, which was meant to be the main prize gained from winning the war. The social citizenship that came into existence with the advent of the social service state was premised on the notion that citizenship entailed the payment of social dues -- responsibilities -- and that these dues had been paid by most

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11 Richard Titmuss, Poverty and Population: A Factual Study of Contemporary Social Waste (1938) was a statement of the perceived demographic 'crisis' looming in the interwar years. Since the time of the Boer War the notion of demographic crisis had played a part in public debate and discourse.

12 This of course was the title of Sheila Patterson's book on migrants of colour in the U.K., Dark Strangers: A sociological study of the absorption of a recent West Indian migrant group in Brixton, (London: Tavistock, 1963).
Britons with service to the state during the war. As Robert Skidelsky has noted with respect to the Beveridge program in general, and the full employment aspect of it in particular: "In Britain, the full employment commitment was part of an implicit social contract by which the state undertook to compensate the civilian population for its wartime sacrifices."\textsuperscript{13} Xenophobia in postwar Britain, according to some scholars, had as much to do with a sense of migrants and immigrants taking advantage of services that they had not earned, as it did with emotive racism: "...if there are people who have refused to make sacrifices", wrote Sennett and Cobb of the attitudes they encountered interviewing workers, "yet are subsidized by the state, their very existence calls into question the meanings of acts of self-abnegation."\textsuperscript{14}

Social citizenship was a double edged sword when it came to the assimilation of east European foreign workers. Jose Harris has perceptively noted that the theoretical format of the postwar social service state, with its contributory insurance principle, reinforced a notion of citizenship as "a sort of modernist embodiment of antique civic virtue."\textsuperscript{15} The insurance principle implied a contractual relationship between state and citizen, as opposed to the sort of community sense


\textsuperscript{15} Jose Harris, "'Contract' and 'Citizenship'", in David Marquand and Anthony Seldon (eds.) The Ideas That Shaped Post-War Britain, op.cit., p.135. Elsewhere Harris argues that though Beveridge envisioned a contributory insurance principle, the reality was different: "...it was not contributory social insurance, but 'free' services financed out of direct taxation that most distinctively characterised Britain's welfare system in the 30 years after the Second World War." Quote from "Enterprise and the Welfare State: A Comparative Perspective" in Terry Gourvish and Alan O'Day (eds.), Britain Since 1945 (London: MacMillan, 1991), p.47.
that permeated the old Poor Laws. In the case of recruited foreign workers and settlers the contractual nature of citizenship made for an easily delineated process of dues payment. Thus work in essential industries was taken as "payment of the passage" to full citizenship. The war record of Polish servicemen, and the persecution that Displaced Persons had suffered were trotted out in government educative material as reasons for accepting these recruited workers into the fold of citizenship. They had made, and were continuing to make a contribution.

The social service state, taken in conjunction with the greater project of reconstructing the British economy and society, also opened the way for the acceptance of foreign migrants in that it was a shortage of labour which posed the greatest obstacle to the fulfilment of the postwar program. Foreign workers were thus able to pay their dues quite readily and visibly. Though they were tied to unattractive work in essential industries, this coercion also made it possible for European foreign workers in general to be more readily accepted by British society, since they were seen to be making a contribution and a sacrifice of sorts. Government propaganda and public education reinforced the image of the foreign worker as contributor to the public good. So successful was this image that even former enemies -- prisoners of war -- were seen to expiate the sin of foreignness through tied work, and many were accepted as permanent settlers and potentially, as full citizens.

At the same time, the social service state made it seemingly necessary to guard the frontiers of citizenship from interlopers who might take advantage of the generosity of the state without paying the commensurate dues. As Harris also points out, while one might attain citizenship status through service and the fulfilment of legal requirements, one could also be excluded on the basis of not fulfilling obligations and
responsibilities. In this sense spivs and "drones" were portrayed as unworthy of citizenship. The statutory definition of citizenship could thus be exclusive as well. In the case of east Europeans in Britain, the stereotype that they might not be fulfilling the contract of good citizenship would obviously be damaging to the prospects for their acceptance and assimilation, a fact that government officials were obviously aware of.

Propensity for such abuse was ascribed at an official level, on the basis of a racialized hierarchy of social compatibility. Thus east Europeans were in the first instance thought less likely to integrate smoothly into the "British way of life" and the social service state than were west Europeans. German prisoners were ranked higher on this social scale than were Italian prisoners. And even further down the scale were people of colour, whom the government from an early stage deemed socially incompatible and troublesome. Kathleen Paul has recently documented no less than five Cabinet committees from 1947 to 1957 that were charged with investigating the "problem" of coloured colonial migration.

Migrants of colour, like east Europeans, did not cause concern simply about miscegenation and the strain that they would put on traditional social relations in the U.K., although

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16 Alien residents in the U.K. were of course entitled to make use of the social services of the state; foreign workers were eligible for NHS health care at all times, and unemployment insurance after a fixed period of residency and contribution. But whereas citizens had a right to continuous recourse to social security, foreign residents and workers could be deported if they were deemed undesirable by the Home Office, and one of the tests of undesirability was an inability or unwillingness to work. An interesting discussion of the issues involved in determining eligibility for state social services is found in Robert K. Fullwinder, "Citizenship and Welfare", in Amy Gutman (ed.), Democracy and the Welfare State, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

these stereotypes about them were important. The main concern from an official point of view was the risk that the social service state would be overwhelmed by supplicants from overseas. This again speaks to the changing nature of the perception of citizenship in the postwar period.

In his book *British Racial Discourse*, Frank Reeves argues that the connection between racial policy and the "welfare state" should be viewed in the context of what Habermas refers to as the "modern capitalist state's" need for legitimacy.\(^\text{18}\) Reeves sees the social service state as part of a "justificatory system of technical rationality" that excludes "ethical and moral questions" and focuses rather on logistical details. This sort of reading is entirely appropriate to the postwar consensus view of an expanded social contract between state and citizen. As Reeves therefore notes, racial discourse must be viewed in conjunction with "those major ideological configurations that provide legitimation for the capitalist social structure as a whole." In the same sense Rose writes of the first phase of colonial migration to the U.K. (which he places from 1948 to 1955) as the "welfare period", in which the citizenship status of colonial migrants was defined almost entirely with reference to civil (rather than political) rights.\(^\text{19}\) The social service state brought the issue of entitlement to the fore in the postwar definition of citizenship.

The connection between the changing nature of citizenship in the postwar period and the issue of coloured migration to the U.K. came together graphically in 1948. In that year the


\(^{19}\) E.J.B. Rose et al., *Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.21-2. Rose et al. note that in this period it was presumed that colonial migrants had full civil rights, and that "the question of political rights did not arise", though here too they held full rights in theory.
National Health Service came into being, and with it the postwar social service state. Also in that year the British Nationality Act redefined British citizenship in the same sort of statutory terms that pervaded the social service state. Thus British citizenship was bestowed upon all citizens of the Commonwealth countries, and all residents of the colonies and U.K. This seemingly liberal act has been dissected in recent years by Dummett and Nicols, who argue that the Act laid the groundwork for discriminatory legislation by making external citizenship qualifications the basis of British subjecthood, and by Kathleen Paul, who argues that the Act was intended to cement British hegemony by putting the U.K. "at the centre of migratory routes throughout the empire." As this legislation was making its way through Parliament in the summer of 1948, the Empire Windrush brought several hundred Jamaican migrants to the U.K. in search of work, causing a brief public sensation. The "Windrushers" were quickly integrated into the workforce, and their numbers were so small that they were easily assimilated into the existing black communities in Britain. The government however did not take the coming of the "Windrushers" lightly, and concern over possible repercussions gave rise to the striking of two committees of inquiry. The first of these met in the fall of 1948 and discussed the possibility of recruiting surplus manpower in the colonies for work in the U.K. This committee advised against the large scale importation of colonial workers, citing the "complications ... of settling in employment peoples of other races." The second committee was set up in June 1950 with the following terms of reference:

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21 Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, op. cit., pp. 122-3. The St. Helena scheme, as has been noted, represented a special case.
To consider and report to the Cabinet what further means might be adopted to control the immigration into this country of coloured people from British Colonial territories, if amending legislation were passed limiting the right of British subjects, or of any class of British subjects, to enter and reside in the United Kingdom, and what issues of policy would be involved in making such a change in the existing law.\textsuperscript{22}

These terms are remarkable in that they show a readiness to consider amending the principles laid out in the 1948 British Nationality Act. The course of discussions would reveal that the committee and the government were very mindful of the implications of such an amendment.

Although this committee would acknowledge that the number of colonial citizens migrating to the U.K. was at this time negligible, it expressed fears that this number would increase. Moreover, it expressed the commonly held opinion that colonial migrants of colour would pose a threat to the social service state: "The social services of this country, and particularly the rights of which any destitute person could avail himself under the National Assistance Act, inevitably acted as a considerable attraction."\textsuperscript{23} The implication here was that migrants of colour were more likely to rely on the beneficence of the social service state, coming as they did from places where the standard of living was less opulent than postwar Britain's, and being inherently more languid and less ambitious.

The case of the St. Helenian agricultural workers illustrated these attitudes and responses of officialdom to the migration of British citizens of colour to the U.K. Although

\textsuperscript{22} PRO CAB 130/61: GEN.325/1, 22 June 1950.

the St. Helenians were brought over in an organized fashion, officials worried that they might turn to the black market and to the social service benefits to which they were legally entitled, rather than work in essential industries for their living. The rationale for these suspicions was often couched in terms of living standards -- for example, "two pounds represents nearly two weeks relief pay in St. Helena and for that money the men would do nearly two weeks arduous roadmending. We consider everything possible must be done to encourage the men to start work as soon as possible after their arrival at the hostels, and human nature being weak, one of the best ways of doing this is to keep down pocket money." But though human nature was invoked here, the implication was that since these colonial migrants were used to lower standards of living, they would be content to live off the state until compelled to work. The defence against this sort of abuse of the social service state was, in the case of the St. Helenians, to obfuscate the nature of their relationship to the state and their citizenship rights, and to keep their presence in the country quiet. By contrast, when the Ministry of Labour felt that it was not attracting enough European foreign workers, it actively sought to disseminate success stories of recruited workers in order to encourage others to come.

This different treatment, and the process of obfuscation detailed in the St. Helenian chapter, were part of the process of creating what Paul has called "communities of Britishness." While the formal definition of British citizenship was expanded by the 1948 Nationality Act, there arose a concomitant informal definition (or number of definitions) of Britishness which distinguished between those who were truly British, and those whose Britishness was merely

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24 PRO MAF 186/24: F.T. Hallett (Treasury) to H.E.O. Hughes (Colonial Office), 5 February 1949.

statutory. There is no question that Paul's notion of informal "spheres" of national identity being constructed along racial lines is accurate. As the St. Helena chapter shows, the government's policies may not have been intentionally racist (though often they clearly were) but they did have racialist consequences. Migrants of colour were discouraged from coming to the U.K. as citizens, while east Europeans of the right "racial stock" were recruited in substantial numbers.

But if the consequences of the 1948 Act worried a racially minded officialdom, the Act was meant to serve quite another purpose. As Paul argues, the Act was part of a strategy of maintaining close ties with the independent Commonwealth countries, the so-called white Dominions, so that they might act as a counterweight to the global power of the Soviet Union and the United States, and thus maintain a bankrupt Britain as a world power. Eight years before Suez, this sort of foreign policy calculation was one of the matters upon which there was political consensus across party lines. The recruitment of foreign labour must also be seen in this context; of the U.K. struggling to maintain itself as a third force between the two super powers, and independent from a more closely knit western Europe. Of course it was Ernest Bevin who was instrumental in seeing the need for a more tightly integrated western Europe, and Britain did participate in European affairs much more than was its wont in the interwar years. But this participation was limited by the British commitment to the Commonwealth and empire, as well as by a reluctance to surrender any sovereignty to a pan-European body.  

The British commitment to Europe was evidenced in the recruitment of Italian men and women for work in the U.K. As we have seen, this recruitment was based more on the desire to

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placate the Italian government, and to help it in its struggle against the Italian communist movement, than it was on the need for foreign labour. While there were certainly labour shortages in the U.K., the number of Italian workers that were recruited were too few to make an appreciable impact on the overall situation. Moreover the Ministry of Labour showed at various times that it doubted the value of Italian labour in general, and particularly where arduous or disciplined labour was needed. Here again there were national and racial stereotypes at work. The expense of official recruitment schemes were also often cited as reasons for discontinuing, or not pursuing, the recruitment of Italian labour.

And yet when the government contemplated the curtailment of official recruitment, it worried about the repercussions this would have on the fortunes of the Italian government, and on the future operation of pan-European organizations such as the OEEC. In an internal memo in March 1951, one Ministry of Labour official noted that such a curtailment might "be inconsistent with our obligations to OEEC and to the ILO", as well as giving the impression "that the United Kingdom was disinteresting itself in the Italian surplus manpower problem." 27 By this time private agencies and firms were recruiting workers in Italy, and official recruitment was serving a symbolic rather than a real purpose. But that symbolism, as an instrument of foreign policy, was obviously important.

Foreign labour recruitment was also affected by foreign affairs in other ways. The settlement of Displaced Persons was a political and diplomatic concern, made the more acute by the fact that Britain was directly responsible for tens of thousands of refugees in its occupation zones in Germany and Austria. As Kay and Miles, Tannahill, and Stadulis have all noted, the politics of the Cold War greatly affected the order

27 PRO LAB 13/813: Veysey to Rosetti, 13 March 1951.
in which national groups were resettled in the U.K. Baltic peoples, for example, were not only considered more "westernized" than other east Europeans, and therefore more easily integrated and assimilated, but their quick settlement was also paramount in the context of the descending Iron Curtain. So too with the Polish servicemen in the U.K., whose resettlement marked a distinct turning point in the British position with respect to Poland. The uncertainty of national boundaries in the lands of the former Reich also added to the foreign policy calculations of labour recruitment, particularly, as we have seen, in the case of ethnic German women.

The recruitment of foreign labour in this period can essentially be broken down into two main types. The official recruitment, which comprised the vast majority of recruited foreign workers, was an exceptional response to demographic and labour shortages arising in the aftermath of the war. This recruitment was meant to supplement the population of the U.K. while addressing the need for workers in essential industries. As Kay and Miles have argued, it is possible to see this recruitment as relating to the need to redress an imbalance in the labour market which threatened to derail the possibility of economic reconstruction along essentially capitalist lines. In this sense then, foreign labour recruitment can be seen in

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28 All of these works are op.cit.

29 Peter Weiler, op. cit.; More recently, Anita Prazmowska has re-examined the particulars of Anglo-Polish relationship during the war in Britain and Poland 1939-1943: The Betrayed Ally, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

30 See Kay and Miles, op.cit., Chapter 8. Robert Skidelsky's essay "The Fall of Keynesianism", op.cit., Corelli Barnett, and Jim Tomlinson (both op.cit.) have also commented on the difficulties of controlling inflationary pressures in a period of "over-full employment", given the government's commitment to the tenets of free collective bargaining and a prominent role for the private sector in the economy.
the context of the need to maintain a reserve army of labour, as Marxists would call it, to ensure that the workings of a capitalist economy could continue smoothly. This sort of reading would certainly explain the trade union hostility to foreign labour, which ran quite high in these years.31

The fact that essential work was unattractive and unskilled further points to a structural reading of official labour recruitment. In the pre-war period foreign labour recruitment was undertaken only in the case of workers with particular skills which were in short supply in the U.K. Often, as in the case of terrazzo and mosaic tile laying, or monumental masonry, the skill in need was considered alien to the British temperament, and thus only obtainable abroad. Given the large scale unemployment of the inter-war period there was certainly no need to look abroad to fill general labour shortages. In the postwar period, the situation was somewhat reversed. The government looked to fill unskilled and generally undesirable vacancies. In the jobs that were traditionally the domain of skilled foreign workers, government policy was generally aimed at "anglicization." Skilled foreign workers were recruited by private firms, often with the help of the government -- as in the terrazzo scheme -- but with the ostensible goal of training a native workforce in order to obviate the need for future foreign recruitment.

The fact that many of these training schemes did not produce the desired effect was not surprising to industrial observers. Certain trades and skills were thought to be exclusive to certain "national temperaments." Thus Englishmen would never make good terrazzo tile layers; and Italians were poor material for mining. This sort of stereotyping was part of the process of classifying the world's population according to

31 Stadulis, op.cit., and Tannahill, op.cit., both commented on this hostility, and indeed it was evident in TUC pronouncements. More detailed work on trade union attitudes to EVWs and Polish servicemen will be the subject of an upcoming work by the team of Kay and Miles.
inherent propensities and capacities. The same sort of hierarchization -- or racialization, as Robert Miles would define it -- was evident in calculations about who might be assimilated into the British nation, and who was irrevocably unsuited. On an industrial level, this process of definition created hierarchies of skill and status which would confine foreign workers, and Britons of colour, within fixed parameters in British industry.

The recruitment of foreign workers by the postwar British Labour governments was thus a process which had several strands of cause and effect. Foreign labour was recruited to fill temporary labour shortages which threatened to derail postwar economic reconstruction. It was recruited to fill demographic shortages which threatened the long term viability of the welfare state. It was recruited to achieve foreign policy goals in the context of the emerging Cold War in Europe. It was recruited as a function of colonial policy. And it was recruited to perform tasks in particular industries which were considered traditionally foreign. Depending on the function the government had in mind, recruited foreign workers were drawn from among prisoners of war, Polish servicemen, Displaced Persons, European civilians, and colonial British citizens.

Government policy with respect to the various forms of foreign labour recruitment is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, the foreign policy element involved in much of this recruitment is a function of foreign labour recruitment that has not been emphasized very much. There were more than just domestic exigencies which the recruitment of foreign labour was meant to address. Secondly, the function of foreign labour in economic reconstruction and the formation of the welfare state shows that both of these projects were conducted along essentially conservative lines. Whatever the humanitarian

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impulses behind the recruitment of refugees, the role foreign labour was meant to fulfill was in large part to obviate the need for even greater government intervention in the planning and direction of the economy. The mechanisms of collective bargaining and private investment were protected to a great degree by the influx of foreign labour. Finally, and most significantly, the importation of foreign workers took place in the context of a redefinition of British citizenship and national identity. The handling of foreign workers reveals much about the way in which that identity was imagined by British officials. While British nationality was legally redefined in an inclusive, statutory way, the conception of who was assimilable, of who could become truly British, was exhibited in the selection criteria which officials used in recruiting foreign workers, by the efforts made by the government to integrate European foreign workers into British society, and by the uneasiness felt by the government about the prospect that it might at some point in the future have to integrate colonial migrants of colour.
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