

**Matthew Stibbe.** *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918.* New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xii + 267 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-78296-8.



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Since the publication of Paul Kennedy's classic study, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914*, a slew of works on British-German relations from the perspectives of comparative politics, intercultural transfer, and diplomatic relations, has appeared.[1] Matthew Stibbe believes he has identified a niche: the impact of anglophobia on German politics in World War I as well as on radical nationalism in the Weimar and Nazi periods. Describing Kennedy's decision to end his 500-plus-page book in 1914 as a "deficiency," Stibbe explores the Anglo-German antagonism in a context in which competition turned into confrontation. Unlike his predecessor, he limits himself to one strand of this relationship--the political--on the grounds that others have already addressed its cultural and intellectual aspects; he also limits himself to one side--German views of Britain--although he acknowledges the existence of Germanophobia in Britain.

Stibbe uses anglophobia as a lens through which to examine the domestic discussion of Germany's national interests during wartime. He does not define "anglophobia" or even distinguish

it from Kennedy's "antagonism," but his usage suggests that he means opposition to England's leading international political and economic position. Stibbe shows that anglophobia, understood in these terms, functioned as an effective vehicle for the promotion of a greater role for Germany within Europe as well as globally. Using press reports, political cartoons, and private papers, he demonstrates that, once Britain entered the war on August 4, 1914, the anglophobic discourse of the preceding decades, which emphasized the utilitarianism and greed of the British, helped justify German military operations against it. Anglophobes maintained that, by failing to restrain its allies, Britain was responsible for the outbreak of war, which it saw as an opportunity to destroy its chief commercial rival, Germany. Stibbe traces the role of anglophobes in debates over the conduct of the war in the subsequent months and years. Convinced that Germany needed to prove to Britain its own entitlement to great power status once and for all, the anglophobes agitated for unrestricted submarine warfare and extensive annexations in the west, the former to ensure swift victory and the latter to establish a *cordon sani-*

*taire* for the future. As demands for domestic reform mounted and Woodrow Wilson proclaimed American support for self-determination, anglophobia became a means of preserving the federal monarchical system. Anglophobes condemned support for parliamentary democracy as un-German and celebrated the existing German political system as the ultimate expression of freedom.

Stibbe's account sheds little light on German wartime politics, however. Anglophobes were found mainly on the right wing, in radical nationalist organizations, especially the Pan-German League, the Agrarian League, and the Independent Committee for a German Peace, and in the National Liberal, Conservative, and Free Conservative Parties, whose views on foreign and domestic policy are already well known. Stibbe's research led him to an organization that has received far less attention, the People's Association for the Swift Defeat of England, which was founded in 1916 as an umbrella group for anglophobes and had 20,000 members by 1917, but it turns out that its membership was drawn from the same constituency. Unlike the Pan-Germans, its leaders did invite like-minded Center and SPD supporters to join, but gained little response. Anglophobia, it seems, was one strand of a broader conception of foreign policy, rather than its driving force. Thus Stibbe fails to demonstrate that anglophobia "developed an important set of assumptions *of its own* about the true meaning and significance of German national identity and Germany's mission in the world" (p. 7, emphasis added). Indeed, his analysis suggests that anglophobia was the corollary of Germany's global ambitions: Britain stood in the way of Germany's economic and territorial expansion.

The capacity of anglophobia to illuminate politics is not in doubt. Kennedy has shown as much and, more recently, Michael Jeismann has used the mutual *Feindbilder* of the French and Germans over three wars to trace the development of each national identity.[2] But both these histori-

ans took a longer view, which helped them disaggregate immediate military considerations from ideological trends. Demands for unrestricted submarine warfare derived from the need to win the war as much as the desire to achieve a peace settlement that would punish the British for their greed. The value of Kennedy's work in particular, was to analyze the Anglo-German relationship on multiple levels--economic, dynastic, cultural, and religious as well as political. In his concern not to revisit ground already covered by others, however, Stibbe neglects these other dimensions and thus leaves the reader dissatisfied. For instance, he notes that the anti-capitalist strand of anglophobia provides the best window into its sociological roots, without explaining what these are (p. 78). And although Kennedy argued that the dynastic connection was the second most important factor--after economic rivalry--in anglophobia, Stibbe does not acknowledge the links between the Kaiser, an important figure in his own narrative, and the English royal family, let alone demonstrate how they shaped wartime relations.

Stibbe looks forward to the Weimar and Nazi periods in an effort to prove the broader significance of anglophobia. He argues that the anglophobia of World War I formed an important part of radical nationalist discourse in subsequent years, including those from 1933 to 1945. While a plausible claim, the justification, largely made in the epilogue, is too brief to be convincing. Stibbe notes that Munich, a hotbed of radical nationalism in the 1920s, was also the center of the anglophobic movement in World War I, but he makes little attempt to examine the resonance of anglophobia in other regions, for instance anglophile Hamburg. He notes the importance of Britain in Hitler's conception of foreign policy, but has to acknowledge that the future leader was far from a consistent anglophobe. Stibbe also traces the popularity of anti-Semitic and anti-African motifs in anglophobia, but neglects to ask if these were any stronger in this hate discourse than others of the period. As Jeismann has shown, modern *Feind-*

*bilder* were highly formulaic. Only an examination of the ways in which German views of the English were distinctive can yield definitive conclusions about the meaning of anglophobia.

In Kennedy, Stibbe has chosen a hard act to follow and might be forgiven for falling short. If unoriginal in its conclusions, the book is based on solid research and provides many colorful examples of German wartime propaganda, including several cartoons, which demonstrate the peculiarly ambivalent character of German anglophobia.

Notes:

[1]. Paul Kennedy, *The Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1980. The best guide to publications on British-German relations is the library acquisitions list of the German Historical Institute in London (itself responsible for many of them), which is included annually in its *Bulletin*.

[2]. Michael Jeismann. *Das Vaterland der Feinde: Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792-1918*, Sprache und Geschichte 19 Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992.

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