

## Keeping the light on: Our shared future as British-German Friends

After World War 2, the British people have rebuilt the cities Oldenburg, Braunschweig and Schaumburg-Lippe. After the war, the British military administration made a new administrative structure and later arose Lower-Saxony out of this. "It's our primary task to provide food, shelter and healthy for the German population", declared the British commander Bernhard Law Montgomery in June 1945.

Among other things, due to the British occupation, democracy came back to Germany. "Here is Radio Hamburg, a station of the allied military government." the people of Hamburg could hear on the evening of 04<sup>th</sup> May 1945.

The new rulers control all areas of public life. Compared to the other occupation zones, there are relatively few attacks on German. Contacts between British and German are initially almost exclusively on an official level. It applies the fraternisation prohibition. Britain are not allowed to speak privately with German, marry German, distribute gifts or accept invitations from German. Instead, the military government is building a parallel world for British soldiers and civilians, with own supplies, schools, entertainment program and churches. They also confiscate homes. This measure is called quartering, which meets with little understanding due to the already tight housing situation in Hamburg.

In trains, British used wagons, specially designated for them, they run their own shops, cinema and clubs. Signs with the inscription "Keep out", "No German" or "Off limits" offensively restrict access for the German population. However, the military government needs German assistance and officers. These must be on the so called White Lists, on which opponents of the Nazis or bystanders are listed. From the summer of 1945, the commanders gradually relaxed the rules. Conversations between occupiers and occupied are now allowed, relations between British soldiers and German women are no longer punishable. Visits to the German appartements, on the other hand, were still prohibited.

Under the watchful eye of the occupiers, political groups and trade unions are gradually becoming active again. The northwest German broadcasting short NWDR, which was founded on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1945 as the successor to Radio Hamburg in the Hanseatic city. Under the leadership of the British Hugh Carleton Greene, the German learned independent reporting following the example of the BBC. It is the beginning of public service broadcasting in West

Germany. The program serves primarily like the initial army group sheets and Radio Hamburg to inform and democratically educate the population.

Bombed-out and incoming refugees have to be accommodated throughout northern Germany. Alone in Hamburg, more than half of the living space has been destroyed. In order to meet the huge demand, at least to some extent, the occupiers have makeshift shelters such as the Nissen huts built. These semicircular corrugated iron huts already served as accommodation in the British colonies.

In addition, British and American pop music is introduced via the WDR and the British army radio station. The British radio presenter Christ Howlan brought new momentum to German parbous with joke and charme.

The "Anglo-German discussion groups", which were founded in 1947 mainly in Hamburg, also ensured a rapprochement between the British and German. City commander Berry wanted to reach the Top 5 percent of the German population with a more intensive exchange. This democratized and pacified should influence the rest of the German.

The official occupation period ends with the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany on 23 May 1949.

However, many responsibilities remained with the victorious powers until the state sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany was obtained on 5 May 1955. However, the occupiers already withdrew from some areas in the time before: From the end of 1948, the British increasingly released confiscated apartments, hotels and entertainment venues. In May 1951, the special compartments for Britons in the Hamburg S-Bahn were abolished, in June 1951 the Passage cinema was returned to the Hanseatic city, and in January 1952 that of the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten.

Even after 1955, the British remain - albeit in smaller numbers. The reason for this is the Cold War, which now dominates politics. Occupiers become partners: The "Tommys" are now carrying out their defence and deterrence tasks against the Warsaw Pact as part of NATO troops. 102,000 British soldiers were still serving in Germany in 1954, in the north mainly in Lower Saxony.

The relationship, once characterized by enemy images and a ban on fraternization, normalizes over the decades. The British and Germans meet each other amicably. "People were no longer talking about crew, but guests and hosts," recalled Briton Clifford Middleton later.

And so, in recent decades, an ongoing friendship has developed between Great Britain and Germany.

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