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The 'Normality' of civilian internment in Germany during the First World War: camps as sealed or entangled spaces?

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ABSTRACT

This article examines internment camps in Germany during the First World War and their entanglements with society. In particular, it discusses whether the internment sites were closed or semi-permeable spaces that were interwoven with their nearby environment. Based on this, the question of what kind of integration existed and what form it took will be answered. Furthermore, the article investigates the consequences and aftermaths of these experiences in post-war Germany. The conclusion raises some further questions for future studies.

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Throughout history, prison camps have had one thing in common: they have all served as places of detention for certain individuals or groups, usually defined as enemies.[1] This common feature was accompanied by various characteristics that were similar within the different camp histories. Most camps were characterised by a broad deprivation of liberty, specific security regulations and, in many cases, violence. The main purpose of internment was, and still is, to isolate the prisoners – something that has been handled differently throughout history. However, even under the most totalitarian regimes, the desired separation was never fully realised. This is mainly because prison camps have always remained a part of the societies that surround them.[2]

Over the past two decades, scholars have explored the complex history of internment of so-called enemy aliens, resulting in a wide range of literature that approaches this topic from different angles.[3] In most of

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these studies, the camps are regarded as largely closed spaces. In the tradition of Erving Goffman, the majority of works view camps primarily as *total institutions* and consequently focus on the confinement and segregation of the prisoners from the outside world.[4] This perspective fails to acknowledge that many of them were not as strictly separated from their environs as imagined. This aspect of internment is what the article seeks to address. It will take a closer look at the 'permeability' of internment sites in Germany and their multi-layered entanglements with society as a whole. Such entanglements are important against the background of German history from 1933 onwards, when the state took internment to extremes.

Looking at the German internment camps during the First World War, and especially the civilian prisoner camps, this text poses the following questions: To what extent did the detention centres exist in isolation from the outside world?[5] To what extent were the camps (and their inmates) embedded in German wartime society, and thus recognised as having a certain normality? Is it possible to identify a specific relationship between the various detention centres and the wider (social) environment? Finally, the question arises as to what degree wartime internment practices were continued into the post-war period.

Based on these considerations, selected aspects of Germany's *internment practice* during the First World War will be examined below. Particular attention will be paid to the mutual exchanges and encounters between the internees, the guards and the civilian population. In addition, the embedding of the camps in their surroundings and their 'public image' will be analysed. The final section goes on to offer some thoughts on possible consequences for the post-war years, especially with regard to the Weimar Republic and the period after 1933.

The Construction of the Internment Camps

After Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914, the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which until then had been localised, became a large-scale conflagration. Violence quickly engulfed large parts of Europe and held the continent in its grip for years to come. Even though different conflicts had been smouldering for years in Europe, none of the belligerents was really prepared for the outbreak of a major war. This also applies to the German Empire, which seemed surprisingly ill-equipped for a conflict, especially when it came to measures designed

to ensure internal security. There were neither any plans for the mass accommodation of soldiers or civilians, nor were any internment measures prepared in advance.[6]

With the offensive in the west and the victorious battles against the Russian army at the end of August 1914 at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, the German army took tens of thousands of prisoners. Due to a lack of infrastructure, the first prisoners of war (POWs) were provisionally housed in tent camps and earth barracks, with the military authorities already treating the prisoners differently according to their national origin. In some places the Russian soldiers had to live in mud huts, while the British and French were allocated better accommodation.[7] As more and more soldiers were captured, the camp system had to expand to cope with the increased numbers. In August 1915, there were already 105 camps for officers and ordinary soldiers, with the number rising to about 175 by 1918. In the last year of the war, a total of around 2.5 million military prisoners had been interned in Germany, over half of whom (1.4 million) came from Russia.[8] In a short space of time, a nationwide camp system was established, which became an underlying part of the German 'home front'.[9]

The detention sites for civilians were set up in the slipstream of the established POW camps. The twenty-five federal states and their four war ministries (one each for Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony and Württemberg) were the major protagonists, with the Prussian War Ministry – as a de facto imperial authority (*Reichsbehörde*) – having the dominant voice in establishing guidelines. Among other things, these bodies were responsible for setting up, equipping and managing the majority of the camps. The Accommodation Department (*Unterkunftsdepartement*) in Berlin, headed by Colonel (later Major General) Emil Friedrich, was by far the most influential actor. Other institutions such as the Deputy General Staff were also important in directing overall policy but had no direct influence on the construction and management of the camps.[10]

Captured military personnel were not the only concern. The Prussian War Ministry thus founded a POW camp in Havelberg in September 1914, but quickly converted it into an internment centre for civilians. In the same month, another detention facility was set up in Traunstein, Bavaria, but from the outset, and unlike Havelberg, its sole purpose was to accommodate civilians. Further internment sites for civilians were established at Holzminden and Ruhleben (both in autumn 1914) and at Rastatt (in January 1915). As already mentioned, the various camps were often

divided along national lines. Holzminden, for example, mainly took in French and later Italian civilians, whereas Ruhleben was used almost exclusively to hold British nationals. Havelberg, on the other hand, mainly housed Russian civilians, and the Lauban camp in Silesia for the most part took in deportees from the Baltic States.[11]

Over the years, the German state detained a total of 111,879 civilians in its camp system. Of these, almost 90,000 people – and thus the absolute majority – had already been taken prisoner by the autumn of 1916. However, many were released after a certain period so that the official figures were a running total only, and did not reflect the actual number of internees being held at any particular moment in time.[12] Ultimately the civilian prisoners became an important part of German wartime society, with whom the surrounding population interacted more or less intensively.[13]

The Camps as Semi-Permeable Spaces

The vast majority of the camps set up from the late summer of 1914 onwards were military institutions, but they did not exist in complete detachment from the civilian world and therefore necessarily have to be linked to the broader social environment of the German home front. The question of the extent to which these two realms, the military and the civilian, were interconnected will be discussed below.

Construction Phase

As mentioned before, the civilian world was linked to the various camps from the very beginning. As the state authorities were unprepared for the outbreak of war in many respects and had to improvise, the civilian sphere was directly involved in setting up the camps.[14] This happened to varying degrees. The barrack camps set up for the POWs were mostly large-scale military projects, with German civilians playing only a minor role (especially in direct administration). By contrast, the civilian prison camps were more often hybrid facilities in which civilian and military authorities were equally involved. Yet the military remained predominant.

This led to the formation of disparate *security regimes* within the respective internment centres, with the clearest differences existing between the military-run POW camps and the hybrid or exclusively civilian-run facilities. The military preferred a much more restrictive

approach. Their main aim was to completely separate the POWs from the outside world. This only changed when the shortage of labour became manifest. By contrast, security measures in the civilian internment camps were generally less strict, and camp administrations often granted more concessions to the prisoners. In the Burgstädt detention centre in Saxony, for example, a camp run exclusively by the municipal administration for the purpose of holding destitute aliens, the inmates – most of whom were Russian citizens in 1914 – only had to stay in the factory building used as an internment centre at night. This milder treatment, which nevertheless varied from camp to camp, was based on the 'exceptional situation' of the mostly innocent prisoners. For this reason – and due to the shortage of manpower within the civilian administrations – the security regimes in the camps run by them were less restrictive.[15]

In addition to its partial involvement in the administration of the camps, German society also played an important role during the construction phase. In many cases, local businessmen were involved in organising the accommodation of 'enemy aliens', for instance by making their properties available in return for a rental payment. As many companies and factories had to cease operations due to the outbreak of war, managements saw this as an opportunity to generate additional income. Consequently, in Königshain-Wiederau in Saxony, the Hundt siblings, who jointly ran a pottery factory, offered their premises to house up to 2,000 'enemy aliens' in return for financial compensation. In Havelberg, the first of the planned 10,000 prisoners were housed at the local brickworks operated by 'Wiese & Co'. The situation was similar in Burgstädt, where the town council was tasked with finding suitable accommodation for the destitute alien deportees from the Leipzig 'exclusion area' (*Sperrgebiet*).[16] Following a brief search, the municipality agreed with the authorised representative of the 'Chemnitzer Stanzwerke' (stamping plant), Alfred Seidel, to lease a floor in the local factory for a monthly rent of 100 marks. As a result, the Burgstädt camp was established.[17]

Local businesses were also often responsible for supplying the camps with food. Particularly at the beginning of the war, the German authorities had to rely on civilian services due to a lack of prior planning and capacity. They often awarded supply contracts to private companies, which were then responsible for delivering and preparing meals. Nonetheless, the quality of the food supplied was quickly criticised in many places, often leading to the withdrawal of supply contracts. The main reason for the poor quality was the pursuit of profit. The companies were naturally

interested in financial gain, but with the low supply rates (60 pfennigs per head and day), this could only be achieved by cutting back on the quality of the food. This applied not only to the military camps, but also to civilian internment sites such as Ruhleben or Celle.[18]

The newly established camps not only had to be supplied, but also equipped with everyday items. As the example of Ruhleben illustrates, this resulted in a multitude of interactions with the local economy, which is why the outside world, for example in the form of craftsmen and suppliers, was in constant (direct) contact with the camps and their inmates. As an important economic factor, local companies competed for contracts, while camp administrators endeavoured to keep costs as low as possible. In addition to everyday items such as brooms, wheelbarrows, shoes and cooking utensils, civilian businesses also supplied building materials like wood for the construction of barracks and beds. This cooperation was not a merely local phenomenon: supra-regional companies also offered their products and services. In September 1915, for instance, the 'Badische Handelstag' praised the advantages of Baden's industry in a letter to the *Unterkunftsdepartement* in Berlin and asked for orders to be placed. In some cases, individual companies even wrote directly to the commandants' offices. For example, the Bochum-based company 'Carpantier & Hanefeld' offered to sell shovel handles to the camp command in Havelberg in 1916. From an economic perspective, it can be argued that the internment camps were pretty much instantly accepted as regular institutions of wartime society.[19]

Social Interaction with the Outside World

Interactions with the outside world were not limited to the economic exchange processes described above. Even more important were the direct acquaintances and relationships that evolved over time. The guards on duty played an important role here, as they connected the inside of the camps with the nearby social environment. The various exchanges between the German population and the guard teams, who had to be housed and supplied in the oftentimes small towns, contributed to this phenomenon. Local inns, guest houses and private landlords were the main beneficiaries. For instance, the retired teacher Adolf Werner from Havelberg reported that the many inns and guesthouses in the town were well frequented every evening. For the small commune, which had a population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants at the outbreak of the

war and had taken in more than 1,000 *Landsturmmänner* in addition to the imprisoned civilians, this was a very important economic factor. It also brought the locals into at least indirect contact with camp life, for example by hearing stories from the camp personnel. Due to these contacts, the inhabitants perceived camps not as distant and closed-off worlds, but as part of everyday life. This type of interaction was most likely not limited to Havelberg but was a widespread phenomenon.[20]

This was also helped by the fact that in many places the staff were recruited directly from the local population who, as in Traunstein in Bavaria, alternated between their military life inside and civilian life outside the camps.[21] The military guards in Traunstein were mainly made up of farmers and tradesmen from the neighbouring rural communities. They were usually on duty for two days and were then given a day off to look after their own farms and families. In addition, many women in need of an income worked as interpreters in the postal inspection centres of the camps, where they came into contact with life behind the barbed wire. The camps thus functioned to some extent as attractive employers, which brought the immediate social environment and the detention centres together.[22]

The guards not only played a significant role as a link to the German population but were also a very important point of contact for the internees themselves. This specific aspect of camp life has received little attention in research to date. For this reason, only some initial reactions to this question can be made here. The relationship was generally tense, as the civilian internees found themselves in an exceptional situation through no fault of their own. Beyond any doubt, there is evidence of violence and mistreatment inside the camps. Still, there were examples of far more cooperative relationships, not all of which were based on hostility. Especially in a civilian-run facility like Burgstädt, the interaction between the inmates and the only guard on duty – policeman Rothe – was relatively relaxed. This was due to the fact that the municipal authorities were not looking for direct, hour by hour control over the inmates, but just wanted to keep them under a general surveillance. Rothe acted more as a policeman than a guard. He also looked after the needs of the internees and was therefore an important figure for them. Similar reports exist from the camp at Traunstein, where the commanding officer, Captain Theodor von der Pfordten (1873–1923), who later became a Nazi supporter and was killed during the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, complained about the overly gentle treatment of the interned civilians. According to one guard's own testimony, he and his colleagues were

reluctant to enforce certain punishments, such as the extended 'severe arrest'.[23] Ultimately, the guards, in their dual roles as public servants and ordinary members of German society, acted literally as gatekeepers between the prison camps, the state and society, a crucial role that should be analysed in more detail in future research.[24]

The civilian population also came into contact with the camps and their inmates through repeated day trips from curious onlookers. The military authorities tried to counteract this form of 'camp tourism', but in many places this was only partly successful. The photographs taken by the unwelcome audience are evidence of this phenomenon. In many cases, brief conversations were even possible. This made the prison camps an attraction. It was not only in the *Gartenlaube*, an early illustrated magazine, that one could read about the tourist rush to the camps. The commandant of the POW camp in Königsbrück, Saxony, reported on this, as well:

> At times the road alongside the prison camps was completely blocked by cars, carts, cyclists and pedestrians. The demands of the guards and patrols not to stop were only reluctantly complied with; there were also several attempts by the public to slip fruit, cigars and cigarettes to the prisoner detachments marching along the road or to throw such gifts [*Liebesgaben*] into the prison camps.[25]

Especially in the first few months of the war, ordinary citizens across Germany showed great interest in the camps. They were apparently perceived as attractions that aroused the Germans' curiosity rather than being an off-putting aspect of the war. In some places, such as Ohrdruf in Thuringia or Havelberg, it was even possible to enter the internment sites for a short time. In the small Thuringian town, for example, local residents were allowed to visit the camp for an entrance fee, to be donated to a supposedly good cause, with the *Jenaische Zeitung* pointing out the heterogeneous composition of the internees on the former military training ground ('people ranging in age from schoolboys to old men'[26]). It is not known what the money collected was used for. However, it is very likely that the proceeds went to the military, either to finance the camps or to support the German war effort. Regardless of this, it should be emphasised that such close interaction between society and the camps was unusual. Traunstein can serve as a counterexample. There, the camp commandant prohibited contact between the internees and the local population early on. He justified this by stating that the 'dignity' of the inmates had to be protected. Nevertheless, society's interest in

internment contributed to the fact that the camps were quickly granted a certain normality. This should come as no surprise, especially in view of the declared state of emergency. The so-called 'spy hysteria' at the outbreak of war also contributed to the sense that security measures – such as the imprisonment of civilians – were a necessary part of home front defence.[27]

Camps as Places of Labour Recruitment

Still, the interaction did not end there. Of far greater importance was the recruitment of labour. Due to the high losses at the front caused by the Brusilov offensive and the Battle of Verdun, this development gained momentum from 1916 onwards. Therefore, both POWs and civilian internees were increasingly recognised as a resource capable of meeting some of the urgent economic needs of the home front. In the wake of growing labour shortages, many of them were mobilised as workers and thus inevitably came into contact with large sections of the German population.

Recruitment of interned civilians began at an early stage. This was often pursued for purely pragmatic reasons. In particular, the enormous number of Russian civilian prisoners threatened to overload the internment centres. The authorities therefore not only began to release 'reliable' prisoners, but also endeavoured to place them into suitable employment. This gave rise to a practice that was to characterise the treatment of enemy nationals throughout the war. In addition to recruitment (sometimes by force) in the occupied territories in the east and west, the camps on the home front were also considered important sources of (cheap) labour.[28]

The mass recruitment began around six months after the war started. As early as January 1915, the Prussian War Ministry insisted on placing Russian-Polish labourers in jobs instead of detaining them. In the following years, state authorities repeatedly sought to promote labour recruitment as a route out of the camps. As a result, individual employers and companies approached the various camps and detention centres and asked for workers. POWs were particularly favoured for reasons of cost, but the authorities and the employers also discovered civilian internees as an important resource for the labour market. From 1915 onwards, companies increasingly endeavoured to recruit larger groups of the latter in particular. For example, the

'Niederlausitzer Kohlewerke', an enterprise which already employed 140 Russian civilian prisoners in March 1915, asked the Sachsenburg detention centre to provide fifty additional internees. In some cases, however, the employers also tried to recruit individual prisoners. They were often people known to them because they had previously worked in their company. Charlotte von Schroeter, who lived in Bieberstein in Saxony and ran the estate in the absence of her husband, tried to get sixteen Russian-Polish farmworkers released. All of them had previously been employed by her and had been imprisoned in autumn 1914 for allegedly refusing to work and trespassing.[29]

In 1916, the state intensified its efforts to get more civilian internees into work and clear the camps of so-called 'useless eaters'. Nevertheless, the authorities still refused to use direct force. By allowing living conditions to deteriorate to a point where it became desirable to take up labour, and sometimes by making false promises about release or home visits, the military rather used indirect coercion to empty the camps. This practice was at first mainly aimed at the Russian internees and, from 1916, also against the at least 100,000 Belgian and French deportees who entered the German camp system during the war, while the British were still not affected by these measures. This was primarily due to the likely impact on the large group of Germans detained in Britain and its empire, who outnumbered the British civilians held in Germany by a ratio of about ten to one. However, some British civilian prisoners were allowed to work outside the camps. In Ruhleben, for example, up to 800 Englishman were permitted to leave the camp during the daytime because they had voluntarily taken up work outside the confines of the barbed wire.[30]

From this point onwards, a strict separation of the camp internees from the civilian population, which the military had demanded, was no longer possible. Contacts between these two spheres thus became increasingly frequent and close. This was particularly true in cases where 'enemy aliens' were employed outside the camps but had to return there in the evening. For instance, from the summer of 1915, seven Russian civilian internees who had been housed in the Burgstädt camp for destitute aliens were allowed to travel to neighbouring Markersdorf every day to work in the 'Paul Hempel' granite factory. At night they had to return to the factory building in Burgstädt. In such cases it was almost impossible to prevent the two worlds from overlapping. However, it must be noted that the recruitment and subsequent labour of the prisoners – as mentioned

above – was always based on unequal power relations. By no means was it a question of two equal sides facing each other.[31]

Limited Freedom

A further entanglement resulted from the freedom of movement granted to selected prisoners for reasons other than employment. The camp commandant's offices – often in co-operation with the local administrations, as in Donauschwingen[32] – allowed at least a few internees to spend some time outside the confines of the camp in order to carry out errands or to meet with their family members in public. In Burgstädt, it was the prisoners´ responsibility to obtain their daily food supplies. In 1916, a total of nine people were allowed to collect the bread for the camp inmates from the local bakery and take it to the nearby soup kitchen. Even though there were clear regulations in place that stipulated strict penalties in the event of non-compliance, such as having someone else collect the bread, this form of self-supply inevitably led to contact with the outside world. Overall, a 'loose' security regime prevailed in Burgstädt, which, as a civilian-run camp for the destitute, followed a different approach to that of the army-run mass camps in Ruhleben, Holzminden or Havelberg.[33]

The civilian internees and the German population also remained connected for other reasons. Throughout the war, points of contact continued to exist, for example, through occasional authorisations to leave the camps for short periods of time or as a result of necessary medical treatment, as was repeatedly granted in Ruhleben. There, prisoners in need of long-term care were sent to Dr Weiler's sanatorium in Charlottenburg (today a district of Berlin), which was open to internees only. Nevertheless, access to local services in particular led to a certain image of 'normality', which resulted from the repeated encounters with the German medical staff in these facilities and the supposedly 'mild' treatment of the prisoners.[34]

Apart from such temporary trips outside the camps, the long-term release of civilians caused more intensive contacts between the former internees and the population. These interactions, which were not forbidden, were criticised by some sections of society.[35] Nevertheless, this did not prevent regular contacts from being established in many places. There are various reasons for this. On the one hand, many foreigners had already been integrated into German society for

a long time, meaning that some of them maintained longstanding friendships and relationships with Germans. Many foreigners had also married into German families before 1914 and were thus deeply rooted in the country. In 1910 alone, there were 835 weddings in which at least one partner was an alien.[36] On the other hand, most (but by no means all) of those who were released from internment were not allowed to leave Germany which inevitably led to countless points of contact – whether in the world of work or in everyday relations with German landlords, employers, family members or vendors in grocery shops. This applied in particular to the Russian civilians, while French and Belgian aliens left the country in larger numbers.[37]

This process was fuelled by the increasing number of releases over the years. As early as the beginning of 1915, the authorities realised that the majority of the civilian prisoners interned in late 1914 posed no danger. In conjunction with the limited capacities in the camps, the associated costs – especially for consumables and food – and the increasing labour shortage, many enemy nationals were subsequently released. As a result, the population of most prison camps fell. Of the 111,879 civilian internees registered on 10 October 1918 in Germany, about 21,000 were still being held in camps. The vast majority (almost 86,000) had already been released or exchanged.[38]

In summary, the German state established various types of camps during the war, which were characterised by different security regimes. In addition to the 'closed' military camps with strict security measures, there existed 'semi-open' facilities – mainly for civilian internees. These were also fenced and guarded, but otherwise often had lower-level security arrangements. For this reason, and because of the higher fluctuation due to releases and labour recruitment, social interaction with the surrounding area was much more frequent than in the POW camps. The degree of freedom, however, varied from camp to camp. The interned 'enemy aliens' received the most concessions in civilian-run institutions such as Burgstädt or Borna (both in Saxony). Strict separation was never possible there, which meant that social contacts with the residents were maintained even when the inmates were still being held in internment. With regard to these facilities, one could say that they had a kind of 'open' character. However, all home-front camps had one thing in common: they all existed as semi-permeable spaces, even though the degree of (social)

permeability differed. None of them – not even the more strictly run military camps – were completely separated from the outside world. The military's desire for complete isolation thus remained an unrealisable goal.

The Public and Publicised Image of the Camps

Internment, which was certainly perceived as an exceptional but necessary wartime practice, also served propagandistic purposes. The exemplary 'humanity' that was supposedly practised in Germany was repeatedly emphasised in the press and sometimes criticised by those on the home front who wanted harsher measures. For example, an article in the *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* complained about the overly considerate treatment of the British internees. The author argued in particular that, when compared to the situation of Germans abroad, the housing provided to the Englishmen in Ruhleben was 'the purest summer breeze' (*reinste Sommerfrische*).[39] Embedded in this criticism was the notion of the unusually good treatment of enemy nationals in Germany.

The connections between the internment facilities and the civilian population also played an important role in the public image of the camps. In January 1915, the *Pfälzische Kurier* emphasised the concern shown by the inhabitants of Landau in the Palatinate and the Red Cross Women's Association for the welfare of the French civilian prisoners. They collected laundry and clothing for the internees, many of whom were women (some of them even pregnant). The writer concluded from this: 'We are just better people than those French who treated our prisoners badly'. He was also certain that those who had already left Germany in the spring of 1915 would be able to 'tell their relatives back home that the Germans are not barbarians'.[40] Such cases of philanthropic intervention helped to reinforce the notion that internment could be carried out in a considerate manner, which meant that the imprisonment of civilians was often not perceived as a break with civilised norms and customs.

The population also learnt more about the camps through the increasing number of inspections and visits by German and international delegates from 1915 onwards. In particular the inspection reports published by organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or the protecting powers had an influence on the way Germans saw their own camps on the home front and camps abroad.[41] In order not to antagonise the respective

governments, the reports were mostly written in a pleasing or at least diplomatic tone. Even when obvious shortcomings and problems were addressed, the protecting powers and the ICRC refrained from condemning the conditions too harshly. Nonetheless, the inspection reports provided insights into life within the home-front camps, even if they only covered a few aspects and often ignored the major everyday problems of the internees. In some cases, the authorities and, indirectly, the conditions in the prison camps were even praised. For example, an ICRC inspector noted after his second trip through Germany:

> My overall impression is also good this time. What is not yet as it should be can and will be improved, and I am assured of this by the evident good will of the German authorities to treat the prisoners humanely.[42]

His closing words, which certainly contained criticism, nonetheless conveyed a fundamentally positive image. Such statements resonated with the German public and were subsequently reproduced in home-front newspapers. For instance, an article published in the summer of 1917 in the semi-official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitun*g referred to the 'exemplary organisation of our prison camps and military hospitals', which was allegedly well known at home and abroad and was illustrated 'not only by the detailed reports of the neutral commissions, but also by the statements and letters of those exchanged and [the] prisoners'[43] themselves. This and similar articles repeatedly emphasised the 'excellent organisation', 'cleanliness' and 'humanity' that allegedly prevailed in the German camp system. These aspects, which one author believed to be rooted in the 'German character',[44] were compared with the chaos that supposedly reigned in the camps of Tsarist and post-Tsarist Russia. The negative portrayal of the German detention sites in the foreign press – and especially newspapers published in enemy states – was dismissed as pure propaganda.[45] Neither side believed the other, with representations of captivity falling victim to war-related distortions of the truth. In the German Empire, this resulted in an image that often did not do justice to the actual living conditions inside the camps. In fact, it contributed to a certain glorification of German internment practices.[46]

The claim that conditions in captivity were worse in enemy countries also seemed to be supported by the comparatively low mortality rate in the camps within Germany.[47] According to an apologetic report published by the Reichstag after the end of the war, 'only' 3,334 of the 104,501 civilian internees registered up to

that point had died by May 1918.[48] This was a rate of around 3.2%, with most of the deaths being due to diseases. Epidemics such as typhus, enteric fever, tuberculosis and pneumonia claimed the majority of victims. Accidents (48 deaths) and suicide (16), on the other hand, caused comparatively few deaths. The mortality rate, which was particularly high in the early phase of the war, also continued to be linked to the supply situation in Germany. For example, the number of tuberculosis deaths rose over the years as a result of increasing shortages of food and medicines.[49]

Especially in comparison to the situation of the internees in Russian-controlled areas of Eastern Europe, the German camps did not appear particularly 'inhumane' to the home-front population. Rather, against the backdrop of the war, they were regarded as comparatively civilised institutions in which the best possible care was taken for the welfare of the inmates. However, German society often ignored the fact that the accommodation of civilians in prison camps – which took place in a legal grey area – represented a new development in (total) warfare and that the number of dead enemy civilians would have been significantly lower without internment.[50]

Despite this fundamentally positive perception of the camps, reservations against internment grew over the period of the war. At no time, however, did this criticism reach a scale or level of intensity that significantly influenced the positive public image. Initiatives such as the resolution passed by a majority of Reichstag deputies in the autumn of 1916 demanding the release and repatriation of all civilian prisoners held by Allied and Central Powers' countries if those set free were not drafted into the army were exceptions. Criticism of internment by individuals also remained an isolated phenomenon; such voices did not gain majority support until 1918. Furthermore, the practice of internment was not questioned in principle. Individuals or institutions – including military ones – only criticised specific aspects of the treatment and living conditions in the camps.[51]

Overall, the media portrayal and public perception of the detention sites in Germany were, with a few exceptions, largely positive. Most Germans perceived internment as a 'common' feature of warfare. This basic understanding led to a desensitisation towards the internment of foreigners, which was to have a lasting effect even after the war ended.

The Legacy of Internment

Many detention centres continued to operate after the armistice of November 1918. In some places, they served as internment facilities for foreigners. Alternatively, they were converted into reception and transit camps or central collecting points for Germans returning from abroad. Although this meant that some of them lost their original purpose, they remained an integral part of society. Long after the guns fell silent, the internment policies put into practice between 1914 and 1918 had a significant impact on German society.

Post-War Challenges and the Continuation of Internment

In the late autumn of 1918, Germany faced a variety of challenges. The spectre of Bolshevism frightened the newly installed republican government and most state institutions. At the same time, the soldiers had to be demobilised in orderly fashion and the home front placed back into a peacetime mode. Needless to say, the sense of ongoing crisis and emergency resulted in a feeling of insecurity. One of the reasons for this perception was that tens of thousands of foreigners from the former enemy states were still living in Germany, of whom the former Russian civilians and soldiers constituted by far the largest category. It was precisely against these 'suspicious' groups, and against the 'home-grown' revolutionaries now labelled as internal political enemies, that internment was directed from 1919 onwards. In addition, thousands of German soldiers and civilians returning home from captivity or facing expulsion from former enemy countries had to be accommodated in reception camps (*Heimkehrerlager*).[52]

The authorities converted many former POW camps into returnee and quarantine facilities, where repatriates were housed for a period of time to prevent the outbreak of possible epidemics. With this in mind, the 'Reich Commissioner for Civilian Prisoners and Refugees' designated the camps in Heilsberg, Eydtkuhnen, Prussian-Holland and Frankfurt an der Oder as so-called quarantine camps in 1921, where German refugees and returning POWs from Eastern Europe were to be quartered and deloused. Shortly after the end of the war, other internment sites became transit and collection camps for foreigners destined for repatriation.[53]

Some camps also remained places of actual detention rather than mere collection, and thus were in the direct tradition of internment practices during the war. In particular, the detention of Eastern Jews

(*Ostjuden*) who were either already in the German Empire in 1918 or had fled to Germany as a result of post-war fighting and pogroms in Eastern Europe can be seen as a direct legacy of the practices of 1914–1918. This form of internment was often legitimised and justified by the supposed 'troublesomeness' (*Lästigkeit*) of these foreigners. In April 1920, for example, the *Wehrkreiskommando I* (military district command) in Königsberg, East Prussia, demanded 'the immediate placement [of troublesome foreigners, H.B.] in concentration camps'.[54]

As part of this campaign, the former internment camp in Stargard in Pomerania was designated a 'foreign nationals camp' (*Fremdstämmigenlager*) for 'burdensome' aliens in the spring of 1921. Foreigners of non-Russian nationality were interned there, with the authorities primarily holding East European Jews – many of whom had no criminal record. The living conditions in the camp were demonstrably poor. There were repeated complaints about the treatment, accommodation and food. Mathilde Wurm (1874–1935), a Reichstag deputy for the Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who had broken away from the mainstream SPD in 1917, visited the camp in the summer of 1921 and criticised the inadequate care, violence and discrimination that prevailed in Stargard. The violence against the inmates was also raised as an issue in the left-wing press.[55]

Alongside the often racially motivated internment of supposedly troublesome Eastern Jews, German authorities also detained foreign soldiers in the various camps and prisons. For example, Polish and Russian deserters who had come to Germany during the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921) were interned in Cottbus, Frankfurt an der Oder and Minden.[56] Russian prisoners especially were often demonised as a 'Bolshevik' threat. Furthermore, the state detained Polish Germans in Havelberg and Sagan in 1919, some of whom had enlisted in the Polish armed forces after the end of the war and had taken part in skirmishes with German border troops in November-December 1918. According to a Red Cross delegate the prisoners also included completely innocent people who were only interned on the suspicion that they might fight on the Polish side against Germany in the ongoing border conflict, which had claimed up to 7,000 lives by 1922.[57]

Public Support for Internment

In the immediate post-war period, large sections of the (conservative) press supported restrictive measures against what they perceived to be 'dangerous' aliens. In November 1920 an article in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* applauded the decision of the Reich Ministry of Interior to 'accommodate all troublesome foreigners of foreign origin in internment camps'.[58] The author Count Ernst zu Reventlow (1869–1943), who sat in the Reichstag for the NSDAP from 1927 onwards, called for strict enforcement of internment. But he was sceptical whether the 'bourgeois' coalition government (in office since June 1920) under the leadership of the Catholic Centre party politician Constantin Fehrenbach (1852–1926) was really willing to put its own words into action. There were similar reports on this subject from Bavaria. In autumn 1920 a writer for the *Bayrische Kurier* complained that the decision to intern 'nuisance' aliens had been taken far too late. At the same time, the author repeatedly reproduced entrenched antisemitic stereotypes without directly referring to the foreigners in question as Jews. As a result, the report painted a picture of dubious racketeers and profiteers, most of whom had supposedly already moved to Western Europe or America and had 'long since exported the largest amounts of capital [...] across the borders'. According to the author only 'stragglers from Poland and Galicia' remained in Germany, and they had 'probably already brought their profits to safety'.[59] As this statement demonstrated, terms such as 'troublesome' were often used as a well-known code to conceal the underlying antisemitic motives.[60]

Overall, a climate of fear prevailed due to the political upheavals and the revolutionary situation in Europe. The 'Bolshevik threat' in particular was perceived by many members of the middle classes as well as the conservative elites as an existential danger that had to be withstood by all possible means. Against this backdrop, internment still seemed to be a suitable tool for achieving this. Eastern European immigrants in particular – and especially the Jews – were stigmatised as the nucleus of the Bolshevik idea. Accordingly to a report from the Saxon Reichswehr (army) command in October 1919:

> It is also an indisputable fact that German Communism derives its main driving force from Russia, that Bolshevism there has one of its firmest pillars in Russian Jewry and that its leaders are almost without exception Russian Jews.[61]

Not surprisingly, the report's demands for internment and deportation were primarily directed at this group. The report's author

insisted bluntly and without any reservations that where 'deportation is not possible for whatever reason, [...] the strictest surveillance or protective custody [*Schutzhaft*]' must be imposed.[62] However, such demands were not limited to the Jewish population. In some places, they were also directed at other social and national groups. With this in mind, the writer Friedrich Otto, who lived in Chemnitz, called for action to be taken against the Baltic Communist 'agitators'. They needed to be 'arrested and rendered harmless', he argued.[63]

Such demands were made by state and civilian actors not only in respect to foreigners, but with regard to supposedly 'labour-shy and criminal persons' among the indigenous German population who were also to be taken into 'military protective custody'.[64] Parallel to this, the Reichsbank Directorate proposed in 1919 that those Eastern Jewish refugees who 'could not prove that they were undoubtedly economically productive' should be placed in internment camps.[65] Here the idea of eliminating 'unproductive' forces through imprisonment, which had been realised and internalised especially but not exclusively in the occupied territories during the war, was combined and revived as a matter of course.[66] Imprisonment and internment – prior to this more or less war-related security measures – now became widely accepted tools for creating and restoring 'order'. After 1918, protective custody (*Schutzhaft)* in particular became increasingly important as an instrument of social engineering, designed to separate political enemies (for instance communists and pacifists) as well as marginalised groups like prostitutes, beggars and supposedly 'work-shy' people from the rest of society. This was a measure that was only partially criticised by liberals, conservatives and leftists.[67]

Finally, it became clear that the experiences gained during the war years continued to influence mindsets beyond 1918. Internment, still perceived by most Germans as an 'ordinary' practice in a state of emergency, appeared to be a suitable tool to counter the threat of the Bolshevik Revolution, especially in the face of the rampant political unrest in the Reich itself, as seen, for instance, during the Spartacist Uprising in Berlin in January 1919, the Munich Soviet in April-May 1919 and the Ruhr insurrection in March-April 1920. As a result, internment during and after the First World War was by no means experienced as a breakdown of civilised values, which is why the arrest of civilians did not lead to a widespread outcry among the population even after the armistice.

Conclusion

The internment of prisoners of war and civilians from 1914 to 1918 left a lasting imprint on German society and politics. As outlined above, the prison camps in Germany were an essential component of the home front. Throughout the war, they by no means remained isolated spaces that existed apart from the civilian sphere. On the contrary, they were closely intertwined with the social environment on many different levels. They thus presented themselves as semi-permeable institutions that confined the internees within their perimeters but offered the German population a wide range of opportunities for asymmetrical interaction and (economic) cooperation. The prison camps for 'enemy aliens' thereby became part of the communities in which they were located from an early stage. However, the prisoners themselves had far fewer opportunities to interact actively and independently with the social environment outside the camps. Instead, they were an involuntary part of this constellation.[68]

Despite these restrictions, German society did not perceive the internment camps as exceptional institutions, but rather increasingly saw them as a fixture of wartime and post-war normality. Precisely because of their partial openness, most Germans did not experience them as completely separate spaces and living environments. As outlined above, they were not permanently closed institutions governed by regimes of 'absolute' power but were connected in many ways with the surrounding social world.[69] Especially in a state of emergency and in view of the extreme and totalising violence at the front and the treatment of Germans abroad, internment appeared to be a justified practice. In this respect, it was not only the press that repeatedly emphasised the supposed humanity towards the enemy foreigners in Germany, thereby reinforcing the widespread image and assessment of such a treatment. The internment camps, which were often referred to as 'concentration camps' in contemporary jargon, were looked upon as conventional facilities in this respect. Germans regarded some of them even as positive achievements of modern warfare. In terms of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), there is therefore no evidence of a break, as was the case after 1945.[70]

On the contrary, the ideas internalised over four and a half years of war intruded into the collective memory of many Germans. The internment of civilians, which had never been practised on this scale before, was seen as a pragmatic, effective and justified procedure to guarantee the security of the homeland. Even after the end of the war, the imprisonment of civilians

deemed to be a threat to internal security was demanded and practised almost as a matter of course, without widespread protest.[71]

Overall, it can be said that uncritical views and interpretations of civilian internment persisted in Germany, especially during the Weimar Republic. The image of the German internment sites as 'ordinary' facilities that was promoted between 1914 and 1918 was partly responsible for this. During and after the war, they were hardly ever addressed in critical terms, let alone analysed. When this subject was examined, an apologetic intention prevailed, as in the semi-official post-war publications of Wilhelm Doegen or Christian Meurer.[72] The authors were less interested in a critical coming to terms with wartime internment. Rather, they saw their task as being to justify and trivialise Germany's actions against its former enemies. This uncritical approach was to a certain extent understandable, especially against the whole background of the 'war guilt controversy' *(Kriegsschuldfrage*), sparked by the Allies insistence on attributing sole responsibility for the war to Germany under Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles.[73]

What conclusions can be drawn from this and what research questions arise from it? Future studies should take a closer look at the various parties involved. First and foremost, the role of the guards as gatekeepers and as a separate social group needs to be analysed. The extent to which the lack of engagement with the history of civilian internment in Germany during and after the First World War led to a relatively 'uncritical' reception of the early National Socialist concentration camps should be examined as well. Apart from the systematic violence from 1933 onwards, which was certainly aimed at 'disciplining' the German population and choking any thoughts of resistance, the aforementioned circumstance may have led to a certain indifference towards the establishment of early concentration camps. The extent to which there is valid evidence for this needs to be investigated.[74]

In order to verify or falsify this thesis, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the early interwar years and potential debates on camps as institutions in the Weimar Republic. Did a socially relevant discussion take place on the (wartime) camps or the increasing use of protective custody since 1919 as a whole, or were these aspects ignored, as previously claimed? If there was a discourse, who took part in it, which topics were discussed, and what were the intentions of those involved? Furthermore, it seems necessary to analyse the social reactions to the founding of the early Nazi camps. The first weeks and months of National

Socialist rule, when their power was not yet fully consolidated, are particularly important in this respect. Micro-historical approaches are highly useful for these investigations, as a broad national public debate on this topic was hardly possible in the wake of *Gleichschaltung* and mounting terror.

Ultimately, future research projects on the history of internment should increasingly adopt a *longue durée approach*. Even today, many historiographical works on German concentration camps neglect the 1920s and early 1930s. Historiography often begins with the founding of the Dachau camp in 1933. However, it seems imperative to include the period of the First World War and the Weimar Republic in any analysis of camps as a twentieth-century phenomenon. Of course, there was no straightforward or direct path from the camps of the First World War to the extermination sites of the Second World War. Nevertheless, the collective experiences between 1914 and 1918 (and to some extent beyond) resulted in a peculiar relationship between the German civilian population and internment, which appears to have been significant for later history. This is not to say that there was some kind of German exceptionality or *Sonderweg* in an ideological sense. Rather, one could argue that during the First World War a 'practical consciousness' of the feasibility of interning 'enemy aliens' and 'political enemies' – the latter especially during the revolutionary days – developed, which, adapting the ideas of the sociologist Anthony Giddens, survived the formal end of hostilities and continued to make its mark as part of the collective experience of the world war.[75]

In future studies, it will therefore be necessary to focus on the majority of the population that was not directly involved in internment – thus moving beyond the perpetrator-victim historiography that has been rightly pursued to date – and to take a closer look at its view of the camps. For the period of National Socialist rule, this must apply in particular to the early years, when the concentration camps had not yet become the places of mass murder and extermination that they had evolved into by the early 1940s.[76]

Notes

1. One exception was the establishment of quarantine camps at the end of 1918, where returning POWs and German civilians ('Auslandsdeutsche') were housed in order to prevent the outbreak of possible epidemics that were feared to be caused by imported pathogens.

2. The article is based on my dissertation submitted to the Free University of Berlin (October 2023) on the treatment of Russian civilians in Germany during the First World War. Accordingly, the following text primarily concentrates on Russian 'enemy aliens' in Germany between 1914 and 1918.
3. The following is just a small selection of studies that are worth reading and suitable as an introduction to the topic: Bauerkämper, *Sicherheit und Humanität*, Vols. I and II; Bauerkämper and Rostislavleva (eds.), *Zivilgefangenschaft in Deutschland und Russland*; Caglioti, *War and Citizenship*; Manz, Panayi and Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War*; Manz and Panayi, *Enemies in the Empire*; Müller, "*Feindliche Ausländer*"; Myers and Moshenska (eds.), *Archaeologies of Internment*; Pitzer, *One Long Night*.
4. It is crucial to emphasise that internment camps, in their essence, are total institutions. On the idea of *total institutions*, see Goffman, *Asylums*, esp. 13–124. The emphasis on the segregation of prisoners can be found in many edited volumes, but detailed discussion of the broader social embedding of the camp worlds is often lacking. See for instance Kotek and Rigoulot, *Das Jahrhundert der Lager*; Greiner and Kramer (eds.), *Welt der Lager*; Jahr and Thiel (eds.), *Lager vor Auschwitz*.
5. There were various types of camps in Germany during the war. The POW camps run by the military were mainly, but not exclusively, used to intern captured soldiers. The authorities also often detained smaller groups of civilians there. In addition, internment sites such as Ruhleben, Havelberg, Holzminden or Traunstein were mainly for civilians (*Zivilgefangenenlager*), in which only a few soldiers were held. In the officers' camps, such as at Celle Castle, civilians from the higher ranks of society were interned alongside officers. These facilities were therefore of mixed nature. In contrast, the authorities accommodated civilians only in the so-called 'camps for the destitute' (for instance the Mittellosenlager Burgstädt). These were places of detention for those who could not afford to live outside the restricted areas declared in November 1914. Finally, 'enemy aliens' were housed in criminal prisons, as well. Short and medium-term prison sentences often served as disciplinary measures and were a fundamental component of internment and imprisonment practices during the war. For reasons of space, however, this article cannot deal in any depth with this aspect of civilian incarceration.
6. Doegen, *Kriegsgefangene Völker*, 37–8.
7. This kind of discriminatory treatment along *national lines* was to become an increasingly important part of internment practice in the years to come. Nationality often determined the actual treatment and opportunities offered to internees.
8. In addition, there were 535,000 French, 186,000 British, 148,000 Romanian and 133,000 Italian prisoners of war. See Oltmer, *"Unentbehrliche Arbeitskräfte,"* 68–9.
9. Doegen, *Kriegsgefangene Völker*, 3, 38–42; Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg*, 74–5; and Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914–1917*, 59–67.
10. In November and December 1914, for example, the Deputy General Staff decided that all British and French male citizens of military age should be

interned. As a result, the British 'enemy aliens' were sent to the Ruhleben prison camp and the French to Holzminden.

11. Haselbeck, "Das Gefangenenlager Traunstein-Au," 241; Gutachten Prof. Dr. Meurer, *Verletzungen des Kriegsgefangenenrechts*, 783, 789; Müller, "*Feindliche Ausländer*," 570–1; and Stibbe, *British civilian internees*, 2. Also worth mentioning, especially for the Traunstein camp and Bavaria, is Jahr, "*Keine Feriengäste*".
12. This applied above all to the Russian civilian prisoners, for whom no general internment was planned and who were therefore usually only interned for limited periods of time. The situation was somewhat different for the British prisoners in Ruhleben, some of whom remained in the camp for the entire war. Although the occupancy rate in Ruhleben halved by autumn 1918, the camp still held 2,300 inmates, compared to a highpoint of 4,273 in February 1915. See Stibbe, *British civilian internees*, 2.
13. Doegen, *Kriegsgefangene Völker*, 56–7.
14. The lack of preparation was particularly evident in the way the early prisoners were housed. In many places, the authorities converted civilian facilities, empty buildings or military installations into improvised detention centres. In the first few days and weeks, the prisoners were often housed in barracks, stables or tent camps in open fields. See Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg*, 100–1.
15. Principles "Zwischen dem Königlich Sächsischen Staatsfiskus, vertreten durch die Königliche Kreishauptmannschaft zu Leipzig und der Stadtgemeinde Burgstädt," 14 December 1914, in Kreisarchiv Mittelsachsen (Wechselburg), Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd. I, 1156; Letter from the Burgstädt town council to the Rochlitz district administration dated 27 July 1915, in Kreisarchiv Mittelsachsen (Wechselburg), Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd. II, 1165, Bl. 56.
16. In November 1914, the Deputy General Staff in Berlin initiated the establishment of restricted areas throughout Germany. These were selected locations such as the island of Rügen and cities such as Leipzig, Cologne, Breslau, Danzig or Strasbourg. 'Enemy aliens' had to leave these places and surrounding communities within a radius of 20 kilometres. If they had sufficient means, they were allowed to choose their new place of residence independently. However, if they did not have sufficient funds, they were forced to gather at central assembly points such as Burgstädt.
17. Ball, *Das Kriegsgefangenenlager Havelberg*, 3; letter from Tonwarenfabrik Königshain dated 19 November 1914, in Sächsisches Staatsarchiv (SächsStA) Leipzig 20024 Kreishauptmannschaft Leipzig, Nr. 0611, Bl. 10; contract between Chemnitzer Stanzwerke G.m.b.H. and the municipality of Burgstädt dated 9 December 1914, in Kreisarchiv Mittelsachsen (Wechselburg), Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd. I, 1156.
18. Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg*, 219; Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 635; Gutachten Prof. Dr. Meurer, *Verletzungen des Kriegsgefangenenrechts*, 771, 791;

Ausschnitt aus dem stenographischen Bericht des Reichstags vom 26. August 1915, 352 betreffend der Internierung der feindl. Ausländer, Referent Bruno Dammann, in Bundesarchiv (BArch) Berlin-Lichterfelde, R 1501/112368, Bl. 174–6.

19. See, among other files, Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (BLHA), Rep. 8, Nr. 1859; here letter from the office of the Badischer Handelstag dated 4 September 1915; letter from 'Carpantier & Hanefeld' dated 22 February 1916. Also Jahr, "Zivilisten als Kriegsgefangene," 312–13.
20. Ball, *Das Kriegsgefangenenlager Havelberg*, 9; Werner, *Havelberger Kriegschronik*, 25; Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 640.
21. In the spring of 1915, the Bavarian Minister of War designated Traunstein as the central internment centre for civilian internees in Bavaria. See Bavarian War Ministry, letter dated 8 March 1915, Nr. 18889, in Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (BayHStA), Kriegsministerium 12791.
22. Müller, "*Feindliche Ausländer,"* 635–6.
23. Severe arrest (*strenger Arrest*) was a punishment consisting of detention in darkness (*Dunkelhaft*) and food deprivation. In some cases, it was also extended to include sleep deprivation. The veracity of the guard's statement cannot be verified due to paucity of evidence.
24. Müller, "*Feindliche Ausländer*," 214–15; Haselbeck, "Das Gefangenenlager Traunstein-Au"; Kreisarchiv Mittelsachsen (Wechselburg), Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd. III, 1174.
25. Letter from the Königsbrück commandant's office, 12 September 1914, in Sächsisches Staatsarchiv- Hauptsstaatsarchiv (SächsHStA) Dresden 11348/156, Bl. 26, quoted in Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 637.
26. Ibid., 638.
27. Ibid., 68, 81–103, 637–8; Jahr and Thiel, "*Adding colour to the silhouettes*," 44; Bauerkämper, *Sicherheit und Humanität*, Vol. 1, 300–3; Gutachten Prof. Dr. Meurer, *Verletzungen des Kriegsgefangenenrechts*, 727; Peter, *Das "Russenlager in Guben,"* 66f.
28. On recruitment practices in the territories occupied by Germany, see, for instance, Thiel, *"Menschenbassin Belgien"*; Westerhoff, *Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg*; Bauerkämper, *Sicherheit und Humanität*, Vol. 1, esp. 321–9.
29. Letter from Niederlausitzer Kohlenwerke dated 10 March 1915, in SächsHStA Dresden 11,348, Stellv. Generalkommando XII. Armeekorps, Nr. 2818, Bl. 131; letter from Charlotte von Schroeter dated 6 February 1915, in ibid., Bl. 120.
30. Stibbe, "(Dis)entangling the Local, the National and the International," 31–7; Letter from the Prussian War Ministry dated 14 January 1915, in Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStAPK), I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 1176, Nr. 74 Beih. 3, Vol. 2, Bl. 27; and Jahr, "Zivilisten als Kriegsgefangene," 312–13.
31. Letter from the Burgstädt town council dated 27 July 1915, in Kreisarchiv Mittelsachsen (Wechselburg), Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd. II, 1165, Bl. 56.

32. Civilian internees in the Donauschwingen barrack camp, which was dissolved as a civilian prison camp in spring 1915 as more POWs were now to be housed there, were able to obtain exit permits (*Ausgangsgenehmigungen*) issued by the district office that allowed them to visit the city centre. However, these special permits had to be stamped and confirmed by the local garrison command. See Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 212–15, 221.
33. Order of the town councillor Dr Roth of 5 October 1916, in Akten des Stadtrats zu Burgstädt über die Unterbringung von Zivil- und Kriegsgefangenen, Bd.1, 1156; Principles "Zwischen dem Königlich Sächsischen Staatsfiskus, vertreten durch die Königliche Kreishauptmannschaft zu Leipzig und der Stadtgemeinde Burgstädt" of 14 December 1914, in ibid.
34. Jahr, "Zivilisten als Kriegsgefangene," 312–13; Stibbe, *British civilian internees*, 71–3; and Gutachten Prof. Dr. Meurer, *Verletzungen des Kriegsgefangenenrechts*, 771–2.
35. The situation was different for POWs working outside the camps. There was a ban on contact with and welfare from the German population.
36. Lorke, *Liebe verwalten*, 71.
37. From 1917 onwards, the German authorities sent an unknown number of French and Belgian civilian prisoners back to the German-occupied territories in the west, where they were forced to work and sometimes pressed into civilian labour battalions (*Zivil-Arbeiter-Bataillone*). See Stibbe, "(Dis)entangling the Local," 32–3; and Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 641–44.
38. Nachweisung der Zahlen der Kriegsgefangenen nach dem Stande vom 10.05.1918 (in den Kriegsgefangenen-Lagern und Lazaretten untergebrachte oder diesen zugeteilte Kriegsgefangenen und Zivilpersonen), in BArch, R 67/525; Nachweisung der Zahlen der Kriegsgefangenen nach dem Stande vom 10.10.1918 (in den Kriegsgefangenen-Lagern und Lazaretten untergebrachte oder diesen zugeteilte Kriegsgefangenen und Zivilpersonen), in ibid.; Bestandsnachweisungen der Zivilgefangenenlager, in BArch, R 1501/112370.
39. "Humanität ist Schwäche," *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung*, Nr. 318, 15 November 1914. Copy in BArch, R 901/82913.
40. Newspaper article in the *Pfälzischer Kurier*, Nr. 20, 25 January 1915. Copy in BayHStA, M Inn 53976.
41. Spain acted as the most important protecting power in Germany. During the war, Spanish diplomats took over the protection of Russian, French and Belgian prisoners, among others. The USA, in turn, was responsible for the British, Serbs and Romanians until it entered the war in 1917. See Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg*, 76; and for a more detailed discussion of the role of neutral states, Bauerkämper, *Sicherheit und Humanität*, Vol. 1.
42. Berichte der Herren A. Eugster, Nationalrat (II. Reise), Dr. C. De Marval, Oberstleutnant (III. und IV. Reise), über Ihre Besuche in den Kriegsgefangenenlagern in Deutschland und in Frankreich, Mai 1915, 48, in BayHStA, MA 97721.
43. "Die russischen Gefangenen in Deutschland," *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 208, 30 July 1917. Copy in BayHStA, MA 97722.

44. "Rechtlosigkeit," *Die Zeit*, 11 December 1914. Copy in BArch, R 901/82913.
45. On the formation of opinion by the press in Great Britain, see Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain*, 231–62.
46. Stibbe, "The Internment of Civilians," 10–15.
47. It is worth mentioning that the situation was different in the territories occupied by the Germans. The death rate there was much higher, especially in the forced labour companies for POWs and civilians, which often operated close to the front since 1915. See, among others, Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, esp. 127–66; and Stibbe, "Gewalt gegen Zivilisten," esp. 75–94.
48. However, these figures should be treated with caution. The "Müggenbusch internment cemetery" of the Havelberg prison camp alone, where mainly deceased civilian prisoners were buried, counted over 700 dead (the exact figures for those buried vary). This would mean that over 20% of the deceased civilians were interned in the Havelberg camp. Although this scenario does not seem impossible, it is questionable. Ministerium für Inneres und Sport des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt (ed.), *Die Gräber erhalten den Frieden bewahren*, 146–7; BLHA, Rep. 8, Nr. 1846.
49. Gutachten Prof. Dr Meurer, *Verletzungen des Kriegsgefangenenrechts*, 794; Rawe, *"…wir werden sie schon zur Arbeit bringen!,"* 226; Jahr, "Zivilisten als Kriegsgefangene," 315–16.
50. For an introduction to the theory of total war, see, for instance, Förster, *Totaler Krieg*, 924–6; Salewski, *Vom Kabinettskrieg zum totalen Krieg*; Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*; Chickering and Förster (eds.), *Great War, Total War*; Chickering, Förster and Greiner (eds.), *A World at Total War*.
51. Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 189–90; letter from Reichstag President Johannes Kaempf dated 2 November 1916, in BArch, R 901/84630; letter from the Deputy Directorate III Army Corps dated 31 October 1916, in BLHA, Rep. 8, Nr. 1345.
52. For further details on the German returnees and refugees after the First World War and the so-called *Heimkehrerlager*, see, for instance, Stibbe, "A Forgotten Minority"; and Oltmer, *Migration und Politik in der Weimarer Republik*, esp. 89–138; Oltmer, "Heimkehrlager".
53. Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg*, 346; Müller, *"Feindliche Ausländer,"* 696; letter from the Reich Commissioner for Civilian Prisoners and Refugees dated 9 April 1921, in BArch, R 1501/114052, Bl. 163; letter from the Prussian Ministry of War dated 9 August 1919, in BArch, R 1501/112372, Bl. 134.
54. Letter from Wehrkreiskommando I dated 3 April 1920, in GStAPK, XX. HA, Rep. 2, II Nr. 4279, Bl. 9.
55. Heid, *Maloche – nicht Mildtätigkeit*, 203–8; "Gefangenenmißhandlungen im Internierungslager Stargard," *Die Rote Fahne*, 17 June 1921. Copy in BArch, R 1501/114052, Bl. 201; "Säuberung in Stargard," *Vorwärts*, June 1921. Copy in ibid., Bl. 203. On Jewish expulsion and migration after 1918, see Oltmer, *Migration und Politik*, 238–51.
56. On the Polish-Soviet War from 1919 to 1921, see, for instance, Lehnstedt, *Der vergessene Sieg*.

57. On the Polish-German border conflict between 1918 and 1922, see Elsbach, "Die östlichen Grenzkämpfe," 106; Letter from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior dated 6 February 1921, in BArch, R 1501/114052, Bl. 156; report by the ICRC delegate, Major Léderrey, dated 26 April 1919, in BArch, R 901/84319.
58. "Wird endlich durchgegriffen?" *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 19 November 1920. Copy in BArch, R 1501/114052, Bl. 53.
59. Newspaper article in the *Bayrischer Kurier*, November 1920, in ibid., Bl. 74.
60. Peters, "*Reventlow, Ernst Graf von"* in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 21 (2003), 476–477 [online version]; URL: https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118788477.html#ndbcontent, accessed on 01 November 2023.
61. Report by Captain (ret.) Coceius dated 6 October 1919, in BArch, R 1501/114051a, Bl. 27.
62. Ibid. Bl. 31.
63. Letter from Friedrich Otto dated 31 March 1920, in ibid., Bl. 95.
64. Letter from the Munich City Command dated 12 May 1919, in BayHStA, M Inn 66272.
65. Letter from the Reichsbank Directorate dated 13 December 1919, in BArch, R 1501/114051a, Bl. 43.
66. On the development of the idea of using imprisonment as an instrument of social engineering in Germany during and after the war, see, for instance, Stibbe, "Gewalt gegen Zivilisten," esp. 94–101.
67. Keil and Stibbe, "Ein Laboratorium des Ausnahmezustands," 536–40, 545, 550, 565; Keil, "The Captives of the Kaiser," 68–9; and Stibbe, "Gewalt gegen Zivilisten," 82.
68. It should also be emphasised once again that the camps were places of violence. Detention itself was an act of state-led aggression, and in many cases camp life also led to acts of physical and psychological violence.
69. In contrast, the National Socialist concentration camps were places of 'absolute power', for which violence and terror can be described as fundamental characteristics. For a more detailed discussion see Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors*.
70. Jones, "Eine technologische Revolution?" 132.
71. Nevertheless, there was (sporadic) criticism of the imprisonment of civilians in the post-war period. It was primarily directed against the use of protective custody (*Schutzhaft*) against (German) left-wingers. For example, Wieland Herzfelde, a German author and publisher, wrote about his experiences in *Schutzhaft* during his time in a Berlin prison in March 1919. Also worth mentioning is Emil Julius Gumbel's critique *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*, in which he sharply criticised the violence and imprisonment practices carried out shortly after the end of the war. See Herzfelde, *Schutzhaft*; and Gumbel, *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*.
72. Wilhelm Doegen (1877–1967), a German phonetician, published his apologetic work *Kriegsgefangene Völker* in 1919. His book was commissioned by the War Ministry (Reichswehrministerium). Christian Meurer (1856–1935), a jurist, wrote on behalf of the National Assembly and the Reichstag on the violation of the rights of military and civilian prisoners.

73. On the question of war guilt, see, for instance, Janz, *14: Der Große Krieg*, 17, 61–2, 68–9.
74. For an introduction to the (early) history of the Nazi concentration camps and the political intention behind them, see, for instance, Wachsmann, *KL*; Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors*; Kogon, *Der SS-Staat*; Benz and Distel (eds.), *Die Organisation des Terrors*, Vols. 1 and 2; Benz and Distel (eds.), *Instrumentarium der Macht*; and Orth, *Das System der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*.
75. This did not only apply to Germany but must be understood as a global phenomenon. For this very reason, future studies on the history of internment in the twentieth century must analyse and compare the social discourses on internment practices in the various countries after 1918. See here Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 6–7.
76. Of course, we should not forget that hundreds of prisoners were already victims of abuse, torture and murder in the concentration camps in 1933. Nevertheless, the number of deaths remained relatively low compared to later years, especially from 1939 onwards. For example, 'only' around 25 of the 4,821 internees lost their lives in the Dachau camp in 1933. See Wachsmann, *KL*, 76.

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