

Defensive Humanitarianism: Swiss Internment Camps During World War I

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Abstract:

During World War I, the Swiss state interned nearly 30,000 foreign soldiers who had previously been held in POW camps in Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, Austria, and Russia. The internment camp system that Switzerland implemented arose from the Swiss diplomatic platform of defensive humanitarianism. By offering good offices to the belligerent states of WWI, the Swiss state utilized humanitarian law both to secure Swiss neutrality and to alleviate, to a degree, the immense human suffering of the war. The Swiss government mixed domestic security concerns with international diplomacy and humanitarianism. They elevated a domestic policy platform to the international diplomatic level and succeeded in building enough trust between the party states to create an internment system that reconceptualized the treatment of foreign soldiers from the holding of prisoners to the healing of men.

Introduction

On July 27, 1916, William McGilvray, a sergeant in the London Scottish Regiment, found himself riding in a passenger train travelling south through Germany, surveying the landscape of the Rhine River valley. It was quiet, the sounds of the sloshing mud and whizzing bullets of trench warfare far off to the west. He had started that day in Friedrichsfeld, one of the many prisoner of war camps in Germany that detained Allied soldiers. He would arrive that evening in Darmstadt to connect with another train brimming with other British prisoners of war. His journey would bring him to Konstanz, Germany, for examination before internment in Switzerland, as Konstanz was the last stop before entry into Switzerland.¹ McGil-

vray, along with 305 of his compatriots, were among the first British POWs imprisoned in Germany to be evaluated for internment in Switzerland, where the physical conditions far outshined those in Friedrichsfeld. Crowds of Swiss citizens at the train stations of Zurich, Lausanne, Montreux, and finally Chateaux D'Oex would soon greet him. Speeches by Swiss and British military, government, and Red Cross officials would welcome him and the other soldiers throughout their journey, as well as music, gifts, and warm meals. His experiences and perceptions were echoed by many soldiers in Switzerland interned during World War I, including those from France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, and Russia.

In the centuries before these soldiers arrived in Switzerland, distinct legal factors that shaped and allowed for the creation of the internment camp system had already emerged.

¹ The city's English name is Constance. It is located on the Bodensee, or Lake Constance, in southern Germany along its border with Switzerland.

First, a body of international law existed in Europe, particularly in the form of the Geneva Convention of 1864 and The Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907. Both specifically dealt with the rules of war and the treatment of soldiers, POWs, internees, and civilians during war. The internationally agreed upon instructions of these assemblies dictated, to an extent, the treatment of soldiers and civilians, captive or not, in times of war. Second, Switzerland's nearly 300 years of neutrality in the European arena continued to shape its diplomatic platform in the early 1900s. These factors did not exist as independent developments, but they grew in the same intellectual spaces in Europe. In response to the crisis of World War I, Swiss diplomats and statesmen utilized the tools at hand to merge international law, Switzerland's aggressive neutrality politics, and the ideology of humanitarianism into a cohesive diplomatic platform to protect Swiss sovereignty.

The ICRC and Swiss state implemented its first internment camp system in 1871 with the experimental internment of the Bourbaki Army. The internment of the French Bourbaki Army during the Franco-Prussian War acted as a practical trial for the later Swiss internment camp system during WWI. The French and Prussian governments signed an armistice agreement to end the conflict on January 27, 1871, however, the agreement did not extend to the Army of the East. To avoid further losses, the Bourbaki Army sought refuge in Switzerland, initiating deliberations between the French and Swiss Armies. On February 1, the Swiss General Hans Herzog and French General Justin Clinchant signed an internment agreement which promised medical attention, lodging, and protection within Switzerland for all 87,847 troops of

the French Army of the East, as long as the French troops handed over their weapons to the Swiss military.² The Prussians did not attend these talks. The Swiss Army managed the internment of the French soldiers in coordination with the Swiss Red Cross, subsequently dispersing the soldiers throughout the country. The successful internment of the Bourbaki Army set the stage for the internment camp system during WWI.

The internment camp system in Switzerland during World War I acted as the intersection between international law, Swiss neutrality politics, and humanitarianism. This intersection formed a new policy referred to in this paper as defensive humanitarianism.³ Due to its successes in WWI, this policy platform would later come to define Swiss international relations and the Swiss image internationally in the decades that followed. These conclusions may be drawn from the body of secondary and primary source literature on the Swiss internment camps, humanitarianism, international relations, WWI, and Swiss and European history.

The topic of internment camps in Switzerland during World War I and their impact on humanitarianism, Swiss politics, and European history is woefully understudied, particularly in the English language. These areas rarely overlap with each other in the literature, as historians generally examine them separately. It is important to analyze this situation from the perspective of international diplomacy and the role of Swiss "good of-

² Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz, "Die Internierung der französischen Bourbaki-Armee in der Schweiz," *Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz*, accessed April 15th, 2016.

³ This is a term created for this paper in order to succinctly explain Swiss diplomacy since WWI. I have found no records of this term elsewhere.

fices,” or the offering by a third party state to facilitate peaceful mediation between two opposing states.⁴ The idea of Swiss good offices greatly informed the idea of defensive humanitarianism in this paper and will be discussed in section one.

There is no dispute among historians that the international laws, treaties, and agreements surrounding POWs, internees, and civilians affected by WWI further expanded in scope during the conflict. However, many scholars have greatly limited the role of the Swiss state and the Swiss internment camp system in their conclusions.⁵ These historians minimize the importance of small-player states in their explanatory framework, which views this evolution as an effort on the part of major-player states, specifically Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and France to lessen the suffering of soldiers and civilians in a war of attrition. Others briefly mention the Swiss internment camp system in their discussion of WWI diplomacy, but only as a small-scale humanitarian project that did not significantly impact the war. Rather, they argue that it merely created enough proof of good intentions to allow for the larger belligerent states to collaborate on later bilateral agreements.⁶ In an atmosphere that focused on the actions and diplomatic platforms of belligerent and major-player states, the histo-

riography of this period failed to look at the other smaller, but still influential, actors. This paper seeks to amend the shortcomings of this era’s historiography by acknowledging the strong role of international diplomacy in WWI as facilitated through the good offices of smaller actors, specifically highlighting the Swiss case and its unique contributions to the legacy of international law.

Those historians, Swiss or otherwise, who focus on Swiss internment camps in particular have traditionally approached it from the position of a history of neutrality and international relations. In the historiography of Switzerland during WWI, some historians maintain that the Swiss government acted as the main actor on the international scene, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) worked as a secondary collaborator.⁷ This ignores the collaboration of the ICRC with the Swiss government and military on the internment camp system, as well as their larger international roll as the progenitor of national Red Cross societies. Others have approached the history of the internment camp system as only part of the history of humanitarianism and the ICRC, removing the diplomatic history included in this paper. This strain of the historiography looks at the Swiss state only as a practical facilitator, possessing the bureaucratic framework and institutional resources to physically construct and manage the camps, not on its role as sovereign power and negotiator.⁸ This paper argues that domestic Swiss neutrality politics and the inter-

⁴ When a state offers good offices, they act as a third party facilitator of negotiations. See Raymond R. Probst, *‘Good Offices’ in the Light of Swiss International Practice and Experience*, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers), 1989.

⁵ John Yarnall, *Barbed Wire Disease: British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-19*, (Stroud, UK: History Press), 2011.

⁶ Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats, and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 33-38.

⁷ Georges André Chevallaz, *The Challenge of Neutrality: Diplomacy and the Defense of Switzerland*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books), 2001.

⁸ David P Forsythe and Barbara Ann J Rieffer-Flanagan, *The International Committee of the Red Cross: A Neutral Humanitarian Actor*, (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group), 2016.

national humanitarian ideology of the ICRC intersected in the diplomatic platform of the Swiss state, leading to the formation of the internment camp system, which necessitated both the Swiss state and the ICRC as similarly important actors.

There are exceptions to the disinterest in Swiss internment camps and their unique characteristics. Some recent scholarship within the historiography of Swiss history gives a general overview of life in the Swiss internment camps. This focuses on its economic benefits in the area of Swiss tourism, as well as on the role of women in Switzerland during WWI.⁹ The focus on the benefits of the internment camp system for the Swiss economy and the roles of women in the internment system represents a new area of exploration. However, historians of this subject have failed to recognize the unique blend of the domestic needs for neutrality and the international movement of goods and people for the Swiss economy with the ideas and institutions of international humanitarianism. This paper builds on this economic focus on the internment camp system by contextualizing its place in the debate in tandem with the international diplomacy and humanitarianism pieces.

Since the turn of the 21st century historians of Switzerland have increasingly studied Swiss history by assessing the situation through a combination of political, diplomatic, economic, or social lenses. According to recent works of history on Switzerland, neutrality concerns continue to rule as the dominant Swiss interest in Swiss internation-

al relations during WWI. However, scholars have also increasingly portrayed the influence of neutrality politics on areas such as the Swiss economy and the Swiss identity inside and outside of Switzerland.¹⁰ Some of the newest scholarship focuses on the situation of specific internee groups within Switzerland; though these works are beyond the purview of this paper.¹¹ Most notable among the scholars of the Swiss WWI internment camps is Dr. Cédric Cotter, whose work focuses on the connection between neutrality and humanitarianism in Switzerland, and its meaning for Swiss diplomacy and the Swiss identity.¹² Cotter offers many important insights into the political situation of the Swiss state during WWI, arguing that the issue of neutrality functioned as the central concern for the Swiss Bundesrat in its decision to pursue the internment camp system.¹³ This paper constructs the idea of defensive humanitarianism by combining the insights of Cotter on the neutrality and international humanitarian aspects of the internment camp system with the economic impetuses of other recent historians in order to form a more holistic picture of the Swiss situation. By looking at the internment camp system as a microcosm of the political, humanitarian, and economic devel-

⁹ Susan Barton, "Dropped from 'ell into 'eaven: Interned POWS in Switzerland 1916-1918," Accessed February 16, 2018, http://www.ruralhistory2015.org/doc/papers/Panel_12_Barton.pdf.

¹⁰ Max Mittler, *Der Weg Zum Ersten Weltkrieg - Wie Neutral War Die Schweiz?: Kleinstaat und Europäischer Imperialismus*, (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung), 2003.

¹¹ For information on Russian internees in Switzerland during WWI, see Thomas Bürgisser, "*Unerwünschte Gäste*": *russische Soldaten in der Schweiz 1915-1920*, (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010).

¹² Cédric Cotter, (*s'*)*Aider pour survivre: action humanitaire et neutralité suisse pendant la Première Guerre mondiale*, (Geneva: University of Geneva), 2016.

¹³ The Swiss Bundesrat is the Swiss Parliament. Switzerland is the only direct democracy in the world.

opments and crises of WWI, this paper offers new insights into the domestic and international impacts of the camps on Switzerland and Europe during and after WWI. These insights are possible due to the large body of primary source literature from the ICRC, Swiss government, and Swiss military that draw out the interconnected nature of international law, neutrality politics, and international humanitarianism.

The primary sources available on this topic exist due to the archival practices of the Swiss state, military, and the ICRC. The Swiss army in particular took meticulous care in preserving its correspondence with outside governments, as well as their internal briefs, notices, and telegrams, all of which can be found in the Swiss Federal Archives in Bern. These sources form the primary basis of this paper. In addition, Major Édouard Favre, Surgeon General and head of the internment system within the Swiss army, published three reports on the workings of the camps and his reflections on them.¹⁴ These reports synthesize many of the documents found in the Federal Archives. This paper employs them more frequently than the original papers, as they offer the factual information of the originals, but include his commentary as the highest-ranking administrator in the internment camp system. His insights begin with the formation of the internment camps and continue through to the repatriation of the internees, and offer both his subjective and objective notes on the functioning of the camps. These notes are

useful as their intended audience members of the Swiss military, who managed the operation of the internment camps.

In addition, British Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Philip Picot published his memoirs of his time as a British diplomatic administrator involved with the camps, including the reception of British internees in 1916.¹⁵ His memoir, *The British Interned in Switzerland*, relays many anecdotes on the reception of interned soldiers in Switzerland, it presents the limitation of the British populace acting as its primary audience. It must be examined with extra scrutiny due to Picot's tendency towards embellishment and the propagandistic role of his writings.

While Favre, as a ranking official in the Swiss military, had a bias towards the importance of Swiss neutrality politics, Picot stressed the importance of international law and diplomacy as a British diplomat in his papers. The reports by Favre and Picot allow this paper to draw conclusions on how actors within each an individual area of influence conceived of the roles of international, domestic, and humanitarian issues in relation to each other in the context of the internment camp system. The methodology used here differs from the methodologies of other historians of Swiss diplomacy and Swiss history by examining these documents as part of the larger idea of defensive humanitarianism.¹⁶

¹⁵ Henry Philip Picot, *The British interned in Switzerland*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1919).

¹⁶ Many of Cotter's academic works look at the relationship between the Swiss state and humanitarianism; however, this paper broadens the scope of this debate by observing the evolution of international humanitarianism through bi- or multilateral treaties not necessarily facilitated by the Swiss state. In addition, this paper brings in the issues of the stagnating Swiss economy and tensions of cultural nationalism within

¹⁴ Édouard Favre, Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer, and Karl Hauser, *Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: A Report from the Swiss Commission in the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917).

The structure of this paper is both thematic and chronological and utilizes a telescoped structure. Each section examines defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system from increasingly focused perspectives. Section one examines the context of Swiss neutrality politics in treaty negotiations during WWI before the full implementation of the internment camp system, narrowing the focus thematically to defensive humanitarianism in practice and chronologically to 1914-1916. Next, section two further restricts the scope to the structure of the internment camp system in practice, and the experiences of individual internees. This allows for an evaluation of defensive humanitarianism at the level of individual experiences. The narrowing in sequential sections from the broad, international developments to the individuals impacted by the internment camp system allows this paper to connect the areas of international law, neutrality politics, and humanitarianism at increasingly focused levels in order to explain how they merge to form the policy platform of defensive humanitarianism.

Finally, the conclusion of this paper focuses on the international response to the Swiss internment camps and their effects on later Swiss diplomacy, as well as their impact on the evolution of humanitarianism. The conclusion seeks to offer explanations for the role of neutrality and humanitarianism in Switzerland, as well as to offer insights into the unique Swiss position in global politics and diplomacy. With the current centennial

Switzerland when evaluating the drivers behind Swiss governmental policy. Finally, the major difference between Cotter's work and the conclusions of this paper arise from the use of defensive humanitarianism as a unifying concept that explains the merging of these different factors into a coherent policy platform implemented by the Swiss state during WWI.

commemoration of WWI, the parallels between international law, neutrality, and humanitarian issues in WWI versus the present make the subject of defensive humanitarianism relevant today in 2018. In an increasingly globalized world that is currently seeing the largest states isolating themselves from international trade, politics, and humanitarianism, smaller players may well again rise to meet the current crises as Switzerland did during WWI. Historiographically, this paper pioneers a new methodology for understanding not only the Swiss internment camp system during WWI, but also the larger debates around humanitarianism, diplomacy, and WWI in Switzerland and Europe currently absent in the historical literature through the idea of defensive humanitarianism.

Creation of the Internment Camp System

Despite the long history of Swiss neutrality, the Swiss military nonetheless feared that Swiss neutrality would be violated when World War I erupted in August of 1914. Germany had breached the eastern Belgian border on August 4, 1914, just seven days after the beginning of the war, despite more than 80 years of Belgian neutrality. In addition to the external threat to Swiss neutrality, an internal rift also existed between the western and eastern regions of the country. Since the creation of the German Reich in 1871, the western region of Switzerland, Roman-die, inhabited primarily by French speakers supported France, while the eastern region with a German-speaking majority supported Germany.¹⁷ This schism, created by linguistic and cultural loyalties in an era of intense cul-

¹⁷ Carlo Moos, "Domestic Politics and Neutrality (Switzerland)," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, published January 24th, 2017.

tural nationalism, threatened Swiss neutrality from within by destabilizing popular support for Swiss neutrality and giving the appearance of popular support for either the Central Powers or the Allied Forces. The Swiss government and military, therefore, searched for a solution that could solve both the external and internal issues simultaneously. By maintaining absolute international neutrality with a policy platform of defensive humanitarianism, the Swiss hoped to defuse competing cultural nationalisms at home and preserve their territorial sovereignty through neutral international diplomacy and politics abroad.

Already in 1914, the initial rumblings of a future internment plan started at the ground level in two places: Geneva and Rome. The Vatican began advocating for prisoner exchanges for incapacitated POWs starting in late 1914, on humanitarian grounds.¹⁸ The International Committee of the Red Cross first proposed the plan for the internment of mildly injured prisoners of war in Switzerland in 1914. With the permission of the Swiss government, the ICRC began treaty talks with France and Germany. In addition to the urgings of the ICRC, the Holy See, through their representative Charles Santucci, also campaigned for the broadening of ailments and ranks meriting internment, as they saw the prospect of internment too important an opportunity for POWs to restrict to only tuberculosis patients.¹⁹ On March 6, 1915, after securing a loose agreement of the terms of internment, the president of the ICRC, Gustav Ador, wrote to the president of Switzerland, Giuseppe Motta, asking for the Swiss government to take over treaty negotiations:

Our Committee is continuing with the realization of the project, which I have spoken to you of interning in Switzerland the wounded officers whom they would not wish to return to their country of origin. I take the liberty of asking you again to support this proposal with your high influence. There are so many families of officers in Germany, France, and England, who wait with anguish for the realization of this project, that if it were not to succeed, it would be a cruel disappointment. Do you not think that it would be a very good thing for the Federal Council to officially submit this proposal to the governments concerned? I know that you agree with this idea and I am quite sure that no government would oppose a refusal to a firm proposal made by the Federal Council.²⁰

While the ICRC initiated the talks between France and Germany on the subject of prisoners of war, they, even with the support of the Holy See, could not exert enough pressure upon either government to come to an agreement. Diplomacy at this stage of the war was tense; without being able to offer good offices, the Vatican and ICRC failed to instill the same sense of trust that the Swiss state had during the internment of the French Army of the East.

On May 1, 1915, the Swiss government, with backing by both the ICRC and the Holy See, reinitiated and finalized the negotiations between France and Germany. The Swiss delegation's offering of good offices played

¹⁸ Yarnall, 155.

¹⁹ Picot, 36.

²⁰ Édouard Favre, *L'Internment en Suisse*, (Geneva: Georg, 1917), 188.

no small part in bringing the two powers to the table.²¹ In addition, assurances that Swiss military order would prevent soldiers from escaping, as well as the belligerent states agreeing to return caught escapees, led to the signing of an agreement on January 26, 1916.²² The Swiss government and military readily seized the opportunity presented by the ICRC and Holy See to press the agreement talks between France and Germany to a conclusion, in order to both transform internal pressures into interest for the soon-to-arrive soldiers and to secure external respect for Swiss neutrality. The Swiss defensive humanitarianism platform combined the internal and external threats to the Swiss state into one coherent solution. The signing of the treaty on January 26, however, did not itself initiate the transferring of prisoners of war into Switzerland.

For the following three weeks, negotiation on the terms of internment continued. The issues most intensely discussed included the definition of internment, methods for surveillance of prisoner of war camps in belligerent states, selection criteria, and the conditions on returning soldiers after the conflict ceased. Many of the issues of contention focused on which diseases and injuries warranted internment in Switzerland, and which did not. To settle this issue, the Surgeon-General of Switzerland created the Bureau of Internment within the medical branch of the Swiss military, which conducted a temporary internment period with 100 French and 100 German prisoners of war suffering from tuberculosis in the towns of Davos, Montana, and Ley-

sin.²³ This temporary internment functioned as a barometer for the trust of the belligerent signatories. As the test showed early success, France and Germany warmed to the idea of accepting the Swiss internment camp system on a full scale. On February 14, France, Germany, and Switzerland came to an agreement on the final terms of internment.

The previous understanding of internment, as suggested in the Geneva Convention, had entailed the safe movement of prisoners of war. This included soldiers incapable of fighting in the future, with their departure leading them through a neutral state back to their homeland. It also allowed for internment within neutral states. The agreement between France and Germany defined internment as the removal of prisoners of war from these states to Switzerland for medical care in Swiss facilities. The treaty also included clauses promising the return of interned soldiers to Switzerland if they escaped to their home country.²⁴ The codification of Swiss defensive humanitarianism into this international treaty benefited not only the Swiss state, but the belligerent states and the internees as well. Defensive humanitarianism represented a unique form of diplomatic policy, as it benefited all states involved.

The arrival of these initial internees in Switzerland created a spark of celebration for the Swiss populace. Those healthy enough to walk went first with canes and flowers, the latter given to them by members of the crowd. Soldiers too sick to walk continued

²¹ Probst, 20.

²² François Olier, "Suisse (1914-1918): L'Internement des Prisonniers de Guerre Allies, Malades et Blessés," accessed March 5, 2017.

²³ Édouard Favre, *"Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States,"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917), 10.

²⁴ Picot, 37.

behind in cars.²⁵ The Swiss populace came out in droves in celebration of their national project. Promoted as not only the saving plan for the Swiss economic and political situation, many in the government promoted the plan as the duty of the Swiss. This rhetoric set out to dispel the linguistic tensions of the country and promote Swiss nationalism and identity.²⁶ The Swiss government did not miss the chance to promote the evolution of international law and Switzerland's role through the internment camp system internally or externally.

This new definition of internment created by these treaties allowed for the opportunity of extended healing in Switzerland for prisoners of war who had been excluded by the previous understanding of internment due to states not wanting injured soldiers returning to enemy front lines. Deliberation on what ailments would now qualify under the new definition, however, took another three weeks after the original tentative agreement. The debate focused on short-term or easily treatable ailments that could not be manageably treated in prisoner of war camps. By July 1916, the French, German, and Swiss governments identified the 18 diseases in total that merited internment in Switzerland. These included: chronic diseases of the blood, respiratory, circulatory, central and peripheral nervous systems, digestive organs, urinary and sexual organs, organs of the senses, the skin, rheumatism, as well as blindness and deafness. The majority of the internees fell under the criteria of suffering from Tuberculosis, tumors, severe debility, severe syphilis, loss

of limb, long-term paralysis, maladies that would preclude military service for one year, and cases deemed severe enough on a case-by-case basis.²⁷ Tuberculosis represented an especially critical point to the concerned parties, as it had been previously disqualified during talks in 1914 before internment became an option due to the chance for soldiers to recover and reenter the war.²⁸

Not all major conditions from which POWs suffered made the cut. Mental health afflictions, alcoholism, and sexually transmitted diseases that could still be transmitted at the time of inspection were also excluded.²⁹ The agreement excluded soldiers with mental health issues, as they referred these cases to special institutions and not general hospitals in Switzerland. It also proscribed soldiers with sexually transmitted diseases or infections, for fear of infecting citizens of the Swiss populace or family members of the soldiers.³⁰ This list of ailments illustrated the level of strictness the countries involved desired for the agreement, as the belligerent governments, not the Swiss government, paid for the costs of interning their soldiers in Switzerland. This agreement greatly expanded the number of soldiers removed from prisoner of war camps in belligerent states and greatly increased the chances of survival for wounded prisoners of war. Montana was one of the first towns open to internees and housed

²⁵ Whitmarsh, "Prisoners of War Interned in Switzerland."

²⁶ Roman Rossfeld, *14/18 Die Schweiz und der Grosse Krieg*, (Zürich: Hier und Jetzt, 2014), 242.

²⁷ Swiss Government, "Vorbereitung für die kriegsrechtliche Internierung, u.a. Konventionsentwurf, 1914-1915," Dossier, E27#1000/721#13951*, (Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Bern, Switzerland), Accessed June 7, 2017, note 3.

²⁸ Yarnall, 156.

²⁹ "Vorbereitung für die kriegsrechtliche Internierung, u.a. Konventionsentwurf, 1914-1915," note 3.

³⁰ Great Britain, "Correspondence with the United States Ambassador Respecting the Transfer to Switzerland of British and German Wounded and Sick

primarily French and Belgian citizens, as its populace predominately spoke French. Prior to the war, tourists to the area had been predominately French. However, this consideration on the familiarity of the locals with French nationals failed to take into account the mountainous terrain of the area, which was hard for wounded internees to traverse.³¹ This failure in the practical planning of the internment camp system arose from how it came about: the hierarchical aspects of the camp, as well as the general rules, came out of the higher level treaty negotiations, while practical issues such as mobility on mountainous terrain or division of internees from different states devolved to local officials.³² While the issue of which ailments merited internment had come to a conclusion, there still existed the topic of how to select prisoners of war for internment.

After France, Germany, and Switzerland reached an agreement on the terms, definition, and requirements of internment, they also debated the evaluation of soldiers for internment. This represented a critical point in the discussions, as it would ultimately decide the number of prisoners of war able to be interned in Switzerland. At the beginning of deliberations, Germany called for an equal quota system in which only an equal number of soldiers from each state could be interned, as they worried about the possibility of French

soldiers benefiting more from the system than the German soldiers. The Holy See, who sought to have the largest number of POWs ameliorated of their conditions and ailments as possible, frequently called on the German Kaiser Wilhelm II to agree to a case-by-case system. Germany eventually acquiesced, as long as neutral teams of medical personnel conducted the examinations.³³ This system entailed “ten Sanitary Commissions for each country, composed of two Swiss doctors reinforced by a third, an officer of the captor States, who should have the place of President, with power to examine and designate prisoners for dispatch to Lyon or Constance, as the case might be, for a final inspection by a Board of Control.”³⁴ In 1916 alone, the itinerant commission undertook twenty trips into Germany, reviewed 82,439 French soldiers and designated 20,677 for internment, while eighteen visits into France allowed for the examination of 46,339 German POWs, with 6,411 selected.³⁵ By having members of the selection committees from different states, this system allowed the belligerent states to trust that the other group would not receive preferential treatment. As defensive humanitarianism requires collective trust to ensure its goals, clauses similar to the Sanitary Commission were key to the policy’s success.

The Sanitary Commission then sent their selections of POWs for further evaluation in Konstanz if held in Germany or Austria, and Lyon if held in France, Britain, or Belgium before their final trip into Switzerland. These

Combatant Prisoners of War,” (London: Harrison & Sons, 1916).

³¹ Yarnall, 158.

³² The internment camps were divided by type of care needed and ability, not necessarily only by linguistic familiarity. This is part of the reason different nationalities of internees existed in the same regions, or even towns. Favre, “*Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States.*”

³³ Picot, 37.

³⁴ Favre, “*Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States,*” 9.

³⁵ Speed, 35-36.

major cities, closest to the Swiss border for each country and equipped with the railway infrastructure necessary for the transportation of the internees, represented logical choices for the main examination centers. Through the legal protections created by the Geneva and The Hague Conventions, the inspection teams could travel through war zones with reduced fear of assault, capture, or deterrence. The small group sizes also allowed for greater efficiency and mobility. The ICRC, Swiss Red Cross, and military medical units of France and Germany, with their Red Cross armbands in place, quickly situated the sanitary commissions. New soldiers began entering Switzerland on February 21, 1916, with an estimated maximum of 30,000 interned by January 1917.³⁶ While the deliberations between France and Germany lasted over a year to reach this agreement, similar arrangements between Germany and Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Belgium followed almost immediately thereafter.

The relative speed with which Great Britain and Germany reached an agreement on internment of British and German prisoners of war in Switzerland occurred due to the fact that the United States, still a neutral power in 1916, handled the majority of the communication for Great Britain. As the United States would not enter the conflict until one year later in 1917, they maintained their diplomatic channels with Germany. Great Britain requested that the United States' ambassador in London communicate with his counterpart in Berlin to appeal on Great Britain's behalf for an agreement on internment in Switzerland,

³⁶ Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 46.

similar to the one created between Germany and France. The communications lasted from March 25 to May 13, 1916, with nine messages in total exchanged between Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Britain, and W.H. Page, United States ambassador to Great Britain. That six of the nine messages came from Sir Grey illustrates the urgency felt by the British government to secure an agreement for the internment of British soldiers held as prisoners of war in Germany.³⁷ On April 9, the urgency of Sir Grey's telegrams reached their climax, with him writing, "it is not possible to make an official request to the Swiss Government to inaugurate the necessary arrangements pending the receipt of the reply of the German Government, and much unnecessary hardship is being caused by the failure of the German Government to send a reply."³⁸ The response on May 1 to this message contained the German acceptance of the internment agreement with the same terms as the French agreement. Almost immediately, on May 14, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Philip Picot arrived from London in Switzerland as commanding officer of the British prisoners of war interned in Switzerland and began formalizing their accommodations; the first 304 British soldiers arrived on May 28, 1916.³⁹

The urgency of the British government originated in part from international reports of the arrival of the German and French soldiers in Switzerland and the exemplary level of care that they received. As the international agreements fell into place, the Swiss mil-

³⁷ Great Britain, *Correspondence with the United States Ambassador Respecting the Transfer to Switzerland of British and German Wounded and Sick Combatant Prisoners of War*, 15.

³⁸ Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz.

³⁹ Mittler, 17.

itary planned out the locations, regulations, and accommodations of the incoming prisoners of war. These initial stages in the formation of Swiss internment camps and Swiss defensive humanitarian policy rested on both the history of internment during the Bourbaki event and on the foreign policy initiatives of the Swiss government, ICRC, and Holy See in the first few years of World War I.

Changes to the original treaties that created the internment camps eventually came in 1917, when an Anglo-German conference was held in The Hague to further discuss POWs, extend internment and exchange agreements, and resolve issues with the previous treaty. Many of these changes directly affected the Swiss internment camps, as the diplomats in attendance added new categories to the list of internment conditions. First, those who had been in captivity for at least 18 months and were suffering from “barbed wire disease” could now be interned in Switzerland, as well as any officer, commissioned or not, in captivity for 18 months.⁴⁰ This treaty also created the opportunity for the internment of 16,000 POWs in the Netherlands, though this treaty was never extended to non-German or British soldiers.

Defensive humanitarianism as a foreign policy platform derived its strength not only from the actions of the Swiss state, but also relied on the assistance of non-governmental international agencies for its legitimacy. It required the investment of trust from other belligerent and neutral states, such as the United States and the Holy See. With ICRC and Holy See support of internment in Switzerland on the grounds of humanitarian aid,

violating Swiss neutrality changed from an issue of national sovereignty to an issue of international image and respect for the lofty ideals of humanitarianism. This denotes an especially significant point considering the case of Belgium’s neutrality in World War I.⁴¹ Switzerland’s ability to offer good offices and house POWs in internment camps under the promises of neutrality and humanitarianism allowed it a better chance at protecting its sovereignty. This allowed for enough trust between the belligerents to create a treaty that both sides could support and fulfill. Had Swiss neutrality been violated, or the ICRC and Vatican backing not existed, the Swiss defensive humanitarianism platform could not have succeeded. Defensive humanitarianism functioned on an explicitly international level despite being a form of national foreign policy, as it required international acceptance for its legitimacy, while its practical undertaking happened at the ground level.

The evolution of defensive humanitarianism during the years of 1914-1916 included the realization of the last century of international law in mitigating human suffering during armed conflict. The formation of the Swiss internment camps took more than just the urgings of the ICRC or pope; the unique position of Switzerland as a neutral state capable of enacting the Geneva and The Hague Conventions created the conditions suitable to craft the internment camp system. Solidifying the practicality of defensive humanitarianism to the Swiss populace and the international

⁴⁰ This illness is believed to have been PTSD. Speed, 36-37.

⁴¹ As far as neutral states acting as hosts for internment treaties, the Netherlands held British and German soldiers after a treaty between those states was formed in 1917. For more information, see John Yarnall’s *Barbed Wire Disease: British & German Prisoners of War, 1914-19*.

community at large, the treaty negotiations of 1915-1916 marked a significant turning point in the prestige of Swiss good offices. With the initial internees beginning their journeys into Switzerland, the next phase of defensive humanitarianism began. In this stage, the Swiss government would have to make good on the humanitarian half of its policy platform.

Life in the Internment Camp System

When William McGilvray arrived in Chateaux D'Oex late in 1916, he could have scarcely believed the change in treatment that he would receive. The Swiss military and the ICRC operated all of the internment camps in Switzerland for the duration of World War I, yet their daily maintenance and administration rested in the hands of non-commissioned Swiss soldiers and a few of the internees themselves. This section explores the humanitarian aspect of defensive humanitarianism by illuminating the unique opportunities and freedoms afforded to interned soldiers. From work and job training to education, leisure, and sport, the Swiss internment camps overhauled the traditional POW system. Not all of these changes happened smoothly, and some failed, but the humanitarian experiment in the internment camp system would prove that bringing lofty principles into international law could bring about practical change. The changes in the experiences of these soldiers from their time in POW camps in France, Germany, Britain, and elsewhere, to their lives in the internment camp system represent more than just a difference in scenery. The goal of this section is to lay out the structure of the internment camp system, elaborate on the changes between POW camps and internment camps, and analyze how the unique humanitarian aspects of the Swiss internment

camp system constitutes the second half of defensive humanitarianism.

The Swiss military housed the interned soldiers primarily in hostels and hotels and sent severe cases to hospitals and sanatoria. The Swiss army required military-level discipline in the camps, as the interned soldiers only had the legal rights of prisoners of war, due in part to the small amount of international law written specifically on the rights of internees as opposed to POWs. However, in their accommodations, internees experienced abundant comfort in rooms normally meant for paying customers, with between one and four men inhabiting each fully furnished room.⁴² The day-to-day undertakings of the internment system relied on daily reports sent to the two regional superintendents, with information on attendance, fees accrued by soldiers for their rent and board, work assignments, changes in soldiers' health, and disciplinary incidents recorded by the staff at each hostel, hotel, hospital, and sanitarium, not necessarily by military personnel.⁴³ Indeed, many non-commissioned Swiss soldiers served in this position, but they also delegated duties to the internees healthy enough to work.

On the surface, the personnel structure of the Swiss internment camps appears at first glance as extremely hierarchical. The Surgeon-General of the Swiss military, located centrally in Bern, sat at the top of the administrative system, followed by a quartermaster-general who oversaw two section-

⁴² "Internierten-Zeitungen (1916-1918)," Dossier, E27#1000/721#14038*, (Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv: Bern, Switzerland), accessed June 5, 2017.

⁴³ Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 20.

al superintendents. One was for the Central Powers' soldiers in Lucerne, and the other for the Entente Powers in Montreux, with non-commissioned Swiss officers acting as individual area supervisors. In addition, a Bureau of Information, centered in Bern, maintained all written records of the camp, including the number of soldiers interned in Switzerland. To maintain discipline among the internees, trusted officers from each individual location were given the authority to oversee their fellow soldiers' behavior.⁴⁴ Despite the hierarchical appearance of the system, non-commissioned Swiss soldiers and internees completed much of the day-to-day work of the camp by compiling attendance sheets, distributing mail, and assuring work, recreational activities, and leisure time proceeded smoothly.⁴⁵ In fact, in areas with internees from multiple nations, groups of mixed internees could complete tasks together. This relaxed system paralleled the relaxed military character of the internment camp system; the humanitarian and neutral aspects of the system removed the need for a rigid power hierarchy. While the treaties focused on the higher-level problems of selection, transportation, and payment, the Swiss military and ICRC primarily handled the ground level issues of running the day-to-day aspects of the system. This dichotomy between state level and individual level authority mirrors a similar dichotomy between the defensive and humanitarian aspects of defensive humanitarianism. While the defensive aspect functions mainly at the international treaty level,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Verschiedene Listen betr. den Internierten-Bestand (1916-1919)," Dossier, E27#1000/721#14032*, (Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv: Bern, Switzerland), accessed June 5, 2017.

with state leaders and diplomats as actors, the individuals who ensured the daily survival of the camps account for the humanitarian half.

The unique humanitarian goal of the internment camps, reducing the unnecessary suffering of prisoners of war due to injury, created an entirely new method for handling prisoners of war. The new structuring of the internment camps resulted in Swiss military avoiding gross loss of active Swiss soldiers to the cause of guarding interned international soldiers.⁴⁶ Medical staff, hotel staff, and non-commissioned soldiers, in addition to the internees themselves, took over these roles. As the health of soldiers represented the primary goal of internment, the daily activities and lifestyles of interned soldiers also differed dramatically from the traditional experiences of prisoners of war.

Forced labor has always existed in the prisoner of war system; however, the internment camp system utilized work as a tool to improve internee health. One major difference between traditional prisoner or internee labor and the work completed in the Swiss camps was the rationale behind the labor. This sentiment is evident in Favre's work, as he felt that:

Work is a necessity for interned war prisoners. It is the only way to restore them after the ravages that sickness, wounds, and a long captivity have made on their minds and bodies. Switzerland must furnish the interned prisoner with diversion so that he does not become lazy and fall prey

⁴⁶ Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 40.

to the numerous temptations that he finds in our country.⁴⁷

The physicians of the camps categorized the internees into the six categories of work, removing the chance for misunderstanding as to why the soldiers originally interned for illness participated in laborious activities. The six categories varied in the amount of labor and the duration per day of labor. The categorization lent itself to the Swiss model that labor helped to heal, in moderation. The Swiss government employed internees only in industries that did not compete with Swiss labor.⁴⁸ This dramatically lessened the exploitative characteristic of traditional prisoner or interned labor and reduced any internal fears of labor competition within Switzerland. Labor, therefore, took on a humanitarian characteristic: internees labored to the benefit of their health and the future welfare of their families and states. While the Swiss army required all those chosen as capable to work, non-commissioned officers of the rank of sergeant or above could not be forced to work, nor were civilian internees required to work.⁴⁹

The Swiss government, due to its intense scrutiny of idleness, required all interned soldiers to report their previous occupations before the war and undergo routine health assessments by the military medical staff to check for work status. Prisoners could not refuse the work or studies assigned to them, as the Swiss government and army held that

idleness would lead to the deterioration of the mental, moral, and physical health of the soldiers. From these reports, the Swiss government fashioned six groups of soldiers: those incapable of work, those capable of light work within the camp, those capable of light work outside the camp, those capable of regular work outside the camp, those needing to learn a new profession through apprenticeship due to injury, and those interested in studying.⁵⁰ These positions ranged from administrative positions such as postal carriers, or laborers assisting Swiss citizens around their places of internment.

The structuring of interned soldiers' time while captive in Switzerland differs dramatically from how time functions in traditional prisoner of war camps. Both The Hague and Geneva Conventions allowed for governments to require prisoners of war to perform labor if healthy enough to do so, in accordance with their skills.⁵¹ The unique Swiss system of internment brought a new aspect to the occupation of captive's time: the opportunity to work in their prewar professions as well as the opportunity to receive further vocational or academic education. The Swiss government held that:

Switzerland must furnish the interned prisoner with diversion so that he does not become lazy and fall a [sic] prey to the numerous temptations that he finds in our country. She must make, or remake, men of them, so that once the war is over they will be capable of

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Mitteilungen des Armeefeldarztes an die Presse (1916-1918)," Dossier, E27#1000/721#14034*, (Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv: Bern, Switzerland), accessed June 6, 2017.

⁴⁹ Civilian internees are not covered in this paper, but would make a very interesting future area of research.

⁵⁰ "Vorbereitung für die kriegsrechtliche Internierung, u.a. Konventionsentwurf, 1914-1915."

⁵¹ "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1864."

establishing a family; or if they have a family, of resuming their life with it on a proper basis and so to lift up their country.⁵²

The utilization of the word diversion, as opposed to labor, points to the focus on health and not on utility that came with the internment system. It also points to the administration's focus on idle time, seen as a detriment to the soldier's character. Why was the Swiss military so concerned with the idleness of internees? One of the biggest worries of the Swiss came from the fear that interned men with too much money and free time would fall into deleterious social behaviors such as alcoholism or gambling.⁵³ This accounts in part for the Swiss government's insistence upon internees working.

Another factor came from Favre's personal insistence that idle men had a greater risk in falling into poor health or breaking rules than men with less free time. This paradox of diversion, suggesting relaxation and leisure, versus the concern with idleness, which implies productivity and usefulness, illustrates the tension of running the internment camp system with humanitarianism as the ideology. New and old concepts of internment camps clashed in Favre's reports of how men should spend their time, but the result produced a middle ground. Soldiers labored to their benefit and to the benefit of their state, but also participated in recreational sports and pastimes and studied at university and relaxed in local establishments.

⁵² Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 37.

⁵³ Ibid, 38.

In traditional prisoner of war camps, prisoners of war did not receive any money for their labor.⁵⁴ The Swiss internment camp system approach even to the monetary aspect of labor is, therefore, exceptional, as the Swiss government only withheld 40% of an internee's earnings. The transformation of labor from a compulsory measure to a health initiative radically improved the experiences of the interned soldiers, while simultaneously boosting sectors of the Swiss economy lagging due to the loss of manpower and tourism. The transformative nature of the internment camp system pleased not only the interned soldiers and their home governments, but also the citizens of Switzerland. It saved many internees from their deaths in the POW camps and also painted Switzerland as the humanitarian bastion of Europe. The possibility for and success of defensive humanitarianism arose from its unique quality of suiting the needs and desires of all sides.

Sergeant William McGilvray could have hardly imagined how he would spend his idling hours in internment in Switzerland, and he would certainly have never dreamed his tenure would include duties such as officiating curling tournaments. As a non-commissioned officer at the level of sergeant upon his arrival, McGilvray oversaw the British soldiers interned at the Chateaux d'Oex internment camp as the highest-ranking officer in 1916. In addition to maintaining military-style behavior and conduct, McGilvray oversaw the implementation of labor, education, and recreation programs that saw to the mental welfare of the internees. In June of 1917, this meant overseeing a curling tour-

⁵⁴ Heather Jones, "Prisoners of War," last modified October 8, 2014. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war.

nament between the British interned men of Chateaux d'Oex and the local female curling team. As one of the internees, British Lance Corporal Gruchy, wrote home, "I am extremely comfortable and can hardly realize my good fortune. The days as a 'gefangener' [prisoner] seem like a particularly horrible nightmare; thank God they are over..."⁵⁵ The internment system in Switzerland revolutionized how prisoners of war could be handled by shifting the emphasis from captivity to health. Internees were allowed to participate in a myriad of recreations, ranging from soccer clubs to symphony orchestras that collaborated with the local populace.

The reeducation of internees also played a central role in the health initiatives of the internment camps, as the healthcare goals of the ICRC and Swiss army extended past the point of internment and continued into the soldiers' return to civilian life. The treaty focused particularly on interned soldiers that had been active in their studies before the war or on those who would have to learn a new skill or trade due to complications from injury or illness. As Favre noted in his report:

The *Swiss University Work* divided the regions and sections among the different university committees of Geneva, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Berne, Zurich, Bâle; procured books for study, created or developed regional libraries, facilitated access to the libraries already in existence, and organized conferences and lectures ... the normal, secondary, and professional schools, the schools of commerce, etc., opened their courses to

interned pupils and students ... Only the interned men fulfilling the regular conditions were to have the status of regular students. The others who gave evidence of satisfactory educational training were admitted as auditors.⁵⁶

The Swiss army, while allowing the interned soldiers almost complete access to the Swiss education system, was very concerned that the opportunity of education would be abused by internees who were distracted by the "agreeable pursuits of a stay in the city, and who do not see anything better, the lazy, the incapable, the non-serious."⁵⁷ The Swiss army held the reeducation of the interned soldiers as similarly important to the health of the internee and something deserving of serious attention. While Favre's report shows that he held a level of cynicism towards the intent of student internees, he went on to include that any infractions that transpired happened only in a fraction of the student internee population, as trusted internees acted as observers of the less trustworthy students for the camp administration, just as other officer-level internees oversaw the men in their area. Here we see the give-and-take aspect of defensive humanitarianism: while the humanitarian aspect of the internment camp system pursued as many opportunities for interned soldiers as possible during their time in Switzerland, the defensive aspect attempted to hold them to traditional military standards of behavior and structure. The humanitarian half cared for the internee, while the defensive half utilized the

⁵⁶ Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 25.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁵ "The London Scottish Regimental Gazette," 136.

internee to protect Swiss national security. Though the doubts of the Swiss army in regards to the humanitarian ideals of the internment camp system may be seen in Favre's report, at no point did he denounce or criticize them explicitly.

Additionally, the social halls in each camp acted as a creative refuge, as opposed to a café or bar where alcohol would have been used as the relaxant. Social halls were venues designated as group activity spaces for internees. Favre's report illustrates the morale of internees also played a role in the humanitarian goal of long-term physical health. As Favre notes,

It is obviously good for the interned men that alcohol is not an indispensable element of sociability. The help to each is beneficial and the morale is elevated by lectures, dramatic performances, and concerts given from time to time. Interned men who take part in these things find an interest which keeps them from idleness. At St. Legier, Blonay, the social hall is opened only twice a week and yet is a source of constant interest. These meetings are attended, on average, by two-thirds of the interned men in the section. Certain social halls are used for other purposes. That at Mürren, the English social hall shelters the Temperance Rambling Club, with seventy members, and the orchestra of interned men, and courses are given, with instruction in wood-carving.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Favre, "Swiss Internment of Prisoners of War: An Experiment in International Humane Legislation and Administration: a Report by the Swiss Commission in the United States," 43.

Various commissions of Swiss nationals worked to broaden the opportunities of the interned, including the Commission from the Christian Associations, Commission of German Switzerland, The Swiss Catholic Mission, and the Swiss Society of Chaplains. The role of these commissions focused primarily on religion and the spirituality of the internee.

The uniquely humanitarian aspect of the Swiss internment camp system differentiates them from traditional prisoner of war or internment camp systems by focusing on long-term health and lifestyle goals, instead of punitive or reprisal measures. The internment camp system, run to a large extent by the internees themselves, focused on improving more than just the immediate health of the interned. While work was a traditional aspect of both POW and internment camps, the utilization of work for the express purpose of healthcare goals differentiates internment camps dramatically from other models.

The reeducation of internees through both vocational training and university schooling presents perhaps the most apparent transformation and showcases the future-oriented outlook of the internment camp system. Keeping the future of internees after internment in mind, the structuring of the internment camp system sought to facilitate soldiers' transition back to civilian life. As a non-belligerent in the conflict, the Swiss had no acrimony towards the internees, removing any structural opportunities for pernicious intent. This enabled the humanitarian aspect of the camps to flourish, resulting in the change from conceptualizing the soldiers' stay from short-term confinement to long-lasting health and professional goals. The humanitarian aspect of defensive humanitarianism cannot be

understated. The defensive property, enabled by the internment camp system, benefitted the neutral Swiss state in political and economic terms, keeping the Swiss safer from external invasion and internal conflict. The humanitarian half, on the other hand, had a greater impact at the individual level. The defensive and humanitarian aspects intertwined and mutually depended on each other, and their disentanglement would have crippled the system.

Conclusion

The initial reports on the arrival of interned soldiers in Switzerland came from the governments involved and the vast majority contained very positive sentiments. Many accounts, especially from British officials, contain descriptions of the levels of enthusiasm of the Swiss populace at the arrival of newly interned soldiers. Reports conflict as to whether soldiers arrived on third-class cars that had been transformed into medical cars, or if officers rode first class and enlisted men in second, but this is truly minor in the grand scheme of the internment camp system.⁵⁹ Almost all reports contain accounts of the types of gifts received by soldiers at stations and restaurants as they travelled through Switzerland to their assigned internment location, where they also received attention and gifts from individual Swiss citizens.

Defensive humanitarianism was successful due to its international character and governments with or without interned soldiers took an interest in the project. A plethora of reports exist in English from both the Brit-

ish government officials and the internees in Switzerland. One report, from Heron Charles Goodhart, a member of the British legation in Switzerland, states that, “fruit, cigarettes, chocolate and postcards, besides flowers in profusion, were the principal gifts brought by private individuals, many of whom were Swiss. The British Colony were [sic] in full force.”⁶⁰ While the level of enthusiasm of the Swiss populace recorded by many British officials illustrated the international use of internment in Switzerland as a form of morale building for their local populations, the vast majority of accounts captured the truly positive feelings of the Swiss welcoming of interned soldiers.

In addition to the protection of Swiss neutrality and international prominence for the humanitarian goals of internment, the financial benefits to the tourism sector of the Swiss economy due to the housing of interned soldiers in hotels and hostels likely explains the overwhelmingly positive Swiss reception of interned soldiers. The Swiss government, with the input of NGOs and other states, created defensive humanitarianism and the internment camp system both to protect Swiss sovereignty and to allow for humanitarian ideals to survive in a new and destructive era. Both sides of the coin, defense and humanitarianism, equally showed through in the internment camp system.

The transformation from POW camp to internment camp could not have transpired without the existing international legal basis of the Geneva and Hague Conventions, as well as the ICRC, Swiss Red Cross, and other international humanitarian organizations. The internment systems evolved in response

⁵⁹ Grant Mountstuart, Evelyn Duff and Heron Charles Goodhart, *The Reception of Wounded Prisoner Soldiers of Great Britain in Switzerland*, (London: Jas. Truscott & Son, 1916), 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

to the new challenges presented by WWI by reevaluating the costs of total war and revolutionizing the care of its casualties. The Swiss government chose to move forward with internment not exclusively out of humanitarian ideals but also out of financial and political considerations. The reconfiguring of norms around POW treatment remains an important example of how states may pursue humanitarian policy when considering their treatment of foreign soldiers.

The term defensive humanitarianism is useful for describing the policy platform implemented by the Swiss state to assuage the

crises of WWI. The application of domestic policy through international agreements and humanitarian law presents a unique approach that small states may use to maintain their sovereignty. This episode in history touched not only the domestic Swiss level, but influenced the histories of WWI, international diplomacy, and humanitarianism as well. Switzerland, often overlooked in the historiographies of these three larger areas due to the state's small player status during the 20th century, still may offer valuable policy alternatives today.

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